CHAPTER FOUR

The historicality of language, literacy and psychological development: A heterochronous analysis

> In the sense in which there are processes (including mental processes) which are characteristic of understanding, understanding is not a mental process.
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein (1967: 61)

Introduction

Although Vygotsky's extensive use of evolutionist assumptions has been replaced to a certain extent by cultural-semiotic relativism (Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez 1995), his historical perspective on the various genetic domains of psychological development still has an enormous value, providing the researcher with efficient tools to clarify and possibly redirect the ongoing intellectual process of studying language and literacy learning practices. By drawing on Vygotsky's uses of history, I argue in this chapter that a heterochronous analysis of sign-mediated activities gives a possibility for conceiving psychological phenomena systemically and in its interconnectedness to language and culture.

This view is important here for two reasons. Firstly, I seek to overcome a constraining logic of binarism, leading to an obsessive concern either with the atomistic ontology of producing knowledge and meaning by the knower or with the ontology of social overdetermination and 'not knowing'. This task is difficult, as it involves, first and foremost, a displacement of the binary rather than its reversal. Consequently, I deploy multiple historical time-scales to argue that participation in semiotically mediated practices involves both the recognition of meaning-making agency (understood here *not* in terms of the sovereign subject) and the recognition of subjection (understood here as the production of the unconscious). This position is important in research into language and literacy learning to understand the interaction between the 'spontaneous' internalisation of language as learners participate in a particular practice and the conscious appropriation of signs as they participate in different communities of practices, i.e., in learners' sociocultural dynamics.

For instance, by focusing on larger time-scales of semiotic activities, researchers can study psychological functions as they 'spontaneously' evolve in the history of a group, institution,

or society. This kind of historical analysis is particularly important for grasping those ideologies that produce the unconscious and underlie the language socialisation of people who are conceived by communities as newcomers (e.g. children, migrants, etc.). A focus on shorter temporal scales, such as the life history of an individual, may reveal multiple transformations of consciousness as an individual engages in various activities and hence in life-long literacy learning. In addition, a focus on the micro time-scale of communication can disclose the processes of meaning-negotiation in moment-to-moment, lived literacy events. In general, the historical method in language and literacy research allows us to obtain a comprehensive, *nested* view of the social genesis and transformation of learning and development. They are seen as embedded in culturally mediated, historically developing, practical activity (Cole 1996; Vygotsky 1978).

Secondly, I argue, following Bakhtin (1984, 1986) and Voloshinov (1973), that the sociogenesis of learning and development can not be viewed as some kind of a progressive movement (whether linear or stage-like) toward the end-point of socialisation. To interpret Vygotsky's uses of history as such an evolutionary model is simplistic and reductionist. Rather, the historical development of the psyche and learning should be seen as revolutionary (Vygotsky 1978) and as connected to meaning dynamics and to the unfinalisability of meaning (Bakhtin 1994). This stance in historical method is necessary for understanding the role played by cultural-semiotic diversity and social heteroglossia in the mutability and multidirectionality of psychological development. Therefore, it is problematic to treat the history of cultural groups, institutions or communities as if they are monolithic, devoid of conflict and struggle over meaning.

Research into language and literacy learning ought to consider the complex dynamics involved in the historical creation of meanings, knowledges and literacies to be learned. This concern drives my attempt here to trace learning pathways so that patterns, milestones and transitions are identified at different points in social and private life. Following Vygotsky, I argue that this should be done historically, by examining various genetic domains. In so doing, I also endeavour to elaborate the Vygotskian historical method specifically for the purposes of L2 research. That is, throughout this discussion I will pay attention to the intercultural tensions in various genetic domains of analysis. These tensions are the results of contradictions between the normative views of language and literacy development and the historical mutation of meanings and knowledges.

4.1 The role of language and sign in intellectual development: An historically nested analysis of learning.

The centrality of semiotic tools and, in particular, language runs like a leitmotiv through the exploration of learning, knowing and the knower in Vygotsky's scholarship. Indeed, to understand how language is learned, it is important to know what role language plays in human development. Vygotsky's analogy of language with a most powerful 'psychological tool' delineates, probably, one of the most fruitful ways for understanding human psychology. As such, language (or any other semiotic system) radically constitutes and transforms people's consciousness as they learn and use it in various social practices.

The history of this idea can be traced to the philosophical debates of the ancient Greeks who created an interpretation of the term 'logos' to identify the connection of thinking, language and being in a system of relations. To Heraclitus of Ephesus, for example, the word 'logos' meant a correlation or interpenetration of things and processes that exist in the universe. The correlation of word (speech, language) and thought (reason, sense) was seen by him as a unity or even as identity. Furthermore, this unity was understood as fleeting, in a constant state of coming into being, in motion and change (Heraclitus 1987).

Such early views of systemic-dialectical relations between language and thought survived Platonic philosophy and medieval scholasticism, and were elaborated by modern philosophers such as Hobbes, Spinoza, Hartley, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and linguists such as von Humboldt and Steinthal. This tradition was then taken further and critically reworked by Marxism and by more recent postmodern theories. One of the most important outcomes of sociocentric and sociocultural theorising is the idea that human capabilities for knowing are formed through language and constructed by signs. Another epistemological implication of this approach is that reality is socially and linguistically constructed. Hence, language is not a container into which natural meanings are poured by self-logical thought but, rather, what meaning is produced and how the world is cognised depends entirely on the social context of sign uses (Voloshinov 1973).

