Mediating the Lions of Postmodernism: *An Efl Field Application of Vygotsky, Bourdieu, and Derrida*

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Abstract

Many ESL/EFL teachers see a need for learners to engage with English both as linguistic *structure*, and as a means of *social interaction*. Therefore, this research project developed a simple material that would foreground structure within relevant social contexts. It explored how to facilitate the *social construction* of meaning for a target segment of text within the socio-cultural frameworks of postmodern theorists Vygotsky (1978), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), and Derrida (1973, 1976). The widespread need for the combination of both structure and social context formed the problem, and the solution presented was an everyday 3x5″ study card (C-card) with a sentence written on the front, and a target word from the sentence elaborated upon on the back. This artifact was tested for its ability to facilitate dialogue, or mediate, between a student and a professor (a novice/expert diad). The research question posed was: *Does the C-card support a topic dialogue between a novice and an expert in a second language?* This question was investigated from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective using a Likert-scaled questionnaire, interviews, participant and non-participant observations. The results suggested that the C-card provides support for on-topic dialogue between a novice and an expert in L2. These findings have implications for the teaching of academic materials, which are normally out of a true social context. Applications include English for Specific Purposes (ESP), collaborative and communicative activities, and even community building within the field of *activity theory*.

Key words: linguistics, social interaction, foreign language, collaborative activities

1. Introduction

1.1. The Problem

An ongoing narrative amongst second and foreign language teachers betrays a frustration with the progress of their students. This is not surprising, given the complexity and difficulty of language acquisition, and the answers to these frustrations can seem to be just as complex and difficult. Even so, most practitioners would agree that

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there is room for improvement in the state of the art, and a need for some tools to carry out such advances. Perhaps it is also no mystery that such improvement should come in the area of form/meaning associations, or the connection between language structure, and its social use (Widdowson, 2000; Watson-Gegeo and Neilsen, 2003). This deceptively simple need, its conspicuous absence in the halls of contemporary education, and a means to achieve it, is the topic of this research project. As this submission is based on a much longer graduate thesis, much simplification and glossing has been carried out on the original work in order to fit this shorter journal format.

1.2 The Solution

For teachers who are working with intermediate to advanced learners, this research may help to create a tighter weave between linguistic form, and social meaning. Basically, I set out to develop and test the efficacy of a simple learning *tool* (*mediating artifact*) to accomplish such a result. Tool use, also *mediation* as used in this context, implies the promise of help with what is normally beyond reach, to accomplish what would otherwise be very difficult. The key advantage of mediating artifacts in the Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978) sense is that they can theoretically bridge the psycho-social gap between people of differing status, a gap that so often stalls an exchange of sufficient length. Social factors of cultural and historical importance often go unnoticed in such exchanges, *but most certainly exist and critically impact the quality and duration of an exchange*. Bourdieu (1977, 1984) says that psycho-social factors function as *constraints* to speech and manifest as anxiety, a loss of words, or adherence to meaningless clichés. Predictably, a sense of discomfort takes hold in one or both interlocutors, and the exchange is aborted before anything worthwhile is accomplished. The works of Bourdieu (1977, 1984) suggest this is predictable because a firewall has been hit designed to prevent access to valuable information or *capital*. For educators designing and conducting communicative tasks, it is worth considering that this firewall may be what is holding back language production, especially if there is a large gap between a student's *linguistic performance* and *competence* (see later discussion of Chomsky, 1965). In such a case, mediation or tool use may be a workable solution, and this article will delineate how to go about describing, creating and implementing such a mediating artifact.

This research and its results suggest that the effectiveness of mediating artifacts is likely due to a primary factor, and one or more secondary factors. It seems foremost is their capacity to hold information thereby removing this task from *working memory,* thus freeing up attentional (cognitive) resources for other more pressing communicative tasks (see Baddeley, 1986). Secondly, artifacts can perform several other functions including the formation of interest or curiosity. These secondary factors can be exploited and tuned to the interlocutor of interest. For example, in this case the 3x5" card with text on it resembles a research card with bibliographic notes, thus blending it into the visual language of academic researchers; it is designed to appeal to older professors who likely used similar cards during their graduate research. The perception of the C-card as an artifact consistent with research hypothetically marks the holder (the student in this case) as one who is doing research, and thereby lifts such a student to a comparatively higher status within the academic field. Theoretically this would result in a

narrowing of the psycho-social distance between the interlocutors thus making dialogue more socially acceptable, i.e. the professor/researcher social distance would be closer in most cultures than the professor/student distance.

1.2.1 Materials: The Mediating Artifact (Tool)

A plain white 3x5" card with a segment of text was investigated as a Vygotskian (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 40) *mediating artifact*; the text used should reflect the academic interests of the senior interlocutor or expert.

