

**CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL
APPROACH TO EDUCATION IN VYGOTSKY'S THOUGHT**

Contribuciones del enfoque histórico-cultural a la educación
en el pensamiento de Vygotsky

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Este trabajo está depositado en Zenodo:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21895490>**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the relevance of Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach in contemporary education through the integration of bibliometric and hermeneutic methods. It analyzes recent academic production and reinterprets key categories of his pedagogical thought. The methodology includes a bibliometric review of the WOS database (2014–2025), identifying and refining 56 records using the Citation Topics Meso algorithm and VOSviewer, along with a hermeneutic analysis of central texts. The results show two main clusters, weak articulation between them, and a geographical concentration in Russia, the United States, and Australia. The study concludes that recovering Vygotsky's pedagogical dimension is essential to better understand socially and culturally mediated educational processes in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Vygotsky, cultural-historical approach, mediation, education, language.

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina la relevancia del enfoque histórico-cultural de Vygotsky en la educación contemporánea mediante la integración de métodos bibliométricos y hermenéuticos. Analiza la producción académica reciente y reinterpreta categorías clave de su pensamiento pedagógico. La metodología incluye una revisión bibliométrica de la base de datos WOS (2014–2025), la identificación y el refinamiento de 56 registros mediante el algoritmo Citation Topics Meso y VOSviewer, junto con un análisis hermenéutico de textos centrales. Los resultados muestran dos grupos principales, una débil articulación entre ellos y una concentración geográfica en Rusia, Estados Unidos y Australia. El estudio concluye que recuperar la dimensión pedagógica de Vygotsky es esencial para comprender mejor los procesos educativos mediados social y culturalmente en el siglo XXI.

Palabras claves: Vygotsky, enfoque histórico-cultural, mediación, educación, lenguaje.

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of educational processes on a global scale has driven the assessment of diverse strategies aimed at achieving quality goals for 2030 and beyond. Within this framework, it becomes essential to recognize the enduring relevance of fundamental aspects of educational thought from previous centuries, particularly those emerging from the main pedagogical traditions.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, both cognitivism and constructivism incorporated the principles of the New School or Active School movement, which emerged at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Within this intense exchange of ideas, the contributions of several scholars stand out—among them, the eminent Russian theorist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, widely regarded as the leading exponent of the so-called Cultural-Historical Approach within social constructivism.

The cognitivist current, derived from psychology, focused on the analysis of internal mental processes—such as memory, attention, perception, and problem-solving—and their influence on learning, recognizing the student as an active processor of information (Torres, Pasapera, Ríos, Quiñones, & Barba-Briceño, 2022).

Conversely, constructivism posited that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner through experience, also considering social interaction and cultural context. Within this framework, language and pedagogical mediation emerge as essential conditions for learning (Salas, 2001). Moreover, this paradigm promoted learner agency through participatory methodologies, collaborative work, and problem-based learning, among other strategies (López & Jaramillo, 2025).

Within this context lies social constructivism, articulated through the Cultural-Historical Approach or Sociocultural Theory developed by Vygotsky, whose theoretical contributions continue to serve as key references in contemporary pedagogical models. Accordingly, the present study aims to analyze education from a cultural-historical perspective within Vygotsky's body of work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Main Aspects of His Life

The complex social reality of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries profoundly shaped the global context, both at the international and regional levels. Within this period of transition in the former Tsarist Empire, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky was born on November 17, 1896, in Orsha, Belarus. A few years later, in 1900, his family moved to the city of Gomel. From an early age, Vygotsky exhibited a keen interest in art, literature, and theater, as well as remarkable intellectual ability.

At the age of thirteen, he simultaneously enrolled at the University of Moscow, where he studied Law, and at the Shaniavsky University, in the Faculty of History and Philosophy (Vygotski, Caicedo, & Davidov, 1997). He also pursued studies in psychology, aesthetics, literary criticism, and philosophy. During this period, he wrote several essays on Hamlet and other topics related to the psychology of art. Amid the turbulence of the October Revolution of 1917, he completed his university studies.

Vygotsky later returned to Gomel, where he worked as a teacher of literature and psychology at a pedagogical institute. Throughout the 1920s, he engaged in intense intellectual activity: he founded a psychological laboratory in Gomel and studied the works of leading scientists such as Pavlov and Bekhterev. In 1924, he presented a paper at the Second

All-Russian Congress on Psychoneurology, and later that same year, he moved to Moscow, where he began his research in theoretical psychology and disability studies, married, and defended his thesis on the psychology of art.

Between 1927 and 1934, Vygotsky collaborated closely with eminent scholars such as Alexis Leontiev and Alexander Luria, developing experimental studies that laid the foundations for his theory of psychological development. He also taught at various universities and led several important research projects. Despite fragile health, he maintained an intense academic output. In 1933, he published his seminal work *Thought and Speech* (*Thinking and Speech*), considered the synthesis of his theoretical framework.