Since people use signs and other semiotic artefacts from past generations, Vygotsky reasoned that to study the development of thinking and consciousness necessitates studying them *historically*. Raising the question of history to address the language-mind interrelationship means, for Vygotsky (1981b: 164), a direct introduction of the social plane of development:

> The very mechanism underlying higher mental functions is internalized social relations. These higher mental functions are the basis of the individual's social structure. Their composition, genetic structure, and means of action - in a word,

their whole nature - is social. Even when we turn to mental processes, their nature remains quasi-social. In their own private sphere, human beings retain the functions of social interaction.

That is to say, the social development of mind can be understood only through its cultural origin in social activities that constitute contexts for semiotically mediated interaction between people. All this implies the 'disclosure of the genesis' of thought processes as 'phenomena in movement', in forms of life and communicative events that bring the mind to life (Vygotsky 1978).

In relation to this thesis Vygotsky distinguishes multiple 'genetic domains' of historical analysis which have been further systematised by sociocultural researchers such as Scribner (1985), Wells (1999) and Wertsch (1985). In particular these scholars agree that Vygotsky uses in his writings four time-scales of analysis (Figure 4.1):

a) *general history* - concerned with how human cognition came to be distinguished from that of other life forms;

b) *cultural phylogeny* - concerned with various, culturally favoured ways of semiotic mediation (discourses, values, norms, representations, etc.), in which the identities and minds of individuals are constructed;

c) *ontogenetic* - concerned with how children appropriate mediational tools, primary languages and discourses as they mature; and

d) *microgenetic* - concerned with the processes of the (re)organisation of socially mediated actions (e.g. dialogical learning in the ZPD) on a relatively short time-scale.
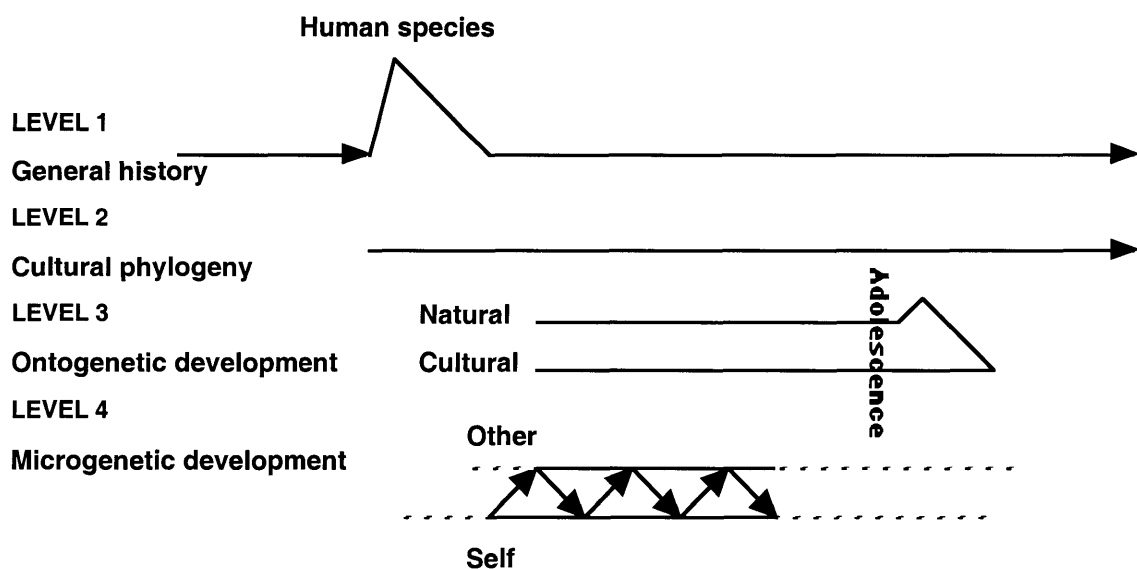
Figure 4.1 Vygotsky's time-scales of historical analysis (elaborated on the basis of Scribner's (1985) representation).

The complexity of relations between the domains of history and cognitive development in principle comes down to the problem of distinguishing "which aspects are universal in nature and which are specific to a particular social environment" (Scribner 1997: 241). To make an account of these aspects Vygotsky deploys a nested view of history based on dialectical methodology. This approach seems to offer some promising elucidations of cultural, linguistic and psychological continuity and contingency. However, Vygotsky's general focus on the explanatory principles of the development of higher psychological functions implies some sort of directionality and progression. The implications of his historical framework then could be a source of ambiguity, especially in comparative and cross-cultural studies (Scribner & Cole 1981).

Thus, in what follows I adopt Lemke's (2000) approach emphasising the role of downward causation between the levels of historicity. This approach is more sensitive to the historical dynamics and multidirectionality in human development. In the four-level system of historical development each higher-scalar level functions to reorganise variety on the level below as meaning for the level above (Lemke 2000). I shall clarify these systemic relationships and make some preliminary observations concerning the historical sequencing of the social and psychological activities, in language and literacy development. In so doing, I will endeavour to interpret Vygotsky's uses of historical method by linking its problematics to the broader forms of Marxist and postmodern theorising.

