

Vygotsky Analyzes Piaget's Developmental Theory

In *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky analyzed Piaget's work. Vygotsky believed that Piaget had developed a clinical method that revolutionized the study of children's language and thought. However, Vygotsky also asserted that there were some flaws in Piaget's methods.

Vygotsky specified many of Piaget's contributions to support his contention that Piaget revolutionized the study of children's thought and language. Piaget's studies gave detailed pictures of children's thinking. Piaget asserted that development occurs in distinct, measurable, and observable stages. He focused on what children have, not what they lack. Piaget found that the difference between adults' and children's thinking is qualitative, not quantitative.

Vygotsky examined Piaget's emphasis on the effects of egocentrism. According to Vygotsky's interpretation of Piaget, egocentric speech reflects that the child is in the preoperational developmental stage. Children develop egocentric speech and then social speech. He observed that logic appears late in the developmental cycle. This led Piaget to conclude that egocentric thought is the genetic connection between inner speech and the logic stage. Piaget theorized that egocentrism decreases at school age because it does not fulfill a function. Egocentric speech has no future. It diminishes with the disappearance of egocentrism.

Vygotsky pointed out what he thought were Piaget's erroneous theoretical and methodological assumptions. Piaget combined psychology and philosophy even though he tried to avoid theorizing. He overlooked the role of the child's activity with relation to thought processes. Observing merely the individual is not thorough enough to understand children's development. Piaget's theory assumes that development is unidirectional with all children reaching each stage at approximately at the same age. By examining the world and society, much more data are gathered. According to Vygotsky, Piaget did not succeed in keeping his works within the bounds of factual science.

Vygotsky thought that many of Piaget's theories lacked the necessary scientific facts. Furthermore, Piaget's analysis of facts was influenced by his theory, Vygotsky contended. This caused Piaget to relate egocentrism to all other traits, without objectively analyzing the facts. Specifically, Vygotsky disagreed with Piaget's inference that egocentric thought is impervious to experience. Vygotsky also disagreed with Piaget's assumption that development could not be impeded or accelerated through instruction.

Vygotsky was also critical of Piaget's assumption that developmental growth was independent of experience and based on a universal characteristic. Vygotsky asserted that development is complex and is effected by social and cultural contexts. Biological and cultural development are interrelated and do not develop in isolation. Vygotsky believed that intellectual development was continually evolving without an end point.

Another conflict between Vygotsky and Piaget was the latter's explanation of development as the notion that concepts should not be taught until children are in the appropriate developmental stage. This conflicts with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) and developmental theories. Vygotsky noted that instruction that is oriented toward development is ineffective concerning the child's overall development.

Although Vygotsky was critical of Piaget, he realized the importance of the information that Piaget gathered. In spite of his criticisms, Vygotsky built his educational theories on the strengths of Piaget's.

References

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