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A <u>mediating</u> artifact is used to bridge psycho-social distance.
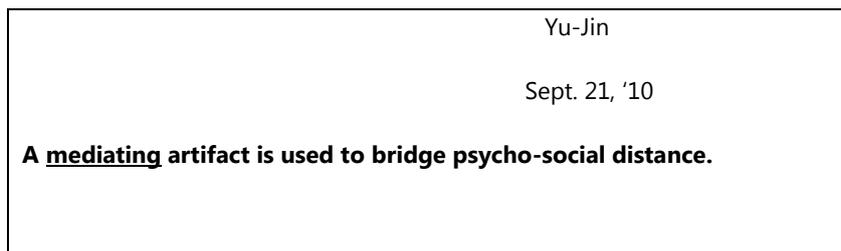
Figure 1: C-card, Side 1

Side 1 above shows the face the novice (intermediate-advanced level student) initially shared with an expert whilst trying to dialogue. The underlined word, or target L2, was then discussed within the context of the sentence. When more support or elaboration was useful, Side 2 was referred to.
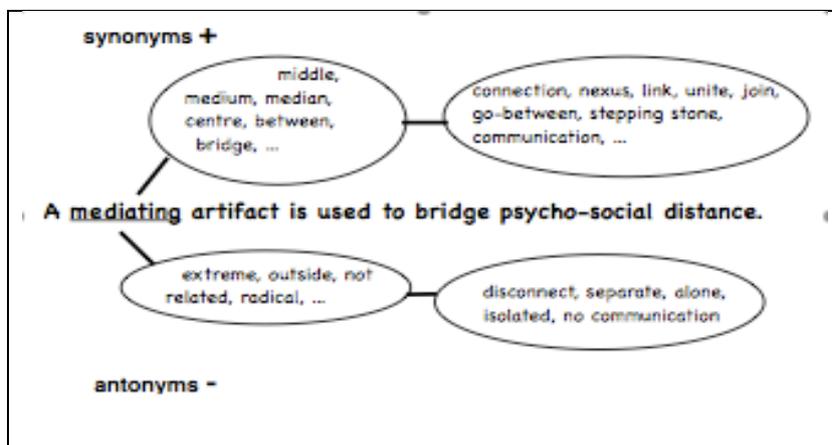

Figure 2: C-card, Side 2

Figure 2 above was prepared before the interaction and shows the target word unpacked in Derridian oppositions, or *differencè* (see later discussion of Derrida). These additional synonyms and antonyms were referred to as needed to add material to the dialogue, or jump-start the interaction, should it falter. Linguistic targets might be singular words, collocates, a phrase, a clause, or even as long as several sentences; however, a discrete focus is recommended. Content could be drawn from sources, such as journal articles, research papers, textbooks, etc.

1.2.2 Application

Specific applications include communicative and collaborative activities at *high intermediate through advanced levels* and could even include more ambitious projects in the area of *activity theory* (see the founding work of Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and Rubinstein) where disparate communities of practice could benefit from the use of mediation.

1.23 Aim, Objective, and Hypothesis

The general *aim* of this research project was to provide a way to address the problem of decontextualized academic material in L2 education, and increase speech production. The more specific *objective* was to test the following hypothesis: a mediating artifact in the form of a C-card could support on-topic dialogue between a novice and an expert in L2.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

For materials and task design, the paradigm or conceptual framework chosen can have a definite effect on learning outcomes (see Breen, 1987, p.83). Bourdieu (1977, p. 76, 92; 1984, p.170) claims that paradigms involve unconscious assumptions and values that drive not only thought, but also social practices, for example, manners. To help assess this tool, I opted for a postmodern framework, using Bourdieu's work to better describe and interpret findings. Postmodernism, although the predominant socio-cultural influence in Western countries since the 1950's, is not agreeable to all for several reasons, including its confrontational stance. Essentially, postmodernism is a reaction to modernism with a corresponding agenda to change it (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv), and as such, postmodernism favors discontinuity over tradition, fragmentation over unity, ambiguity over certainty, and seeks to level large differences in power (Grenz, 1996, p. xi; Klages, 2006, p. 53).

2.1.1 Background

The modern to postmodern shift can be seen as an echo of a seminal split that took place as far back as ancient Greece. Then, Plato claimed that understanding was best arrived at through rational thought alone, and that *mediation* was not only unnecessary, but also threatened clarity of thought (Klages, 2006, p. 13). In contrast to Plato was his student Aristotle, who argued that media could complete rather than adulterate the truth. Indeed, Aristotle's contentious approach promoted the illustrated and expounded give- and-take of ideas, making it both mediated and more dialogic in nature (Klages, 2006, p. 15). Although the similarities and differences between Plato and

Aristotle can become very involved, for the purpose of this research project it may be helpful to underscore a clear difference in approach consistent with each: a didactic (one-sided) directive on the truth, versus an explorative give-and-take, or dialogic investigation into the truth. The point being that this tense interplay between these historical titans of thought exists today, and can be seen in the differences between modern and postmodern educational materials and tasks (Kozulin, 1998, p. 156), as outlined below.