4.1.1 Language and development on the time-scale of general history

To analyse the role of language (and other systems of semiosis) in meaning-making and cognitive development historically, we have to start with the highest time-scale, namely with the general history of humanity. Vygotsky believed that on the time-scale of general history humanity appeared as a moment in the life of nature. Yet, as Marx argued in *The German Ideology*, people can be distinguished from other forms of life by consciousness, intentionality, language, tool-using and tool-making, and by co-operation. Even though we share many of those features with other sociable forms of life (Latour 1996), we fashion our own nature through productive activities and speech. Humans 'produce their means of subsistence' - material and semiotic artefacts - in forms completely different from other animals (Marx & Engels 1974). Marx connected the emergence of social consciousness to the development of social forms of labour and language. In particular, he remarked that "from the start the 'spirit' is afflicted with the curse of being 'burdened' with the matter ... of language" or, in a more radical formulation, "language *is* the immediate reality of thought". However, for Marx "neither thought nor language in themselves form a realm of their own, ... they are only *manifestations* of actual life" (ibid.: 118). That is, both thinking and

language arise as the living evidence of a continuing social process, into which individuals are born and within which they are shaped, but to which they also actively contribute (Williams 1977).

According to Marxist anthropology, upon which Vygotsky draws, "language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, for intercourse with other men" in practical activities (Marx & Engels 1974: 51). The necessity to communicate in co-operative activities proves that language and consciousness are *ab initio* social phenomena: "production by an isolated individual outside society ... is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living together and talking to each other" (Marx, cited in Callinicos 1995: 28). From this, it follows that communication was a necessary condition for the coordination of primeval social activities - the division of labour - between the members of a community.

Leont'ev (1981a: 61) explains the division of labour activity into separate and yet coordinated actions as a "historical consequence of human beings' transition to life in society". This means that, due to the social nature of any activity and the participants' ability to communicate, people learned how to perform different actions and yet to contribute to the ongoing collective activity. Leont'ev (1981b: 210-213) illustrates the break-down of collective activity into separate actions by describing the division of labour in primeval hunting. Suppose that a person wants to eat, and thus his activity is motivated by hunger. To satisfy this need he must carry out actions that are not primarily directed at obtaining food. The person may participate in collective hunting activity as a beater who frightens a herd of animals and sends them toward other hunters hiding in ambush. Thus, his actions do not coincide with the actions of other participants in the collective activity of hunting. He performs actions that constitute this collective activity. As a result an individual intention, even a biological need, becomes a part of the social or collective intentionality. Needless to say, language here plays a key role as a means of communication and knowing-in-practice, as a means of reflection and expression. Language "as practical consciousness is saturated and saturates all social activity" (Williams 1977: 37).

Another important distinction between humans and other forms of life is tool-using and tool-making. Vygotsky extends this concept by saying that the practical consciousness is directly related to the use and production of mediational tools. Moreover, he deems it necessary to conceive the use of tools as directly related to the use of signs, to speech. In this view, the dialectical unity of the use of material tool and of sign forms the historical essence of fundamentally new forms of behaviour in which symbolic activity plays "a specific *organizing* function that penetrates the process of tool use" (Vygotsky 1978: 24). While some animals, for example apes, use tools too, their activity is very limited by the

immediate conditions. The use of signs and speech by humans, on the other hand, allows them to go beyond this limitation; as soon as signs are incorporated into any action, "the action becomes transformed and organised along entirely new lines" (ibid.). Speech helps humans to make sense of the world and hence contributes to the development of their practical and abstract intellect needed for the social organisation of complex tool-mediated activities. As a result of the semiotic activity of sign-using and meaning-making, human cognition and thinking acquires a distinctive structural change in which 'natural' processes are complemented by culturally mediated ones (Cole 1996, 1999). The biological development of humans becomes genuine cultural and socio-historic development.

However, communication in primeval activities was not necessarily carried out by speech. According to Wells (1999), *homo erectus*, the predecessor of *homo sapiens*, is known to have made shelters and a variety of tools, cooperated in hunting and gathering, and developed social skills without a vocal apparatus being fully evolved for speech. This hominid culture used instead a mimetic form of communication (gestures and mime) necessary for the coordination of collective actions and teaching them to others. While this emergent form of procedural knowing was tied to activities with immediately present things and objects, it is only in connection to speech (language) that more abstract forms of thinking and intentionality became possible for *homo sapiens*. That is, language provided more possibilities for the development of practical reason than mimesis due to its greater "precision and explicitness in meaning making" and its potential for "the negotiation of interpersonal relationships and social values" (Wells 1999: 100). This allowed humans to perform more complex social activities through collective planning and coordination and to be less dependent on things and objects immediately present in the visual field. Yet language did not fully replace mimesis but, rather, together with gestures and mimic it has formed a unity - a system of representational symbolism.

According to Vygotsky (1978: 107), the prehistory of writing can be traced to this unity of speech and mimesis. Specifically, he says that a "gesture is the initial visual sign that contains ... future writing as an acorn contains a future oak". Of course, the relationship has not been direct but has been mediated by drawing and painting, which Vygotsky relates to the developmental shift from a first-order to a second-order symbolism, or a shift from a gesture as a visual representation of meaning to its graphic representation. While speech and mimesis shape the inner life of people by providing them with designative meanings and judgements of the world, drawing, besides representing meaning visually, has yet another function. It unburdens the load imposed on memory by the narrative. Hence, "drawing is graphic speech that arises on the basis of verbal speech" (Vygotsky 1978: 112). It has a certain degree of abstraction, which any oral text entails, but now verbal concepts receive their materialisation in symbolic forms and become means for the externalisation

and distribution of cultural memory. In other words, drawing functions parallel to speech as a means of symbolic meaning-making and hence as a new mediational tool of knowing, remembering and influencing others.