Vygotsky passed away on July 11, 1934, in Moscow, at the age of 37, due to tuberculosis. Most of his works were published posthumously, yet his intellectual legacy profoundly influenced modern pedagogy and psychology.

2.2. Overview of His Active Bibliography

Throughout more than 180 works, Lev Vygotsky made foundational contributions to the fields of Psychology and Pedagogy. In his lectures, writings, and extensive bibliographic production, he articulated the core principles of what became known as the Cultural-Historical Approach, from the early decades of the twentieth century.

In *The Psychology of Art* (1925), Vygotsky explored the relationship between psychology and art, analyzing how artistic works influence perception and emotional development. He proposed that art plays an essential role in shaping consciousness, expressing human experience, and serving as a tool for learning and communication.

In *Pedagogical Psychology* (1926), developed alongside Alexis Leontiev and Alexander Romanovich Luria, Vygotsky helped to consolidate one of the earliest efforts to systematize the relationship between psychology and education. Conceived as a manual for teacher training, the work sought to provide a scientific foundation for pedagogical practice, arguing that education should not be confined to the transmission of knowledge but rather understood as a social and cultural phenomenon contributing to the development of higher mental functions. It emphasized the need to analyze the interaction between teaching and development, asserting that schools must operate within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) the space between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with guidance. Furthermore, the text highlights language mediation as a fundamental instrument of thought and cultural internalization.

Vygotsky conceived education as a transformative social activity, in which the educational process combines the child's adaptation to their environment with their capacity to modify their own psychological development. Within this framework, the teacher plays a central role as a mediator between the child and culture, facilitating the appropriation of cognitive tools, values, and modes of action. Thus, pedagogy is grounded in the conception of the student as an active, social, and constantly developing subject.

In *The History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions* (1931), Vygotsky examined the evolution of processes such as voluntary memory, conceptual thought, conscious attention, and inner speech. He argued that, along with biological factors, these functions emerge through social and cultural interaction. He differentiated natural, biologically based functions from higher functions,

which result from culturally and socially mediated internalization. Moreover, he introduced the transition from the interpsychological (social) to the intrapsychological (individual) plane, emphasizing that without a historical-social context, psychological development would be impossible.

In *The Construction of Thinking in the Child* (1931), Vygotsky deepened his analysis of the development of children's thinking, highlighting the role of language, culture, and social participation in educational and cognitive growth.

In *The Role of Play in Development* (1933), he emphasized play as an essential activity for cognitive and social development, fostering experimentation, creativity, imagination, and problem-solving. Play-based learning thus emerges as a meaningful pedagogical tool, particularly in early childhood education, where symbolic play environments promote creativity, empathy, and self-regulation.

His 1934 publication, *Thought and Language* (the year of his death), became his most influential work. It examines the relationship between thinking and language, particularly in child development, and has been translated into numerous languages, with significant impact on psychology, pedagogy, and linguistics.

Child Development (1935) focused on stages of child growth and on the influence of culture and the social environment in learning, emphasizing that development is non-linear and fundamentally mediated by cultural and interpersonal interactions.

Finally, posthumously, *The Theory of Emotions: A Historical-Psychological Study* (1984), written between 1931 and 1933, was published. This previously unpublished work articulated his ideas on emotion and his critique of contemporary theories, completing his broad intellectual legacy in psychology and education.

2.3. The Cultural and the Social: Conceptual Keys in Vygotsky's Work

Specialized literature often attributes to Vygotsky a predominantly social conception of human development; however, neither he nor his collaborators described their approach in those terms. Initially, he referred to it as instrumental psychology, and later his disciples consolidated the expression cultural-historical psychology. For Vygotsky, the central aim was to distinguish between the animal and the human psyche, as the social notion alone was insufficient—animal communities may exhibit forms of social organization, yet they lack both history and culture. Hence, he preferred to speak of the culture, understood as the appropriation of tools and signs functioning as psychological instruments that transform individual life (Solovieva et al., 2022).

From this perspective, culture is conceived as inherently social, although not everything social is cultural. Whereas the social refers to external collective interactions, the cultural involves symbolic mediation processes that generate qualitative transformations in personality and consciousness. Psychology, therefore, should not be conflated with sociology; its object of study lies in how external signs—language, artifacts, and symbols—are internalized as higher psychological functions. Cognitive processes originate in social interaction but acquire a truly cultural character only when they become instruments of internal development (Solovieva et al., 2022).