MODERN	POSTMODERN
Teacher-centered	**Learner-centered**
Didactic (lecture format)	**Dialogic** (discussion format)
Product-oriented, e.g. test results	**Process-oriented,** e.g. task based
Individualism e.g. competition, status	**Collaboration / Autonomy** balanced
Gate-keeping legitimate	**Self-accessed learning** authorized
Centralized: Western standardized English model e.g. native English speaker teachers symbols of linguistic imperialism	**Decentralized:** Regional & diversified English acceptable e.g. non-native English speakers co-opted in learning process
Left-brain-centered activities e.g. linear, logical, propositional, sequential learning of orthodox ideas; learning follows predictable patterns	**Right-brain** activities more acceptable e.g. non-linear learning formats including self-reflexive strategies; learning follows unpredictable patterns
Emotions not relevant	**Emotions** relevant: affective filters with corresponding social factors considered
Quantitative 'Experimental' designs employing objective, absolute descriptions	**Qualitative** 'Action research' employing subjective, relative descriptions and perceptions

Table 1: Modern and Postmodern Pedagogy   (Heavily adapted from Finch, 2006)

Table 1 above illustrates key aspects of materials and tasks from each paradigm, and the C-card is designed to be more consistent with postmodern features. Generally, materials have shifted from carriers of information to generators of activity. Although a modern belief in an objective truth may indeed best be served by a transmission model of pedagogy, the provisional truth characteristic of postmodern thought seems more effectively arrived at through dialogic exchange (Lyotard, 1984, p. 51-52).

It is noteworthy that Freud was instrumental in the growth of postmodernism because his work catalyzed the nascent movement away from a rational worldview (Klages, 2006, p. 63). Freud's articulation of the mysterious

unconscious influenced postmodern thinkers such as Bourdieu (1977, 1984). Moreover, Freud's emphasis on the importance of parental figures and their gradual internalization (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p. 9-10), closely parallels and most likely influenced Vygotsky's (1978, p. 88) emphasis on collaboration with a more competent peer. Not coincidentally, there was an increase in emphasis on *subtext* in the language arts, to the ambiguous, but dynamic meaning signified below the surface of text that factors into communication arguably as much as surface-level meaning. Concurrently, reason began to draw increasing fire, and the platform that rationality enjoyed began to crumble as the modern to postmodern shift gained momentum (Finch, 2006; Ward, 2003, p. 11). Objective descriptions of truth, the hallmarks of a rational approach, were losing ground to more subjective and *relative* descriptions like *perceptions*. Indeed, truth was becoming seen as knowledge contingent on other factors, such as the physical position of the observer, soon extended to the psychological position of the observer, or their *role*. Subjectivity moved closer to the foreground and paved a way for the greater adoption of social and contextual influences in the meaning making (semiotic) process, including the focus on *identity* (Norton, 2009; Oh, 2003). This knowledge formation process known as "social construction" (Williams and Burden, 1997, p.120) forms the cornerstones of the tool and task design featured in this research project.

2.2 Post Modern Linguistics

As language learning is a key objective of C-card use, a short explanation of postmodern linguistics, namely *post-structural* linguistics is offered below. The foremost poststructuralist was Derrida, renowned for attacking key assumptions embedded in Western thought extending back to Plato, namely, that meaning could be derived rationally (Derrida, 1973, p. 17-20), and that there is a central (logo-centric) meaning. Although Derrida did not clearly deny the existence of an objective reality, he argued along with structuralists like Sassaure that there was no direct connection between language and objective reality, or between the signifiers and the signified (Hale, 2004). Rather Derrida contended that meaning was enmeshed in a collection of signs, "caught up in an indicative system", where one sign deferred naturally and potentially endlessly to another (Derrida, 1973, p. 20-22). Hence the *experience* an author writes about never touches the reader directly in the same way that it moved the author (Hale, 2004). In Derrida's concept, meaning is processed through the continual negotiation between one sign and another (different voices), remade in a process known as *deconstruction* (Hale, 2004). Most notably these meanings are often *other* than what the writer intended, and so *authorial intent* is routinely breached (Hale, 2004). Consequently, postmodern pedagogy wisely concerns itself less with authorial intent, and more with the reader's construction of meaning; in other words, m*eaning is the assertion of identity*. Likewise, the indicative system will continue to unravel until the reader stops the process with a decision, an act known as *violence,* because it is *other* than authorial intent. However, this decision is central with who the reader wants to be (Derrida, 1976; Hale, 2004).

2.2.1 Identity and Deconstruction

Derrida recommends a process of looking at opposing words that make up the meaning of a word. In doing so, the privileged meaning that structuralists claim to be assigned to a word can be ferreted out, and alternative shades of meaning can then be seen. This can be seen simply as unpacking, or can be used more rigorously in the true Derridian technique of deconstruction. Deconstruction, along with the corresponding remaking of meaning, can seem almost callous and selfish, and is perhaps what gives postmodern linguistics its irreverent edge. The earmarking of identity as central to the semiotic process has implications for material and task designers, because it suggests that the meaning ascribed to words can and does change according to the role the interlocutor adopts (see Derrida, 1974, p. 82; Hale, 2004). Knowing this gives the designer room to tune the meaning ascribed to words, which, of course, should be consistent with the academic goals of the student. It is commonsensical that the role the student *can* adopt successfully will depend to a large degree on the identity of the expert in the dyad. Consequently, altering *who* the student dialogues with becomes a way to alter the meaning ascribed to words. It also becomes a way of controlling the level of diction used, i.e. higher-level experts tend to raise the level of diction used by novice ones. In all, with Derrida bringing identity to the foreground of the semiotic process, vocabulary development can be thought of more inclusively in terms of the material that students are exposed to, use, as well as *who* the student uses the material with. The applications for ESP/EAP (English for academic purposes) thus become apparent: match fledgling engineers, for example, with a more competent peer (MCP) who is an accomplished engineer to strengthen the vernacular used in engineering. This would be a clear example of social construction (Holzman & Morss, 2000, p. 131).

