
Social Constructivism

Reading and editing Wikipedia in an educational psychology course

<https://tinyurl.com/HuWikiconference2024>

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Hello!



Anne Drew Hu (they/them)

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- Mainly edit Pacific Northwest-related articles
 - Linguistics nerd
 - PhD candidate in Educational Psychology & Educational Technology
 - I teach a class about learning & teaching
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What brought you to this session?

- Help me make this session useful to you!
 - What are you curious about?
 - What questions do you have?
 - Topics
 - Defining social constructivism
 - Wikipedia as a social constructivist tool
 - Case study: educational psychology class
 - Future directions
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Theoretical Background

What is knowledge?

- In philosophy, epistemology is the study of knowledge
 - What can we know?
 - How do we know it?
 - Many different schools of epistemology
 - Two main camps (oversimplified)
 - Realism
 - Constructivism
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Realism vs. Constructivism

Realism

- There exists a “ground truth” to reality
- Reality is not influenced by our perception of it
- We can describe reality through observation and data

Constructivism

- There is no one correct “ground truth” that defines reality
 - Reality is defined by how we perceive it
 - Our descriptions of reality are biased by our perspectives
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Applied to Psychology



Jean Piaget



Lev Vygotsky

Constructivist epistemology started as a philosophy

Then, it was applied to psychology

Piaget studied how children develop their ability to construct “schemas”

Vygotsky studied how children use tools, both physical and symbolic, to construct their sense of reality

Piaget vs. Vygotsky

Piaget

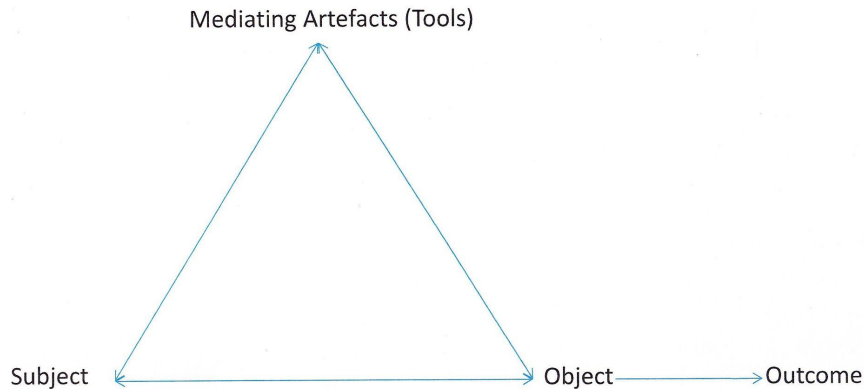
- Believed children's cognition develops in stages
- Brain development precedes learning
- The child is egotistical

Vygotsky

- Believed that children's cognition developed linearly
 - Learning causes brain development
 - The child is influenced by "more knowledgeable others"
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Mediated Cognition