Consequently, the cultural-historical approach should not be confused with constructivist perspectives that indiscriminately equate the social with the cultural. For Vygotsky, the decisive factor is the internalization of culture through semiotic mediation, a process that fundamentally distinguishes the human mind from other for-

ms of social life. From this standpoint, culture constitutes the condition of possibility for psychological development, enabling the preservation, transformation, and transmission of human experience across both individual and historical dimensions (Solovieva et al., 2022).

The essential contributions of Vygotsky's cultural-historical conception began to spread throughout Latin America during the 1960s, facilitated by the publication of his works and the inclusion of his ideas in educational programs and curricula. Initially, this assimilation occurred without sufficient social and cultural contextualization; however, over time, it was enriched by national particularities as practical applications became integrated with local research contributions. These studies—disseminated through journal articles, conferences, books, and monographs—have strengthened the systematic adoption of this approach among education professionals (Ortiz Torres, 2021).

Today, the cultural-historical approach serves as an official reference in the educational sphere and is explicitly incorporated into postgraduate programs—specializations, master's degrees, and doctoral studies in education—as well as undergraduate curricula in psychology and psycho-pedagogy. It is recognized as a key component for the study of the psychological and pedagogical foundations of education and for the critical analysis of contemporary psychological paradigms (Ortiz Torres, 2021).

Likewise, the adoption of the cultural-historical approach as a theoretical foundation is frequently evidenced in undergraduate and postgraduate theses. Although not always explicitly stated, this paradigm permeates various psycho-pedagogical courses within teacher education programs, thereby consolidating its role as a theoretical and methodological framework in both academic

production and professional practice (Ortiz Torres, 2021).

Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective highlights the essential interdependence between the learner and the community. According to the author, the teacher performs a crucial mediating role, guiding learners from initial stages of knowledge acquisition toward more advanced levels of understanding. In line with this view, contemporary educational reforms promote the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning—dynamic, participatory, and accessible—creating environments conducive to the learner's active construction of knowledge.

From this perspective, the use of tools and signs is fundamental to mediating learning activities. The implementation of workshops with specific resources designed to foster students' professional and social development is regarded as a key strategy for linking education to local, national, and global needs, thus strengthening the learner's comprehensive formation.

Finally, Vygotsky underscored the centrality of the social context in the construction of knowledge, noting that human beings do not develop in isolation but through constant interaction with their community. Within this framework, educational reforms encourage the creation of developmental teams in which students, together with community members, enhance both individual and collective growth, thereby reinforcing the social dimension of learning (Salazar Quispe, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Hermeneutic Approach

This study is grounded in a qualitative, hermeneutic approach, oriented toward the critical, philosophical, and contextual interpretation of texts addressing Vygotsky's body of work. This design made it possible

to analyze his pedagogical thought from an interpretive perspective that interweaves the historical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions of his writings, as well as their influence on contemporary educational paradigms. The research was structured into two complementary phases, whose integration allowed for a rigorous and comprehensive analysis: the first, bibliometric, and the second, hermeneutic.

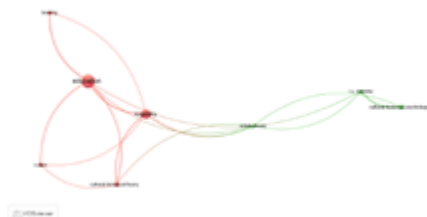
3.2. Bibliometric and Hermeneutic Analysis

3.2.1. Bibliometric Analysis

In this section, a bibliometric analysis was conducted using data retrieved from the Web of Science database, covering the period 2014–2025. The search was performed across titles, keywords, and abstracts, employing Vygotsky as the primary descriptor. A total of 157 articles were initially identified and subsequently selected based on their theoretical relevance and educational pertinence. The metadata were exported in plain text format and imported into the VOSviewer software (version 1.6.20) for processing and visualization.

The co-occurrence analysis of keywords enabled the identification of thematic nodes and conceptual networks related to Vygotskian thought, highlighting the categories education, activity theory, and cultural-historical psychology. The findings revealed a high concentration of studies in countries with a consolidated academic tradition—Russia, the United States, and Australia—and a marked underrepresentation of Latin America, underscoring the need to strengthen regional scientific production on the author's work.

Figure 1. Bibliometric Map of Keyword Co-occurrence on Vygotsky and Cultural-Historical Psychology (VOSviewer)



Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

The bibliometric analysis reveals a conceptual network in which the nodes represent the most recurrent keywords within the specialized literature. The size of each node indicates its frequency of occurrence, while the connecting lines depict co-occurrence relationships between terms. The thematic core is structured around Vygotsky and cultural-historical psychology, confirming their central role in shaping the field. Surrounding this nucleus emerge closely related categories such as learning, education, activity theory, and cultural-historical theory, which delineate the main areas of influence and expansion of this approach.

This pattern demonstrates that Vygotsky's work continues to function as an organizing axis for theoretical debates and educational applications, consolidating cultural-historical psychology as an interdisciplinary reference in contemporary research.