These piercing observations by Derrida have important implications for educators. If *who* is such a potentially meaningful component of the learning equation, what prevents the seeking out of the most prestigious interlocutors available? Clearly, availability would be a limiting factor, but there is a different reason as well. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1984), the pragmatics of paring students with experts has a murky obstacle. Recall that poststructuralists argue that meaning is created through language use, and that the meaning-making process is constricted by the discourse that society will allow (Newberg, 2001), i.e. those who have authority direct discourse, thereby effecting the construction of both knowledge and identity - *sometimes constraining them by design*. An educator's ability to identify these constraints would help them to discern, if problems with L2 production originates from a lack of *linguistic competency,* or from some aspect of *linguistic performance* (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3). Chomsky makes a clear partition between the ability to speak in a safe environment (*competency*), and the ability to speak in the real world (*performance*) where dimensions of power are likely less restrained. Hymes (1966) sharpened the focus on Chomsky's (1965) partition between competence and performance by developing the construct of *communicative competence,* which deals with speech appropriate from the perspective of society's mores. In doing so, Hymes (1974, p. 47) underscored that relational factors such as distinction interweave, and even dominate, linguistic factors.

I contend these relational factors are not just side issues, but rather are *serious competitors for cognitive resources* - especially during novice-expert interactions where a faux pas can bring consequences (symbolic violence) upon an errant novice. The interpersonal grappling that takes place, though played down, is worth moving from a marginal consideration to a more central focus and serves as a viable explanation of why our best efforts to encourage speech production disappoint (see *affect* in Arnold, 1999; and Krashen, 1985).

2.3 Bourdieu and Socio-Cultural Forces

Bourdieu (1984, p. 6) used the term "field" to describe a place where people compete for power, roles and identity. Bourdieu (ibid, p. 6) says this competition is part of an economy with desired roles and their privileges comprising "cultural capital". People with cultural capital distinguish themselves with appropriate manners and style known as *marks of distinction* (ibid, p. 41). Competition in the field centers around particular types of cultural capital, such as membership positions or roles in society with dominant positions fought for to secure the capital legitimately reserved for these roles. The essence of distinction is the creation and maintenance of social distance, executed in various ways. Perhaps, communication or the lack of it, is the most common. I, therefore, posit that *speaking rights* qualify as cultural capital, and also as a mark of distinction (Norton, 2000, p. 62; Brumfit, 2001, p. 51). Bourdieu's (1984, p. 57) articulation of distinction, which is often at least partially unconscious, can be used to better understand and work with the relational factors that will eventually play out in any field. As speaking rights are controlled and often restricted by these traditional forces embedded at least partially below the surface of awareness, the proper use of the C-cards has the learner exercising a degree of speaking rights normally out of bounds, *but not clearly, overtly marked as such.* These psycho-social forces are below the surface for a good reason. As societies progress, the overt use of force becomes less acceptable (Brown & Gilman, 1960, p. 266-267), however, *distinction* does not disappear. Rather the demarcation between groups becomes increasingly covert, and although disguised, distinction becomes coded in language itself (Brown & Gilman, 1960, p. 266). Status becomes marked in how long one can speak, and this coding is relevant to materials and task designers, because it is the implicit degree to which a novice language learner can dialogue with an expert, *regardless of his/her competency*.

Bourdieu's (1977, p. 76) overarching concept is *habitus*, which involves a constellation of attitudes, aesthetics, and practices. Habitus manifests itself in how people negotiate themselves socially, e.g. their taste in clothes (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 76). Such behavior is inculcated from an early age, socially reinforced, solidifying it into dispositions, and invariably passed on through the generations (Wolfreys, 2000). Importantly, these dispositions are so deeply ingrained that they are experienced as natural, with their social origins not recognized, i.e. they are unconscious. This lack of recognition constitutes Bourdieu's (1977, p. 92) use of the term *misrecognition* and is an important point to note when diagnosing the presence of a limit to upward mobility. When social conditioning is misrecognized as something natural, then habitus is at work (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170; Wolfreys, 2000). Over time, the dispositions cultivated from habitus are experienced as spontaneous reactions of what is right, or socially

possible in a situation. Bourdieu (1977, pp. 76, 82) refers to this sense of what is appropriate as *doxa*, and physical reactions stemming from this sense as *hexis*. These can be thought of as body language, or *extra-linguistic* aspects of communication, such as appropriate use of eye contact, hand gestures, posture, etc. (Gombert, 1992, p. 12).

Overall, people absorb social rules and manifest these as reactions, physical characteristics, even speech, which can be seen as the constraint of social behavior.