First Generation – Vygotsky

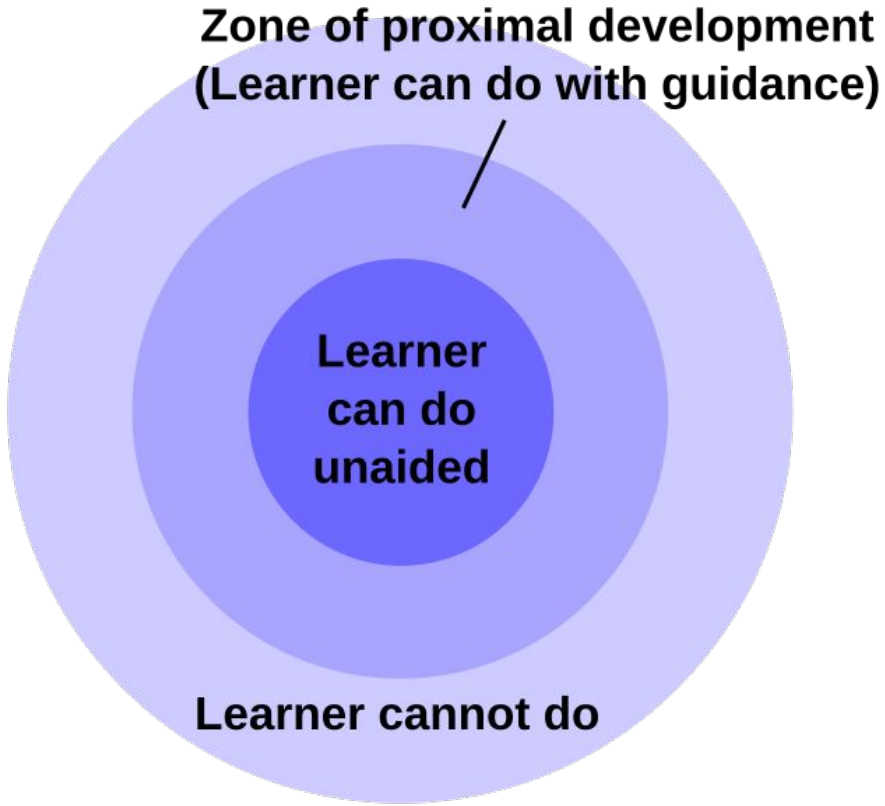


To Vygotsky, thinking is always mediated by some tool(s)

These tools can be “internalized” so that they are cognitive processes instead of physical or symbolic tools

E.g. Using blocks to learn addition

Writing itself is a symbolic tool!

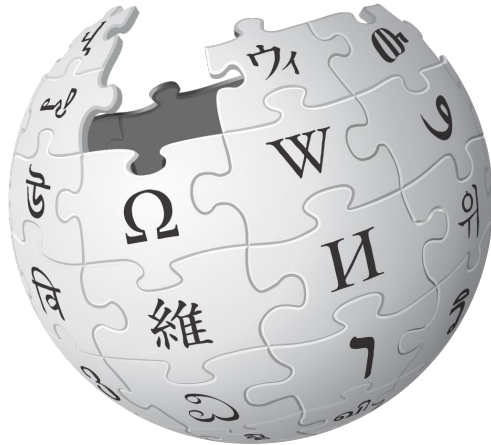


Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Humans gain cognitive abilities after being helped by a "more knowledgeable other"

What if that "other" is Wikipedia?

Wikipedia manifests social constructivism



WP is a tool to socially construct knowledge

We can read, edit, cite, and talk to other editors

Reading positions us as a *learner*

...but editing positions us as a *teacher*

Case Study: My Class

- At MSU, I teach TE 150: Reflections on Learning
 - Intro to educational psychology
 - Attracts not only teacher education majors, but also anyone looking for an elective
 - We spend 15 weeks defining, analyzing, and arguing about learning & teaching
 - Constructivist learning theory is a big topic
 - I gave a one-off lesson on Wikipedia at the end of the semester
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(Begin) Lesson Slides



Wikipedia: Learning, Motivation, and Bias

TE 150 - Anne Drew Hu (they/them)

How do you use Wikipedia?

What do you search for?

How do you use information?

How do you verify truth?

Do you edit?



The image shows the Wikipedia homepage with the following content:

- WIKIPEDIA**
The Free Encyclopedia
- English**: 6 644 000+ articles
- Русский**: 1 909 000+ статей
- 日本語**: 1 370 000+ 記事
- Deutsch**: 2 792 000+ Artikel
- Español**: 1 854 000+ artículos
- Français**: 2 514 000+ articles
- Italiano**: 1 806 000+ voci
- 中文**: 1 347 000+ 条目 / 條目
- فارسی**: 959 000+ مقاله
- Português**: 1 101 000+ artigos

At the bottom, there is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "EN" and a search icon.



How is Wikipedia relevant to TE 150?