Based on these results, it was observed that most studies addressed Vygotsky from psychological or cognitive perspectives, often overlooking his pedagogical dimension. This finding led to a refined search using the Citation Topics Meso categories—Education & Educational Research,

Social Psychology, Social Reform, and Modern History — which enabled the refinement of the corpus to 56 articles of greater educational relevance.

The resulting data were subjected to statistical analysis to determine the geographical and temporal distribution of publications.

Table 1 shows that the countries with the highest number of Web of Science-indexed studies on Vygotsky and his relationship with education are Russia (39 studies), the United States (21), and Australia (14). These figures indicate a significant concentration of scientific production in regions with strong academic traditions in education and psychology. Other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, also display a modest presence (ranging from 3 to 9 studies), while Japan, Ukraine, and Canada show moderate results

Table 1. Distribution of Studies on Vygotsky and Education by Country and Year (Web of Science, 2015–2025)

Country	Total Number of Studies	Yearly Distribution (Number of Studies)
Russia	39	2015 (1), 2016 (2), 2017 (1), 2018 (1), 2019 (1), 2020 (5), 2021 (7), 2022 (8), 2023 (4), 2024 (6), 2025 (3)
United States	21	2016 (2), 2019 (1), 2020 (2), 2021 (4), 2022 (5), 2023 (3), 2024 (3), 2025 (1)
Australia	14	2016 (1), 2017 (1), 2018 (1), 2019 (1), 2020 (1), 2021 (2), 2022 (3), 2023 (2), 2024 (2)
Brazil	13	2016 (1), 2018 (1), 2019 (1), 2020 (1), 2021 (2), 2022 (3), 2023 (2), 2024 (2)

Canada	9	2016 (1), 2019 (1), 2020 (1), 2021 (2), 2022 (2), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
United Kingdom	9	2017 (1), 2018 (1), 2020 (1), 2021 (2), 2022 (2), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
Japan	6	2020 (1), 2021 (1), 2022 (2), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
Ukraine	5	2020 (1), 2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
Germany	4	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
New Zealand	4	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
Spain	4	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2023 (1), 2024 (1)
France	3	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2024 (1)
Netherlands	3	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2024 (1)
Singapore	3	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2024 (1)
Uzbekistan	3	2021 (1), 2022 (1), 2024 (1)
Other Countries	1–2	Randomly distributed across various years

Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

The data demonstrate that Russia, the United States, and Australia dominate the academic production on Vygotsky and education indexed in Web of Science between 2015 and 2025, collectively accounting for more than half of the global output. Latin American and European countries, including Brazil, Spain, and Germany, show growing participation but remain underrepresented compared to the leading nations. This pattern reflects a continued concentration of research activity in regions with established traditions in psychology and education, while indicating emerging contributions from new academic contexts.

However, it is evident that Latin America remains underrepresented

in this dataset. Brazil appears with 13 studies, while other Latin American countries are scarcely represented, suggesting a gap in the region's academic production and visibility concerning Vygotsky's work. This absence indicates that, despite the author's relevance for Latin American pedagogical approaches, his thought has not been systematically incorporated or disseminated in high-impact indexed journals.

Another critical aspect is that, although the studies analyzed span several years (2014–2025), most focus on Vygotsky primarily from psychological or cognitive perspectives, overlooking a deeper exploration of his direct contributions to education—such as active learning, social pedagogy, or dialogical learning. This limitation reveals that, while the existing research may be quantitatively significant in some countries, it does not fully capture the richness of Vygotsky's work in relation to concrete educational practices.

The metadata processing in VOSviewer enabled the construction of co-occurrence maps, which revealed the presence of two main clusters:

- The red cluster, centered on education, activity theory, and Vygotsky, representing the contemporary appropriation of his work with a marked inclination toward activity theory;
- And the green cluster, focused on cultural-historical psychology and L. S. Vygotsky, reflecting the epistemological core of the cultural-historical tradition.

The limited interconnection between these two clusters exposes a conceptual fragmentation in contemporary literature, wherein derivative interpretations are often privileged at the expense of a comprehensive pedagogical understanding of the author's thought.

Figure 2. Keyword Co-occurrence Map on Vygotsky and Education: Convergences and Tensions between Activity Theory and Cultural-Historical Psychology (VOSviewer)



Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

The keyword co-occurrence map, generated using VOSviewer, reveals the predominant conceptual structure within the scientific literature addressing Vygotsky and his relationship with education. Two main clusters are distinguished: the red cluster, articulated around education, activity theory, and Vygotsky, which reflects the contemporary appropriation of his contributions to the educational field, with a bias toward activity theory as the dominant explanatory framework; and the green cluster, centered on cultural-historical psychology and Vygotsky, which refers to the epistemological core of the cultural-historical tradition and the original foundations of his thought.