For this task, the above information amounts to this: the student will feel uncomfortable being active around the professor and opt to stay passive and listen. This position is enforced either explicitly through physical violence, or more commonly it is administered implicitly through symbolic representations that Bourdieu (1977, p. 191) calls "symbolic violence". One may think that "violence" is an overly strong term in this context, but considering that the stakes are *cultural capital* potentially translating into access to positions of power and resources (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82), the term becomes fitting. And when cultural capital is advertised to others in physical form, it becomes "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 177), and as such telegraphs distinction from others less dominant in the field. Previously I suggested that *speaking rights* comprise a form of symbolic capital, and therefore those who speak more are (consciously or unconsciously) *making a move* to distancing themselves from others. This move claims a certain holding of cultural capital, with the corollary being a greater potential to *constrain* others. The point being that speaking rights can be as rigorously contested and defended as other forms of capital, with the means of defense not being easily recognizable, but nonetheless present (see *symbolic violence*). Although normally below the surface of detection, Bourdieu (1977, p. 177) explains that power relations become evident when people transgress the order established by a culture, what he calls *legitimate* displays of behavior.

Brown and Gilman (1960, p. 275) observed that as societies advance they push power relations into the hidden place of symbolic form, and described transgressions as violations of *membership rights*. Importantly, Brown and Gilman (1960, p. 275) claim that people are spoken to according to their membership rights, strongly suggesting that a person's social standing is marked in how they are spoken to. If a person is spoken to in such a way as to constrain behavior deemed illegitimate, a "call to order" has been issued (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 191). Such a reprisal is a typical example of symbolic violence, which Fairclough (2001, p. 4) calls the "power behind discourse". *One may wonder what the acceptable way out of this constraining social reality is.* Bourdieu (1984, p. 253) suggests a good *way to overcome social constraints - by adopting a different role* (Also see *determinism* in Jenkins, 1982). For a student, I suggest the role of researcher because it is a natural extension for a learner, and, with a little creativity, the difference can be made almost seamless. To help in this respect, a mediating artifact can be used to prop up such a role. As a general pedagogical principle, Dornyei and Murphy (2003, p. 125) have found that new roles do appear to raise the levels of learner achievement.

2.4 Introducing Mediated Learning

In the 1960s, Piaget became well known for his stage theory of learning that claimed that learning took place through the trials and errors of a *direct* interaction with the environment (Kozulin, 1998, p. 67). In contrast, Vygotsky (1978) posited that people learned *indirectly* through the mediation of a *more competent peer* (Kozulin, 1998, pp. 61, 67). Subsequently, Vygotsky (1978) identified three categories of mediating artifacts: 1) concrete material artifacts, e.g. paper; 2) abstract psychological tools, e.g. the signs and symbols comprising text; 3) human mediators, e.g. professors, more competent peers, etc. (Kozulin, 1998, p. 3). Importantly, abstract psychological tools raise cognition from an experience of the immediate sensory world into an abstract space where higher level thinking can flourish (Kozulin, 1998, pp. 14, 84), e.g. reading fiction often shifts a reader's consciousness to another time and place. Vygotsky (1978) went as far as to say that thinking and behavior restructure in accordance with the tools or artifacts available, because these help support foundational social activity (Kozulin, 1998, pp. 37, 84). This social activity eventually becomes internalized (Kozulin, 1998, p. 162), with the implication for this research project being that it is accessible to the intrepid novice (see Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983).

As a mediating artifact, the C-card is designed to bridge the abstract psycho-social distance separating a novice and an expert so that inter-subjectivity, a space that is collaborative, a place known as the *zone of proximal development*, might be created (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 27; Wenger, 2002, p. 9). I attempted to do this in three phases of mediation related to the three categories of mediating artifacts identified in the previous sub-section. Bridge #1 uses a concrete material artifact to connect the role of a student and the relatively higher role of a researcher. Bridge #2 uses the signs comprising the segment of text on the C-card as abstract psychological tools to raise the lower mental functions of sensory experience to the higher, more abstract, mental functions accompanying language use. Bridge #3 employs the professor as a *human mediator* to bridge the student's lower level of knowledge to the higher level of the professor's (Kozulin, 1998, p. 3).

Susi (2004) says environmental resources are increasingly used as mediating artifacts to strategically facilitate interaction and support cognitive processes. According to Dix, Ramduny-Ellis, & Wilkinson (2004), mediating artifacts support cognitive processes in three major ways: 1) as *entry points*, 2) as *triggers*, and 3) as *placeholders* or reminders. An *entry point* functions as an icebreaker; it facilitates the start of an activity by orienting participants to what will demand attention. A *trigger* activates schemata, priming relevant areas of the brain for accessibility; and a *placeholder* keeps track of where in a cognitive process the user needs to be. All of these functions provide 'cognitive scaffolding' or support by reducing the demands on *attentional resources* (Kirsch, 2000). Cognitive resources are reduced because the topic is plain to see for both interlocutors; thus, this task is eliminated from working memory. Consequently, more cognitive resources are available for other areas of language processing. For example, the opportunity to reflect upon the text and use it deliberately (metalinguistic development) is supported. Metalinguistic features include: phonological regions including prosodic aspects, such as intonation, syntactical

structures, and lexical structures (Gombert, 1992, p. 1). Extra-linguistic aspects of communication can also be given more attention, such as effective use of eye contact, hand gestures, posture, etc. (Gombert, 1992, p. 12).