Even though symbolic (visuographic) semiosis is based on the historical development of speech and language in social activities, it makes its own distinct contribution to the formation and transmission of cultural ideology - rituals, myths and histories of past events. Graphic symbolism not only externalises the meaning of practical events and activities but also models imagined worlds, providing tools for further cultural production. Seen in this light, language and mimesis in social activities were not a single unity distinct from other modes of meaning-making and knowing. Rather, together with a second-order symbolism, such as drawing and painting, they have formed a versatile semiotic resource from which a diversity of cultural-semiotic artefacts have evolved to mediate thinking, memory and knowing as well as the social forms of consciousness in general.

All the above-mentioned characteristics, from the point of view of Marxist anthropology, are universal across cultures in the historical phylogenesis of humans as distinct from other forms of life. However, no elucidation of the nature of human psychology is unproblematic. On the one hand, Vygotsky was influenced by a broadly Hegelian view of development (Luke & Luke 2001) in making claims about universal human rationality and progressive movement from the 'primitive' to the 'cultural' forms of thinking and languages. This implied a monolinear historical progression conceived from some point in the present (e.g. the Vygotskian present). It is problematic therefore which historical events were put on the line of development and which events were not considered or marginalised. On the other hand, Vygotsky seemed to recognise "a complex interrelationship between history as change and history as universal human progress" (Wertsch, del Rio & Alvarez 1995: 8). This can especially be seen in his treatment of changes in social activities, in the technologies of production and in the symbolic-communicative sphere, in which "humans collectively produce new means for regulating their behaviour" (Scribner 1997: 244).

Therefore, the historical emergence of writing systems and their consequences for human psychology should be treated with particular caution. There is no doubt, in Marxist anthropology, that the development of the technology of writing is connected to significant changes in the social life of such civilisations as Egypt, Mesapotamia, China and Greece. In the first instance, the transition from nomadic to agricultural societies led to the diversification of social activities, the rapid growth of centralised states and the increased production of goods and knowledges. The emergence of caste and class stratification on this basis also led to changes in people's relationships to material production: some were involved in administrative, religious and scientific activities which required textual

production not only orally but also symbolically. Written documents were used for many political and social purposes but what was common to most of them from a psychological perspective was the externalisation and distribution of cultural memory, the objectification of events by fixing meaning and knowledge for their further transmission, and the permanent production of ideology. There is uncertainty, however, in relation to the cognitive consequences of literacy for the development of psychological functions.

On the one hand, there is a view that a fully evolved system of writing functions as a self-sufficient or *autonomous* semiotic mechanism that is not dependent on the context of meaning production and speech. The rules and logic of a writing system, in this view, are the vehicles of textual production and interpretation. Since the internal logic of the written text does not reflect and depend on oral speech, the proponents of the orality-literacy divide (Ong 1982; Olson 1994) argue that a system of writing is substantially different from a symbolic order of oral communication. A system of writing stands beyond social contexts and identities, due to its more abstract and logical principles. Consequently, the acquisition of written discourse and of its internal logic (syntax) would also have important cognitive and social consequences.

On the other hand, there is a view that writing is a second-order symbolism that is based on speech (Vygotsky 1978) and, even more, writing is a 'drawing of words'. Any writing is contextually specific and thus can not be conceived of either as a motor skill or as a dispassionate form of semiosis. Rather, it is a "complex cultural activity" that is always relevant to social life (ibid.: 118). Only when literacy activity is incorporated into practical life does writing become a really new and complex form of social speech. Moreover, as Scribner and Cole (1981) have emphasised, literacy does not in itself produce cognitive changes; for this to happen, there must be an ideological change that necessitates the use of literacy in particular social practices. Thus, through the studies of the *ideological* basis of literacy we can understand what kinds of consequences it produces on the ways people think (Barton & Hamilton 2000, Street 1995).

In this regard, those researchers whose claims are grounded in the autonomous view of literacy argue that schooled literacy makes human beings freer to pursue new intellectual heights (Ong 1982). Orality, on the other hand, is seen as a restrictive practice that impedes the ability of nonliterate peoples to engage in reflective and conscious action. Once a comparison between oral and literate traditions is made, a comparison of the people who favour either oral or literate patterns for organising and expressing knowledge becomes inevitable. The idea of cognitive and cultural inferiority due to illiteracy, according to Graff (1987), has coalesced around this 'literacy myth' of cognitive liberation for more than 200 years. In contrast, those researchers who argue for the ideological conception of literacy see

schooled literacy as just one among many social literacies. Schooled literacy can influence the performance of certain tasks, especially decontextualised problem-solving tasks (Luria 1976), but it does not play a decisive role in other contextual literacy events (Scribner & Cole 1981). Abstract, inferential thinking and reasoning may just as well be developed, as I was arguing above, in oral communication and in situated contexts of practical activities involving many forms of second-order symbolism.