- Social-constructivist learning theory
 - People collectively build their understanding of the world
- Motivation & interest
 - Editors add to articles they are interested in and have confidence in
- Cognitive biases
 - The worldview of editors biases their contributions to Wikipedia

Why you should contribute to Wikipedia





Why edit Wikipedia?

- Wikipedia is often our first (and sometimes last) stop for information
- Social-constructivist learning theory is reflected in its design
 - “Work together to contribute to the sum of human knowledge!”
- Your perspective can influence huge amounts of people!
- Inform yourself and fight misinformation!
- Wikipedia is the most popular nonprofit website
 - It keeps information accessible to anyone with basic internet access!



How to contribute to Wikipedia

- Start with small changes
 - Quality over quantity
- Edit articles you are passionate about
 - What knowledge are you *motivated* to share with people?
- Always cite your sources!
 - Citations add credibility and allow readers/editors to *verify* the claims

Go try it!

[Wikipedia simplified ruleset](#)

[Wikipedia editing basics](#) (short YouTube videos)

Goals

- Find article(s) that interests you and need to be expanded
- Add a citation
- Add content with citations

Wrap-Up: Bias in Wikipedia

How Wikipedia Erases Indigenous History

<https://slate.com/technology/2023/02/wikipedia-native-american-history-settler-colonialism.html>

Line 141:

[[Category:Date of birth unknown]]

[[Category:Duwamish tribe]]

[[Category:History of indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest]]

[[Category:History of King County, Washington]]

Line 141:

[[Category:Date of birth unknown]]

[[Category:Duwamish tribe]]

+ [[Category:Genocide perpetrators]]

[[Category:History of indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest]]

[[Category:History of King County, Washington]]

Revision as of 08:23, 25 January 2023

For other uses, see [Chief Seattle \(disambiguation\)](#).

"Sealth" redirects here. For the ferry, see [MV Sealth](#). For the camp, see [Camp Sealth](#).

Chief Seattle (c. 1786 – June 7, 1866) was a [Suquamish](#) and [Duwamish](#) chief.^[3] A leading figure among his people, he pursued a path of accommodation to white settlers, forming a personal relationship with "[Doc](#)" [Maynard](#). The city of [Seattle](#), in the [U.S. state](#) of [Washington](#), was named after him. A widely publicized speech arguing in favour of ecological responsibility and respect of Native Americans' land rights had been attributed to him.

The name Seattle is an Anglicization of the modern Duwamish conventional spelling **Si'ahl**, equivalent to the modern [Lushootseed](#) spelling siʔaʔ IPA: [ˈsiʔaːʔ] and also rendered as **Sealth**, **Seathl** or **See-ahth**.

According to elder [taqʷsəbluʔ](#), his name was traditionally pronounced siʔaʔ.^[4]

Chief Seattle

siʔaʔ





Consider: Bias in Wikipedia

Think about the articles you edited. How might they be biased based on the perspectives of the authors?

How can bias on Wikipedia cause harm in the real world?



What is truth?

[Wikipedia and the Meaning of Truth](#)

“The threshold for inclusion in Wikipedia is verifiability, not truth”

If it's false, but verifiable, it can go on Wikipedia

Was the user who added the genocide label following the rules?

There is hope!

The Women in Red project is addressing the gender gap in Wikipedia articles

Adding our own perspectives makes Wikipedia more diverse

Small edits add up



You can make Wikipedia better!

(End) Lesson Slides

My Results

- Students had a hard time getting started editing Wikipedia
- Even before using the editor, they didn't really know what to edit!
- The concept of actually editing was so foreign that they were stuck

Questions for the audience

- Have you ever helped someone start editing Wikipedia?
 - What motivates you to edit?
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Future Directions

- Ed Psych course redesign
 - Pepper Wikipedia throughout, gradually introduce editing
 - Other possibilities
 - Information science
 - History of technology
 - Science and technology studies (STS)
 - Data science (Is Wikipedia a good source of data?)
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Thank you!
Questions?

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