3. Methodology and Procedures

3.1 Overview

As mentioned at the outset, this work has been abbreviated, so this section will give just a gloss of how the original study was performed. Overall, the desired outcome of the approaches was a disciplined inquiry leading to reliable and valid answers to the research question. An analytic, hypothesis-driven approach (quantitative) was chosen, supplemented with descriptive (qualitative) features to test an aspect of Vygotsky's (1978, p. 40) theory of mediated learning. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, because if large discrepancies between the results of the two became evident, this study could be re-evaluated. The qualitative methods used were consistent with field research and ethnography by utilizing interviews, participant and nonparticipant observations recorded as diary and field notes. Participants drew conclusions based on their experience of using the C-card constituting a *retrospective probe* (Seliger & Shohamy, 2001, p. 170). A pilot study (Cycle 1) was followed with action research Cycles 2 and 3. Cycle 2 had a sample size of 17, and Cycle 3 had a sample size of 43. Consistent with an action research approach, slight improvements in methodology and procedures were made between the cycles. However, all cycles were basically the same: participants used the C-card and then rated their experience on the questionnaire. After examining the data from both Cycles 2 and 3, I decided that the pattern of response was similar enough to justify grouping them together (see Chart 1).

To gather the data, I assumed the roles of both participant and nonparticipant-observer. In the former, I functioned as a *more competent peer* for approximately one half of the interactions. In the latter, I gave the presentation and background for the study, as well as observed some of the C-card interactions. Both of these roles afforded the opportunity to ensure that the quality of the study was maintained, and of course allowed observations as an actual participant. The liability of this approach, however, was that my presence could have introduced a degree of bias into the research.

3.2 Pedagogical Section: Praxis

Below is a guideline for educators interested in using the C-card.

3.2.1 Basic Procedures

1) A novice chooses a more competent peer (expert), e.g. a favorite professor, and makes arrangements to discuss the target topic together.

2) The novice asks the expert first in L1 what s/he thinks the key word on the C-card means, and then asks permission to dialogue in L2 (English).

3) They work together to interpret the key word within its sentential context, drawing on Side 2 only when necessary. L2 is used as far as possible, however, switching back to L1 at roadblocks is acceptable (see Prabhu, 1987, p. 59).

4) The novice should listen carefully to the expert, noting (on the card with a pencil) associations they have of the key word. These associations might correspond to different *voices* in the Derridian sense. From these associations, the novice should try to understand the expert's frame of reference, or the context he/she is bringing to the dialogue. The novice (carefully) tries to draw out more experiences that the expert may have had surrounding the topic area, providing additional clues as to their perspective.

5) The novice tries to *notice the difference* between his/her own perspective, and expert's perspective.

6) Overall, the novice strives for a balanced exchange of ideas, and to *float* (in the Derridean sense) between the possible interpretations of words, weaving them together as much as possible, i.e. engage in *social construction*.

3.2.2 Adjusting the C-card for Different Applications

The C-card can be adjusted in many ways to meet various objectives, educational settings, and individual preferences. Here are just a few of the many possibilities:

a) Vary the length or difficulty of the segment to reflect the target language, or point of interest, e.g. collocates (lexical chunks) or idiomatic phrases.

b) Personalize the card with something that reflects your identity, e.g. a thumbnail picture, or your favorite color, etc.

c) Experiment with visual salience (text prominence) with highlighting, font size, text offset with a contrasting background, etc.

3.2.3 Adjusting the C-card for Different Roles

Much can be said on this (see Recommendations for Future Research, p. 31), but common sense suggests that the role adopted be in step with the future goals of the novice, as well as it should not be too big of a step forward. The novice language learners should feel they are stretching themselves into an achievable end result, not engaging in fabrication. The prospective role should also be looked at from the vantage point of the *more competent peer* to ensure that it is constructive, interesting, and acceptable. Here are some suggestions:

a) Choose topic content that mirrors the interests of the MCP, e.g. for an engineer, a segment from the latest research on aerospace materials.

b) Select the artifact (paper, card, font, object) to prime schema related to, or even loosely associated with, the target topic.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Overview

As mentioned in previous sections, the reporting of this research project's results have been simplified. The research question was as follows: *Does the C-card support on topic dialogue between novice and expert in L2?* To find a reliable and valid answer to this question, both hard and soft evidence were brought together. Some of the findings are shown below.