One step, then, in the direction of seeing how language and literacy historically influence cognitive development is to make their ideological basis as clear as possible. The ideological measure of this development on the time-scale of a particular culture could filter out some unchecked and uncontested values that shape people's minds. As Luke and Luke (2001) argue, social and cognitive consequences of literacy must be related to particular cultures and communities that introduce children to the particular communication technologies, texts, discourses and practices, while displacing other forms of literate practices and the emerging new technologies relevant to traditional print-based literacy. This point leads this discussion to the next, lower time-scale: cultural phylogeny, especially to the role of cultural ideology in human development.

4.1.2 The time-scale of cultural phylogeny: Ideology in the cultural semiotic

Vygotsky (1978) expressed the need to search for specifically human behaviour in cultural history rather than in biology. The cornerstone of this viewpoint is that psychological functions depend upon real social life and bear its imprint. Specifically, as individuals participate in economic, political, educational, religious, and other interpersonal activities, they produce cultural artefacts. These artefacts are simultaneously material and ideal (Cole 1996; Ilyenkov 1977). They are material in that they exist in the world as distinct objects, and ideal in that their existence is the product of purposive activity (Ilyenkov 1977). Thus, cultural artefacts are essentially imbued with purpose, or meaning. As such, they mediate human experience, particular psychological functions and organise knowledge by "structuring the selection, retention, and use of information" (Cole 1996: 125). Culture, understood in terms of artefacts, is a 'control mechanism' determining what actions are appropriate in what context and specifying what is meaningful, ideal and hence ideological. Cultural ideology resides in all practical activities, discourses and semiotic artefacts. It 'interpellates' and shapes the psychological landscape by producing worldviews and 'cultural identities' (Althusser 1977) for individuals and groups as well as the *teloi* of their development (Wertsch 1998).

The cultural construction of psychological phenomena in congruence with social activities is not an unproblematic issue for cultural-historical psychology. Humans collectively devise

activities such as the economic production of goods, the education of the population, medical services, etc. It is through these socially organised activities that humans survive and realise themselves. Consequently, they are basic to all social and psychological processes. However, the fact that cultural activities are socially organised does not mean that they are democratically constructed and controlled. Most activities are controlled by powerful groups of people through ideologies. Concerning this issue, Vygotsky (1997: 211) argues that:

> The environment does not always affect man [sic] directly and straightforwardly, but also indirectly through his ideology. By ideology we will understand all the social stimuli [material-ideal artefacts] that have been established in the course of historical development and have become hardened in the form of legal statutes, moral precepts, artistic tastes, and so on. These standards are permeated through and through with the class structure of the society that generated them and serve as the class organization of production. They are responsible for all of human behavior and in this sense we are justified in speaking of man's class behavior.

It is evident from this statement that the Marxist thesis - social being (the mode of material production) determining consciousness - influenced Vygotsky's view of the ideological constitution of mental phenomena. Yet he overturns the one-sided notion of economic overdetermination by putting an emphasis on *sign* mediation. Economic relations and activities do not mean by themselves but, rather, they are ideologised in the sphere of semiotic production and hence come to have meaning only in the context of particular semiotically mediated practices such as in the socialisation and enculturation of children by adults, 'newcomers' by 'oldtimers', the powerless by the more powerful (Lave & Wenger 1991). The ideological construction of consciousness, according to Voloshinov (1973: 90) too, remains a fiction unless "embodied and objectified in the material of signs and gestures". Cultural ideology then is textual ideology, or the politics of sign and meaning in specific socio-economic conditions.

The issue of ideology in Vygotsky's theory of cultural development is often edited out of the discussion. Perhaps if we turn to the ideology of meanings and cultural literacy, we might be able to clarify the process of internalisation and cognitive development on the macrolevel of cultural phylogeny. In particular, we must focus on how some meanings and knowledges become preferred on this time-scale and what consequences this might have for consciousness. While being aware of debates about 'ideology' (e.g. in Pennycook 2001), I still feel the need to stress its significance in the Vygotskian approach. This is important for raising some key issues for cultural-historical psychology concerning power, meaning, common sense, the production of the unconscious and the possibilities of coming to awareness. Here, I am not engaging in the debate but, rather, outlining some key critical points pertaining to the analysis of cultural phylogeny and the role of semiotic mediation in

the psychological development of individuals. These issues, unfortunately, are rarely articulated, if at all, in a conventional 'interception' of Vygotsky in the West.

Vygotsky constructed his theory of semiotic mediation by saying that "a sign is always originally a means used for social purposes, a means of influencing others, and only later becomes a means of influencing oneself" (Vygotsky 1981b: 157). That is, he advanced an epistemology that focuses *first* on the cultural-ideological plane of meaning-production and then on the internalisation of cultural representations, in which signs come to mediate the consciousness of particular individuals. For a sign to influence others on the broader scale of practices it must represent a culturally preferred meaning, which does not allow much room for negotiation. Such a process of meaning production must be linked, then, to *the cultural politics of the sign* and to the ideology of cultural literacy, which legitimises particular ways of knowing, doing and communication. Only when meanings acquire broader cultural significance do they come to constitute *cultural literacy* - the relatively stable fields of knowledges, discourses and practices recognisable by members of the cultural community (writ large) - to which others are socialised and in which they develop a sense of cultural conventions and rules for the performance of meaning. It is thus important to notice that the ideology of cultural literacy stabilises the systems of meaning by emphasising particular meanings and maginalising others as unimportant and valueless. Signs that carry out this potential to influence others tend to centralise, constrain or edit out cultural differences and hence to sustain the historical continuity of meaning.