Connections between both clusters are limited and reduced to isolated links between education and activity theory with cultural-historical psychology. This weak articulation reveals a fragmentation in the way current literature addresses Vygotsky's legacy, privileging derivative interpretations and general approaches to his educational contributions from a cultural-historical perspective.

This finding exposes a significant limitation in the analyzed corpus: most of the selected references contribute

only marginally to the research focus, displacing the specificity of Vygotsky's cultural-historical proposal within the pedagogical domain. Therefore, it becomes necessary to reorient bibliographic searches toward sources that more rigorously and deeply recover the educational dimension of his thought, preventing his original framework from being diluted within secondary theoretical currents.

3.2.2. Hermeneutic Analysis

Subsequently, the hermeneutic method was applied as the central interpretive strategy. This approach proved suitable for examining the selected texts within their historical, philosophical, and pedagogical contexts, acknowledging that meaning is neither univocal nor static, but rather constructed through the interaction between text, context, and reader.

The hermeneutic analysis enabled the interpretation of the evolution of Vygotsky's thought and its relevance in contemporary educational theory, focusing on key categories such as activity, mediation, dialogical learning, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Through comparative and reflective reading, it was possible to identify continuities, ruptures, and reinterpretations among the various pedagogical trends that have revisited his intellectual legacy.

This process contributed to linking the findings of the bibliometric analysis with a qualitative and interpretive understanding of current educational discourses, achieving a more holistic vision of Vygotsky's enduring influence on modern pedagogy.

3.3. Final Considerations on Methodological Design

The articulation between the bibliometric analysis and the hermeneutic method enabled a comprehensive and dialectical understanding of Vygotsky's pedagogical thought. The former provided empirical rigor, aca-

demic traceability, and documentary breadth, while the latter offered interpretive depth and philosophical-contextual meaning.

This methodological combination established a coherent and validated analytical framework, reinforcing the theoretical soundness of the study and its contribution to the field of educational research by recovering the essence of cultural-historical psychology as an interdisciplinary and pedagogically relevant approach.

RESULTS

The results of the systematic literature review on Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach are presented in three differentiated tables, compiling the 25 works selected for their relevance to the objectives and themes of the study Education in Vygotsky's Work from the Cultural-Historical Approach.

Table 2 includes books and book chapters—both classical and contemporary—that constitute the theoretical pillars of Vygotsky's oeuvre and that of his principal successors. This corpus encompasses foundational texts such as *Thought and Language* and *The History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions*, as well as subsequent contributions that have expanded upon the conceptualization of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the interrelation between psychology and pedagogy.

Table 2. Books and Book Chapters

Reference	Type
Álvarez, A., & Del Río, P. (1990). <i>Learning and Development: Activity Theory and the Zone of Proximal Development</i> . In C. Coll, J. Palacios, & A. Marchesi (Eds.), <i>Psychological Development and Education. Vol. II: Educational Psychology</i> (pp. 93-119). Alianza Editorial.	Book chapter/collective volume

Baquero, R. (1996). <i>Vygotsky and School Learning</i> . Buenos Aires: Aique.	Book
Rodríguez Ramos, M. (2024). <i>The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Twenty-First Century Higher Education</i> . Universidad Mayor de San Simón.	Book
Vygotsky, L. S., Leontiev, A., & Luria, A. R. (2007). <i>Psychology and Pedagogy</i> . Ediciones Akal.	Book
Vygotsky, L. S. (1931). <i>The History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions (Collected Works, Vol. 3)</i> .	Classical book
Vygotsky, L. S. (2004). <i>The Theory of Emotions: A Historical-Psychological Study</i> (Vol. 230). Ediciones Akal.	Book
Vygotsky, L. S. (2021). <i>Thought and Language</i> . Editorial Pueblo y Educación.	Book
Álvarez, A., & Del Río, P. (1990). <i>Learning and Development: Activity Theory and the Zone of Proximal Development</i> . In C. Coll, J. Palacios, & A. Marchesi (Eds.), <i>Psychological Development and Education. Vol. II: Educational Psychology</i> (pp. 93–119). Alianza Editorial.	Book chapter/collective volume

In turn, Table 3 compiles articles published in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), which make it possible to contrast and update current debates surrounding the cultural-historical approach. These sources ensure academic rigor and international visibility, as they include research studies that address a wide range of perspectives—from comparative analyses, such as the connections between Vygotsky and Piaget, to more recent explorations of developmental education and the dialectics of early childhood education.