4.2 Results of the Survey

Chart 1 below shows Likert scaled data from Cycles 2 and 3.
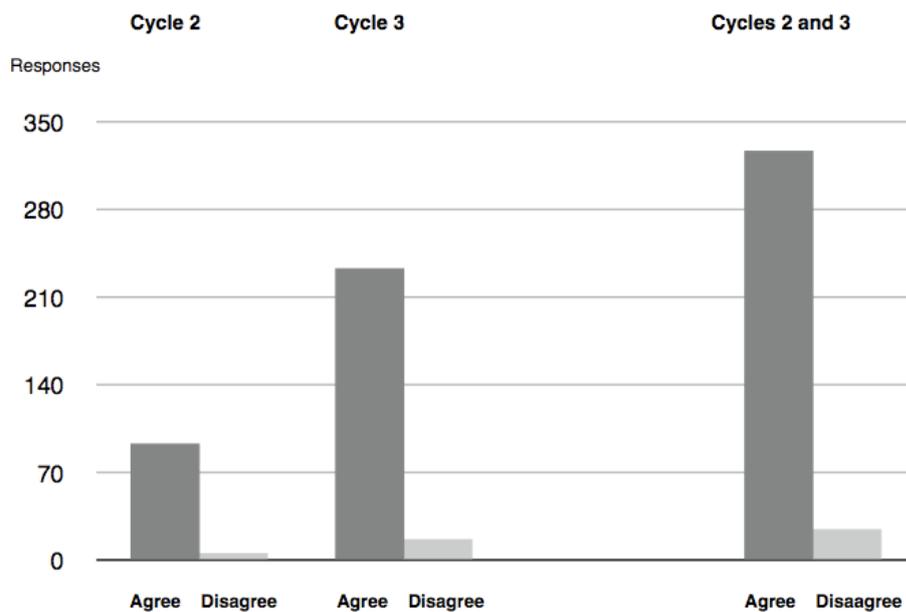
Chart 1: Simplified Cycles 2 and 3

The vertical axis shows the total number of responses on the Likert scale. The dark grey illustrates responses in favor of C-card use, while the light grey shows responses not in favor of C-card use. Next, the data in Cycles 2 and 3 were pooled together, and a Pearson's Chi-square test performed.

4.3 Research Question and Findings

The research question was simplified into a null hypothesis (H_0), with a corresponding alternative hypothesis (H_a):

H_0: **The application of C-card does not make a difference.**

H_a: **The application of C-card does make a difference.**

	Disagree	Agree	Totals
Observed	25	328	353
Expected	176.5	176.5	353
Totals	201.5	504.5	706

X^2 **= 159.4;** p **< 0.0025 (alpha, degrees of freedom = 1)**

Table 2: Pearson's Chi-square Test

4.3.1 Interpretation of Findings

The probability of these results occurring due to chance (p) is less than 0.25%, well below the conventionally accepted level of 5%. This indicates a statistically meaningful difference between the data in the Agree and Disagree categories, making it acceptable to reject the null hypothesis (H_0). However, there is a remote possibility that a variable other than the C-card caused these results, so the adoption of the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was delayed until the questionnaire comments, interviews, and observations were thoroughly reviewed. During this investigation, however, no valid reason was found to abort (H_a) in favor of a confounding variable, and therefore, it was concluded that the C-card was responsible for the difference. It is now reasonable to move from the conclusion that the C-card makes a difference (H_a), to answering *yes* to the research question. Overall, a reasonable amount of evidence has been found in this study to support Vygotsky's (1978) theory of mediated learning.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Overview

Although this study drew its sample from a South Korean population in South Korea, the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1984) as well as my own assessment suggests that the forces explored are more or less universal - distinction exists everywhere, whilst deceptively taking on different forms to telegraph power.

The consequences of transgressing the rules of the field, and resultant issues, predictably come into play, surrounding the access into the historical capital built on the shoulders of previous generations (Kozulin, 1995, p. 61, 67) as competition for capital in the field runs its course. Important to this competition is the subtle and non-descript zone of proximal development that Vygotsky suggests to be central to the successful interfacing between generations, and as such, this collaborative space represents an important opportunity for students to negotiate their sense of self across time and place (Norton & Kanno 2003, Norton, 2009), and is, therefore, worthy of being earmarked as a point of intervention in materials and task design. The notion here is that access to intergenerational knowledge is *capital*, and Bourdieu (1977, p. 82; 1984, p. 41) says that symbolic violence guards the gates of this portal from the remaking of meaning that Derrida (1974, p. 121) describes as *violence* (Hale, 2004).

5.2 Discussion

Here then is an interesting scenario where *who* one is becomes the capital contested for in the field. From this perspective, it makes sense that the older generation would reflexively gate-keep the cultural capital they have either fought or at least desired to win. It is, thereby, understandable that they would try to hold back the lions of postmodernism from breaching the portal and gaining access to the opportunities that might threaten *who* they have aspired to become - their *identity*. In general, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 5) say that cultural capital may be rightfully defended, raising issues of *legitimate* access, articulated well by these research participants: "(the) professor wants to teach for study-hard students" (Subject 11), and "the professor will tell me more because he thinks that I make enough preparation" (Subject 38). Such comments indicate the recognition of a rule of the field: preparation or 'study hard' is the condition that should be met for access to the professor's time and knowledge. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990, p. 5) add that a contested role (in this case that of *researcher*), if successfully defended, can win "cultural legitimacy" and thus access.