On the other hand, we have to look at the ideological dimension of semiotic practices not as something fixed and static but, rather, as subject to change and struggle over meaning. That is, the preferred meanings are not likely to be shared by everyone within a particular culture. Meanings change over time and across the contexts of their use and are characterised by a certain degree of mutability (Lotman 1990). This process, however, reflects and consists in relations of *power* and ideological conflicts fought out by social groups. While some groups strive to impose preferred meanings at the expense of other meanings available in society (Bakhtin 1981; Voloshinov 1973), other cultural groups may resist and subvert this 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1991) - "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault, as cited in Pennycook 2001). For that matter, *continuity* and *change* of meaning on the time-scale of cultural phylogeny are the results of ideological tensions in which "every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation" and "an arena of class struggle" (Voloshinov 1973: 10, 23). To address these dialectics of cultural meaning means that cultural-historical psychology must reflect on such issues of consciousness as *unawareness* and *awareness*. These two phenomena can be seen as the result of people's participation in cultural practices, in which their consciousness is constructed and developed within the ideological-semiotic dimension of culture.

4.1.2.1 Cultural hegemony and the production of the unconscious

The historical continuity of meanings is facilitated by the production and dissemination of particular knowledges and texts which come to constitute what people need to know to communicate, read and write effectively within a given culture (Hirsch 1993). A particular view of such knowledge and literacy then becomes a canon - a major vehicle of enculturation and a political tool for maintaining and reproducing the established social order. To enter the "social purview" of culture and "elicit an ideological reaction", canonical or preferred meanings must be associated with "vital socioeconomic prerequisites" but also with other multiple areas of cultural-semiotic production, such as the racial, social, gender, age, religious, etc. (Voloshinov 1973: 22). That is, economic power, or economic capital, is important but not the only area to be taken into consideration while analysing the production of cultural knowledge and literacy.

It is also important to stress that any culture 'writes itself' into existence through the political production of semiotic artefacts (narratives, stories and written texts) that determine what can and can not be thought, said or done. Such texts operate as if they were natural, timeless and ahistorical; as if the ideas represented in them have always been, and always will be. But in fact, as Marx and Engels (1974) put it, these ideas are nothing more than 'the ruling ideas' of dominant groups which try to hide the contingent nature of cultural practices by elevating particular meanings and values to the rank of general ideas, acceptable to all. Hence, the historical continuity of meanings is sustained due to relations of power within the ideological dimension of various material-semiotic practices. Dominant groups govern the ideological sphere of cultural practices through textual politics, in which their preferred meanings are presented as accepted, established and nonnegotiable (Lemke 1995, Pennycook 2001). The dominant ideology then controls not only the production of meaning, knowledge and cultural literacy, but also through the textual-semiotic medium it transforms and controls people's consciousness. It flows through the capillaries of social practices, through all semiotic artefacts constitutive of culture and constituting psychologies.

In doing so, the dominant cultural ideology promotes meanings that privilege one culture or part of a culture over another, thereby naturalising differences. It always works through the construction of racial, gender, social, sexual, linguistic and cognitive binary oppositions in which one part of the binary is privileged over the other as better, stronger, wealthier, more preferred, more correct and smarter. This asymmetrical binarism, according to Nietzsche (1967), represents a form of *resentment* - a specific practice of identity displacement, in which the dominant cultural group consolidates its identity by a complete disavowal of the

merits and existence of its social other. Here, one becomes 'good' by constructing the other as 'evil', and precisely in this action of annihilation and emptying of the other does domination become naturalised. Furthermore, asymmetrical power relations between the parts of the binary demonstrate that in a 'social space of difference' some groups occupy positions of greater economic and cultural capital and have a greater opportunity to promote their ideology and to persuade others to accept their claims to power (Bourdieu 1998). For this reason and notwithstanding any social, racial, cultural, linguistic and economic contradictions, the dominant ideology keeps social formations intact (Augoustinos 1999). Its dominance is sustained through political hegemony in various cultural and usually more powerful institutions (such as bodies of state authority and administration, economic management, law enforcement and systems of education) as well as through the conformism of others to the 'imposed worldview' (Gramsci 1986).

Hegemonic cultural ideology is successful when it acquires the form of *common sense*. This becomes possible under the condition when "one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all institutional and private manifestations" (Williams 1960: 587). Common sense is needed to convince other cultural or social groups that their interests are the same as those cultivated within the dominant ideology. This creates a notion of a harmonious community in which all interests are already democratically represented and, in the name of this 'imagined community', deviances are censored and corrected. Common sense is not however a collective agreement but, rather, it is reached through the reproduction and repetition of the same ideas that acquire in their textual circulation only slight variations. Because of this, members of the cultural community no longer question the assumptions on which the ideology of common sense is based. These ideas and concepts penetrate all spheres of social practice, and are objectified and commodified in recognisable, plausible and seductive discourses. In these terms, according to Bourdieu (1998: 97-98), common sense can be qualified as common knowledge - 'acquired dispositions' for particular actions as well as 'the feel' for the regularities of practice. This knowledge is not necessarily learned consciously but is rather internalised implicitly, without prior intention and calculation.