Table 3. References Indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)

Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

Reference	Journal	Database
Rodríguez Arocho, W. C. (1999). The Legacy of Vygotsky and Piaget for Education. <i>Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología</i> , 31(3), 477–490.	Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología	Scopus + WoS (SSCI)
Piaget, J. (1981). Piaget's Theory. <i>Infancia y Aprendizaje</i> , 4(sup2), 13–54.	Infancia y Aprendizaje (Taylor & Francis)	Scopus + WoS (ESCI)
Nardo, A. (2021). Exploring a Vygotskian Theory of Education and Its Evolutionary Foundations. <i>Educational Theory</i> , 71(3), 331–352.	Educational Theory	Scopus + WoS (SSCI)
Stepanaova, M. A. (2023). Variations on the Subject of Developmental Education. <i>Cultural-Historical Psychology</i> , 19(4), 78–89.	Cultural-Historical Psychology	Scopus (Emerging Sources), WoS (ESCI)
Veraksa, N. (2020). Dialectics of Preschool Education in the Context of Vygotsky's Cultural-Historical Theory. <i>International Research in Early Childhood Education</i> , 10(2), 30–42.	International Research in Early Childhood Education	Scopus + WoS (ESCI)

Lima Hallwass, L. (2020). Vygotsky's Perspective in Online Teaching Education: Observations in Higher Education. Texto Livre, 13(1), 156–174.	Texto Livre	Scopus
López Morocho, L. R., & Jaramillo Baquerizo, C. (2025). The Role of the Inductive Method as a Link Between Educational Theories and Classroom Practices. Sophia: Collection of Philosophy of Education, (38), 51–77.	Sophia (UPS)	Scopus

Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

Complementarily, Table 4 compiles publications disseminated through other relevant academic databases (SciELO, Redalyc, Latindex, MIAR, and Dialnet), which broaden the analytical scope toward Latin American and European contexts. These sources illustrate how Vygotskian categories have

been appropriated and reinterpreted across diverse educational and cultural settings, reflecting the adaptability and ongoing relevance of the cultural-historical approach.

Table 4. References in Other Academic Databases (SciELO, Latindex, MIAR, Redalyc)

Reference	Journal	Database
Gómez, J. M. (2024). Play as a Ludic Strategy in the Teaching–Learning Process. <i>Revista Neuronum</i> , 10(2), 275–294.	Revista Neuronum	Latindex, MIAR
Roy, A. J. M. (2022). History as a Tool for the Development of Higher Psychological Processes under Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in ELE Reading and Writing Classes. <i>SIGNOS ELE</i> , (16).	SIGNOS ELE (University of Salamanca, Argentina)	Latindex, Dialnet
Salas, A. L. C. (2001). Educational Implications of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. <i>Revista Educación</i> , 25(2), 59–65.	Revista Educación (Costa Rica)	SciELO, Latindex, MIAR
Serna, M. P. D., & Packer, M. J. (2014). Thought and Language: Vygotsky's Project to Resolve the Crisis in Psychology. <i>Tesis Psicológica</i> , 9(2), 30–57.	Tesis Psicológica	Redalyc, Latindex
Torres, G. R. R., Pasapera, R. Y., Ríos, J. A. S., Quiñones, A. M. V., & Barba-Briceño, L. E. (2022). Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism: Their Contributions and the Characteristics of Teachers and Students. <i>Paidagogo</i> , 4(2), 90–102.	Paidagogo	Latindex, MIAR
Vygotsky, L. S., Caicedo, L. B. L., & Davidov, V. V. (1997). Vygotsky: Biography. <i>Revista Colombiana de Psicología</i> , (5), 45–49.	Revista Colombiana de Psicología	Latindex, MIAR, Dialnet
Ortiz Torres, E. A. (2021). The Cultural-Historical Approach in Cuban Educational Research: From Tradition to Traditionalism. <i>Universidad y Sociedad</i> , 13(1), 89–95.	Universidad y Sociedad	Latindex, MIAR

Salazar Quispe, R. (2023). Vygotsky and the Application of Education for Work and Development in the 1972 Peruvian Educational Reform. <i>Horizontes. Journal of Research in Educational Sciences</i> , 7(31), 2737-2751.	Horizontes	Latindex, MIAR
Solovieva, Y., Quintanar Rojas, L., Baltazar Ramos, A. M., & Escotto Córdova, E. A. (2022). Vygotsky's Cultural-Historical Stance Is Not Constructivist. <i>CIENCIA ergo-sum</i> , 29(2), Article e265.	CIENCIA ergo-sum	Latindex, MIAR
Veraksa, N. E., Veresov, N. N., & Sukhikh, V. L. (2023). Cultural Actions in Preschool Children's Play. <i>Cultural-Historical Psychology</i> , 19(1), 54-61.	Cultural-Historical Psychology	Latindex, MIAR

Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

In analytical terms, the selection of works responds to a criterion of breadth and representativeness: on the one hand, it includes Vygotsky's foundational texts and those of his disciples, which are essential to understanding the genesis of the cultural-historical approach; and on the other hand, it incorporates contemporary research that demonstrates its continued relevance in modern education. This combination enables the articulation of the historical dimension with the critical and philosophical projection of the approach in current pedagogical debates, in alignment with the hermeneutic purpose of the study.