5.2.1 Implications

In this research project, a simple card with a selection of text was successfully used to mediate a power difference, or social class distinction. These findings suggest that one way that the C-card supported students was by reducing demands on *working memory* (Baddeley, 1986; Dooley & Levinson, 2001); it would seem that by offloading topic content onto a card, users could spend these attentional resources in other critical areas to meet the demands of this power-imbalanced interaction (see Kirsch, 2000). These other demands likely included *meta-linguistic* factors related to speech production (Gombert, 1992, p. 1), perhaps *extra-linguistic* factors related to body language (Gombert, 1992, p. 12), and possibly some issues related to the socio-cultural factors described by Bourdieu (1977, 1984), namely *symbolic violence* which can raise the affective filter and, thereby, interfere with speech production. The centrality of memory is implicated in the work of Dix et al. (2004) on mediating artifacts as: 1) entry points, 2)

triggers, and 3) placeholders (where the cognitive task one is located, i.e. what needs to be attended to next). This student comments: "Sometimes we can't recall the topic well. If we can write it down, it is very easy and we can avoid being nervous" (Subject 38).

The second factor that may be responsible for these results is that the 3x5" card with text resembles a recipe-type card often used in graduate research to keep the track of references. The professor's perception of this card may mark the holder as the one who is doing research, and thereby lift them to a higher status within the academic field. Hypothetically, this results in a narrower social gap, with a resultant increase in social leverage for the cardholder. In other words, the card functioned as a prop that allowed language learners to transcend a class boundary by passing them through a firewall designed to keep people at their level out.

5.2.2. Recommendations for Further Research

At a practical level, a deeper exploration of the role of *memory* as it relates to specific C-card applications could help guide modifications of the C-card for specific applications. The areas of exploration might include the type of content, organization and layout, as well as investigations into the applied use of *visual salience* (Santangelo and Macaluso, 2013).

At a more speculative level, one might ask: if the adoption of a higher role plus memory augmentation could increase performance with a social superior, could it also by extension support the challenging of social authority and possibly lead to anti-social behavior? I did a brief search of cases of role adoption and memory augmentation to see if anti-social behavior was at least anecdotally present. Interestingly, within the field of computer games, both roleplaying and the extension of memory (via computer hardware: RAM, Hard drive, and Cache) were present in a more powerful way than in a simple card with text on it (C-card). Although drawing a parallel between the results of this research project and the alleged violence associated with computer games is highly speculative, it is worth noting that similar factors are central in both (see Konijn, Nije Bijvank, & Bushman, 2013). These factors include role-play in which people abandon the normal limitations they face, as well as the enhanced memory afforded by computer hardware. This conjecture suggests there may be an upper limit to the amount of role and memory extension that is socially safe. As Vygotsky (1978, p. 102) observed: "subordination is impossible in life but possible in play," which begs the question of what happens when the ability to play is greatly extended through today's computer technology. In light of this possibility, for the future the combined application of Vygotsky (1978), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), and Derrida (1973, 197) outlined here may be recommended for research as a protocol for understanding the possible link between role, memory enhancement, and anti-social behavior.

5.3 Conclusion

The idea that *who* one dialogues with is a central factor in the language learning process is somewhat disturbing because it challenges a desire to be in control of one's own development. This speaks to the *unpredictability* of the

learning characteristic of postmodernism. Related to this last point, it is worth noting that Vygotsky (1978) entitles his work 'Mind in Society', hinting that the mind exists *in* a social context amidst many dynamic variables. It also suggests that effective education takes place within the very flesh of *dialogue*, yet, many educators still look to the content of course material as though it were central. My reading of Vygotsky and Derrida suggests that such a focus mistakenly overlooks the vital ingredient: the *presence* of a respected individual, i.e. a more competent peer.

This presence allows the creation of a rare and perhaps fragile space, the *zone of proximal development,* where symbolic violence is temporarily suspended permitting learners to be who they have yet to become (Holzman, 1999, p. 66). It is fragile because, as Bourdieu warns us, socio-cultural constraints lie on and below the surface of these interactions often sabotaging them. Next, Derrida posits a link between language choice and identity, suggesting that if the educator changes one of these factors, he/she can affect the other. This point of intervention adds worthwhile dimensions to task and materials design seldom explored. Finally, this project demonstrated the efficacy of role and memory augmentation to increase performance with a senior interlocutor, information, which can help engineer to achieve positive outcomes in identity development, bridging divides in communities of practice, etc. (see Engestrom, Engestrom, & Karkkainen, 1995).

Looking back in conclusion, the seminal divide evident in the distancing of Aristotle from his teacher Plato foretold a problem area that educators contend with today, and this divide threatens the crucial threading of knowledge from one generation to the next. On the battlefield are novices, our students, struggling to gain acceptance and respect and educators, who feel they themselves must fight to maintain hard-won power and position. The result is often predictable: educators default to a top-down didactic approach, rather than the more threatening, but beneficial, dialogic approach detailed in PART III of the article. Although solving this longstanding socio-cultural conflict may not be possible, it appears that progress can be made by narrowing the psycho-social distance between the sides long enough for a *meaningful* exchange to take place. Such narrowing can be accomplished through the purposeful use of certain everyday objects. In this case a simple card with text proved to have adequate bridging properties. Practically, this means that an improved connection between a student and a teacher (or a novice and an expert) is not only possible, but also closer at hand than one might at first suspect.

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