Conventional Marxism invests 'ideology' with a negative connotation because it deflects people from knowing the 'true' nature of social relations and produces 'false consciousness'. This evokes the idea that there is a possibility for 'true' meaning and 'true' consciousness. This thesis is problematic because for Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Voloshinov ideology is produced at the same time that signs are produced meaningfully. That is to say, all possible meanings are always *already* ideological and there can be neither 'true' nor 'false' consciousness outside culture. Hence, the ideology of the dominant cultural literacy produces not a 'false consciousness' but rather an *unawareness* of how meanings work in the institutionalised construction of people's subjectivities and positions (Foucault 1980b).

As these constructions are implicitly internalised, in their turn the dominant meanings give directionality to mental life - to the formation of concepts, attributes, desires and motives.

Unconscious learning in this respect is not 'false' but is a function of consciousness; concepts internalised unconsciously are engaged in meaning-making and evaluations and have the same nature as conscious processes. Furthermore, as Augoustinos (1999) asserts, unawareness is *not* a result of the faulty cognitive capacities and mistaken perceptions of human subjects which distort the social construction of knowledge, meanings and practices. Rather, this is a psychological phenomenon that originates from the *reality* of social-semiotic practice itself; it is the result of the functional power of dominant representations, discourses and practices that legitimises certain concepts, values and beliefs. As soon as these representations of power are internalised, they function as 'filters' in the processes of meaning-making on the basis of which evaluative judgements of difference are made (Ratner 1994). Therefore, "people know what they do, they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does" (Foucault, cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982: 187).

To this end, the historical continuity of dominant cultural meanings is based on the relations of power inherent in the ideological dimension and textual politics of social practices. The implicit internalisation of cultural knowledge produced in this way constitutes the unconscious realm of consciousness, due to which people reproduce existing cultural meanings without questioning their underlying assumptions. Therefore, a social agency is barely able to identify the social patterns, meaning, and origin of its psychological functions. As Sartre (1976 : 225) argues, "there is no *a priori* reason why the ... result [of social events] should be understood by the agent: everything depends upon the instruments of thought provided for him by his period, class, and historical circumstances". Hence, what particular type of consciousness is constructed depends on the ideology of the dominant social groups or on their hegemony, conceived of by Gramsci as "cultural guidance" alongside "political guidance"' (Colucci 1999: 159). In practices of socialisation into cultural literacy, the fluid and dynamic personal sense of selves becomes, to paraphrase Althusser, 'hailed' by the dominating ideology. The question then remains how a social agency can engage in 'the struggle' over sign and meaning, while being unaware of its ideological-semiotic construction.

4.1.2.2 Changes in systems of cultural meaning and coming to awareness

On the time-scale of cultural phylogeny, neither change in cultural meanings nor a critical awareness of meaning constructions can be found in the purposeful actions and intentionality of the individual subject. Rather, we have to look for the historical sources of

meaning mutability and agentiveness in the *partially* ordered culture itself, or in the incomplete finalisation of meaning (Medvedev 1985). Culture, a set of heterogeneous activity systems and multifaceted practices, produces alternative ideologies-in-discourses as a response to repression by the dominant ideology. The centripetal forces of meaning-making not only work to reject or resist the authority of 'official culture' and cultural literacy but, in addition, they are creative forces that preclude the complete closure of meaning (Bakhtin 1986). Only when we recognise culture as a 'tension-filled environment' (Bakhtin 1981), can we say that cultural ideology does not automatically direct personal behaviour to the same extent in all individuals and that the sociality of consciousness can not be reduced to only one (let alone the dominant) manifestation. While tacit knowledge and meanings often reflect the prevalent values of dominant social or cultural groups, this knowledge is contradictory and inconsistent (Laclau 1990). The cultural and social diversity, ideological disunity and fragmentation inherent in the practices of particular communities and social groups create ruptures in the totalising ideology and hence in unawareness. In fact, the sociality of consciousness is very diverse and appears not in just one, but in many concrete forms.

Vygotsky (1987: 259), for example, does not conceive of culture as a monolithic ideological superstructure which determines one consciousness for all; various social-semiotic contexts make different semiotic persons who come to an awareness of their social particularity through the process of individualisation:

> The central tendency of the child's development is not a gradual socialization introduced from the outside, but a gradual individualization that emerges on the foundation of the child's internal socialization.

That is, even though the grand-cultural ideology of socialisation and enculturation tends to close meanings by normalising and controlling subjectivities, the experiences of these metadiscursive constructions are always context-specific and individualised. The individualisation of the ideological sign marks the process of socialisation as a *two-sided* activity in which the workings of ideology are variously experienced and 'implemented' by social persons. It is in this sense that Voloshinov (1973: 39) argues that "the ideological sign must immerse itself in the element of the inner, subjective sign; it must ring with subjective tones in order to remain a living sign and not be relegated to the honorary status of an incomprehensible museum piece".