DISCUSSION

This study adopts a hermeneutic perspective to critically analyze Vygotsky's educational principles, emphasizing his contributions to the configuration of the cultural-historical approach and to the renewal of contemporary pedagogical and psychological thought.

Multiple scholars concur that his theory revolutionized the understanding of learning and development. Nevertheless, critiques have nuanced these contributions, arguing that they should be complemented by other perspectives, such as those of Piaget, Bruner, and advances from the neurosciences. Among the main critical

observations are the excessive emphasis on the social dimension to the detriment of individual and biological aspects; the limited attention given to emotional and affective development; and the ambiguity of key concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) or scaffolding, whose practical application often appears diffuse.

Within opposing theoretical positions, Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development stands out for emphasizing the role of the individual's exploration of the environment in constructing knowledge (Rodríguez, 1999). For Piaget, the child constructs knowledge through internal equilibration processes, whereas for Vygotsky, social interaction and culture are the fundamental engines of development, with knowledge being internalized through social mediation (Piaget, 1981).

5.1. Vygotsky's Contributions to the Configuration of the Cultural-Historical Approach

The foundations of the cultural-historical approach in education are closely linked to Vygotsky's central question regarding the relationship between learning and development. In his analysis, the author identified three general orientations: one that views them as independent processes; another that equates them, establishing a direct correspondence

between learning and developmental stages; and a third that interprets them dualistically, distinguishing between maturation and learning.

In contrast to these views, Vygotsky proposed an innovative perspective, asserting that learning and development constitute a unity, though not an identity. Learning, when properly organized, activates developmental processes that would not unfold spontaneously. Consequently, education emerges as a necessary and universal moment in the formation of human capacities that are historical rather than merely natural (Vygotsky, 2021).

This contribution was consolidated through the introduction of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which represented a radical shift in psychology. The ZPD demonstrates that learning acquires genuine value only when it precedes development, enabling the attainment of cognitive levels not yet realized in actual development. As Vygotsky himself stated, the task of pedagogical analysis lies in tracing the emergence and trajectory of the internal lines of development that arise in connection with schooling (Vygotsky, 2021; Stepanova, 2023).

The influence of Vygotsky's thought is especially evident in this concept, which, despite its widespread recognition, is often interpreted reductionistically as a mere pedagogical technique. This view has led to its frequent association with scaffolding, reinforcing an instrumental focus in educational practice (Nardo, 2021). However, such reductionism strips the ZPD of its transformative potential, as Vygotsky conceived it as a dynamic space where individual and collective agencies interact to foster development.

At present, understanding the ZPD solely as a didactic resource diminishes the complexity of pedagogical interaction and fuels narratives por-

traying teachers as dispensable or replaceable by artificial intelligence technologies. In response, this study calls for a critical reexamination of the evolutionary foundations of Vygotsky's thought to reposition his educational theory and reaffirm the irreplaceable role of educators (Nardo, 2021; Rodríguez Ramos, 2024).

Practically, the ZPD manifests in the transition between the level of actual development—what the learner can do independently—and the level of potential development—what they can achieve with the guidance of an adult or more competent peer. Its value lies not only in fostering individual learning but also in building social interactions and collaborative relationships that strengthen competencies and knowledge within cooperative contexts (Junco Chávez et al., 2024).

Another key contribution of Vygotsky lies in his recognition of language as a tool of thought. Language, conceived both as a medium of communication and as a psychological instrument, enables individuals to organize ideas, plan actions, and self-regulate behavior. Social speech gradually transforms into inner speech, making reflective thought possible. Consequently, classrooms should promote spaces where children can express their thoughts and emotions through storytelling, dramatization, guided dialogue, and verbal play (Serna & Packer, 2014).

Vygotsky also attributed great importance to symbolic play as a fundamental means of development. Through play, children imagine, create, negotiate roles, resolve conflicts, and practice social norms (Gómez, 2024). Today, methodologies such as gamification and game-based learning are consolidated as preferred pedagogical tools, integrating the ludic dimension into educational processes.

A further fundamental contribution is found in the figure of the

adult as mediator. According to Vygotsky, the mediator's role is not to impose knowledge but to guide and sustain learning, adapting support to the learner's needs and progressively withdraw assistance as autonomy is achieved (Roy, 2022). In this sense, the teacher is conceived as a facilitator of learning, observing, listening, posing challenges, and accompanying processes of self-regulation and critical thinking.

Finally, the cultural-historical approach stands as a theoretical and scientific framework linking individual development with social integration,

positioning each person as an active subject of history. From this perspective, education is not conceived as a fragmented process but as a dialectical unity between the individual and society. The appropriation of culture enables both the transformation of reality and the self-transformation of the subject, highlighting the sociohistorical nature of higher psychological processes (Rojas Conde et al., 2021).

Table 5. Hermeneutic Analysis of Vygotsky's Contributions to the Cultural-Historical Approach in Education

Vygotsky's Contribution	Hermeneutic Interpretation	Educational Implications
Relationship between Learning and Development	Learning is not independent of development; both form a dynamic unity. It is interpreted that potential development emerges through interaction with structured learning, overcoming dualistic or reductionist perspectives.	Education should be planned as a space to activate latent capacities, fostering learning experiences that anticipate future stages of development.
Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	The ZPD represents a space of social interaction where individual agency is articulated through the mediation of experts or peers. Hermeneutically, it reveals that learning precedes and shapes development rather than merely reflecting it.	Promote collaborative teaching and guided support, avoiding the reduction of the ZPD to a simple technique or didactic tool; revalue the teacher's role in the face of AI-based technologies.
Language as a Tool of Thought	Language is understood as a psychological and cultural instrument that transforms consciousness. The transition from social speech to inner speech illustrates the construction of reflective thinking.	Design activities that integrate storytelling, dramatization, and reflective dialogue to strengthen metacognition and critical thinking.
Symbolic Play	Play functions as a means of cultural appropriation and socio-cognitive development, allowing children to experiment with roles, resolve conflicts, and create social norms.	Incorporate playful methodologies, gamification, and game-based learning as strategies to enhance creativity, cooperation, and social regulation.
Adult as Mediator	Mediation does not impose knowledge but rather guides and sustains learning. Hermeneutically, the mediator shapes the learner's experience, adapting support according to needs and progression.	Train teachers as facilitators who observe, propose challenges, accompany self-regulation processes, and foster critical thinking.
Dialectical Unity of Individual and Society	The appropriation of culture enables both the transformation of reality and the self-transformation of the subject. It is interpreted that higher psychological development is sociohistorical rather than merely individual.	Promote educational projects that integrate individual and community experiences, fostering social responsibility, cooperation, and active citizenship.

Source(s): Author's own work, 2026

The hermeneutic analysis presented in this table demonstrates that learning and development form a dynamic unity, wherein mediation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), language, and symbolic play strengthen cognitive, social, and emotional competencies. It also underscores the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning and the integration of culture into the educational experience, reaffirming the sociohistorical dimension of learning (Vygotsky, 2021; Junco Chávez et al., 2024; Stepanova, 2023; Serna & Packer, 2014; Gómez, 2024; Rojas Conde et al., 2021; Roy, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The dynamics of current global transformations demand educational strategies that ensure both relevance and quality, addressing not only curricular content but also comprehensive formative processes. In this context, Vygotsky's contributions, framed within the cultural-historical approach, remain fundamental to contemporary education. His analysis of language as a mediator of thought, the importance of symbolic play in child development, and most notably, the conceptualization of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), provide powerful tools for understanding and enhancing pedagogical interaction.

From a hermeneutic perspective, it becomes evident that the appropriation of cultural tools transforms mental activity and enables developmental processes that go beyond the mere accumulation of knowledge. Education is therefore understood as a dialogical process in which the teacher, acting as a mediator, facilitates the internalization of culture and the construction of cognitive, social, and ethical competencies. The ZPD thus emerges as a space of potentiality, collaboration, and meaningful learning, where individual action and social interaction converge.

Consequently, Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach not only provi-

des key categories for analyzing human development but also outlines a pedagogical and ethical horizon that reaffirms the centrality of the teacher and cultural mediation in shaping individuals capable of transforming their reality and participating actively in society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Author Contributions. The authors state that the study conception and design, data collection and analysis, and the preparation of the manuscript were carried out autonomously by the research team. All authors reviewed and approved the final version for publication.

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that could have influenced the results or the interpretation of this work.

Funding. This research received no external or institutional funding for its development or dissemination.

Ethical Considerations. This study did not involve the direct participation of human subjects or the use of animals. The research was conducted in accordance with the principles of academic integrity and prevailing ethical guidelines for scientific research. All sources have been appropriately acknowledged, and no personal or sensitive data were used; therefore, approval from an ethics committee was not required.

Originality Statement. The authors certify that this manuscript is original, has not been previously published, and is not under consideration by any other scientific journal. The content reflects the author's own intellectual contribution.

Data Availability. The data used in this study can be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Use of AI Tools. OpenAI's ChatGPT was used exclusively to support

linguistic clarity and textual refinement. The tool was not employed to generate ideas, data, or substantive content. All suggestions were critically reviewed, and the authors assume full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.

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