Vygotsky defines broader social contexts and activity systems of socialisation and individualisation in terms of the heterogeneous class society, systems of education and social practice environments to which individuals belong and in which their interpersonal and intrapersonal development occurs. He argues that the ideologies of these cultural

systems of socialisation and their ideological standards are "permeated through and through with the class structure of society that generated them and serve as the class organisation of production ... In modern society, every person, therefore, whether he likes it or not, is inevitably a spokesman of a particular class" (Vygotsky 1997: 212). So cultural-historical consciousness, according to Vygotsky, may be different for the various social and cultural groups that make up a particular society. Furthermore, reference by cultural-historical psychology to social diversity is intended to oppose a universalistic way of understanding the world because, as Luria (1976: 164) puts it, knowing and meaning-making "depend utterly on the basic forms of social practice" (and not just the category of 'class').

Now the important question is how we can formulate the process of coming to consciousness or awareness on the level of cultural history. As in Marxist theory, social structures in Vygotsky's psychology are viewed as the basis on which the formation and development of consciousness depend. Consequently, Vygotsky argues that the formation of human behaviour should be tied to the process of social adaptation to social environments. Yet his understanding of 'societal adaptation' is completely different from conventional structuralist approaches, which treat the environment as fixed, not as a dynamic and heterogeneous system. Unlike many structural Marxists of his time, Vygotsky (1997: 205) argues that:

> Adaptation has to be considered in no other way than from the social point of view. One must never proceed from the given and existing environment as if from something constant and unchanging. The social environment comprises an inexhaustible collection of the most diverse aspects and elements, which are always in the most outright contradiction with each other and always engaged in the most brutal struggle against each other. We should not think of the environment as a whole as a static, elemental, and stable system of elements, but rather as a dialectically developing dynamic system.

Hence, due to contradictions within the dynamics of cultural systems and in the process of social affiliation, individuals, both as members and as non-members of different groups, experience dilemmas of shifting subject positions and meanings. On the one hand, societal adaptation to different and unstable environments explains differences in consciousness and behaviour. On the other hand, this indicates that social individuals are constantly engaged in a complex, contradictory and contextually situated activity of meaning-making as they deploy and individualise cultural-ideological resources available to them. These aspects of cultural practices, as exemplified in Vygotsky's writings, signal that cultural meanings and knowledges are subject to struggle and contestation because societal adaptation is a two-sided activity of both socialisation and individualisation. This seems to presuppose at least a degree of self-consciousness evolved through knowing the discourses of an ideological

arena in which various social views are fought out, within the context of dominance and control.

One premise, then, from this view of Vygotsky that I will further pursue is that social actions of knowing, learning and meaning-making take place within the ideological terrain of discourse, in which "the composition of human personalities *cannot* be said to represent something homogenous and uniform" (Vygotsky 1994d: 176, emphasis added). On the basis of this idea, Vygotsky criticises the one-sided ideological construction of consciousness and social personality. He sees an ideological contradiction in the double nature of any sociocultural environment that can be both 'the source of development' of specifically cultural attributes and the source of a personality's "corruption", "distortion" and "subjection to unsuitable, one-sided development" (Vygotsky 1994d: 176). In particular, Vygotsky refers to the oppressive conditions of capitalist production that disadvantage rural populations by dividing city and country, leading to the exploitation of child and female labour as well as to an asymmetrical social stratification and poverty. This internal contradiction within the social system - the double influence of cultural environment on human development - cannot be resolved without a transformation of its organisation: "a fundamental change of the whole system of these [social] relationships ... will also inevitably lead to a change of consciousness, a change in man's [sic] whole behaviour" (ibid.: 181).

Much of what Vygotsky terms 'a fundamental change of the whole system' of social organisation can be achieved through the reconstruction of education in which new realities and practices are fashioned for the fuller cultural development of children. In arguing beyond the view of 'permissive education', Vygotsky (1997) also considers the concrete forms of performative activity of both teachers and students (a social agency), in their creative striving to alter the existing conditions of schooling. There is no other way to escape the view "of the educational process as one-sided, and ascribe all activity without exception to the environment, making nothing of the activity of the student himself, of the activity of his teacher, and of everything that must come into contact with education" (Vygotsky 1997: 52). Therefore, by placing an emphasis on 'total social immersion' and 'class psychology', Vygotsky, on the one hand, recognises the primacy of cultural environments in their determinative role in the child's cultural and cognitive development. But, on the other hand, he sees the possibility of transcending these environments through the practical performative activity of social agency, in which to 'grasp the very nature of education', and hence what is 'brought into the educational arena' (the ideology) is a key to the reflective process of cultural learning-leading-development.

Vygotsky in this regard resists the notion of cultural ideology as a separate and inaccessible structure out of which psychological functions evolve as perfect copies. He argues instead for a richer, more varied, and more diverse picture of consciousness in social practice participation. Yet he bases his view of the developmental dynamics, variations and *revolutionary* change on broad social categories such as classes, which implies replacement of one grand ideology by another, albeit more liberating for the oppressed. Today, however, many cultures find themselves in the new conditions of their phylogeny (or the new conditions of sociocultural complexity), in which the changes of meaning are associated with contingent, local, precarious 'forms of life' and heterogeneous 'language games' rather than with hegemonic attempts to fundamentally reconstruct the whole 'ideological superstructure'.

As a result of the collapse of the universal system of meanings and metadiscursive spaces, an interest in difference, there is renewed interest in local knowledges, literacies and 'small narratives' (Barton & Hamilton 1998; Lyotard 1984; Scribner & Cole 1981). The production and legitimation of universal cultural literacy and its ideology are challenged by the proliferation of particularistic forms of knowledge and by the 'historical mutation' of knowers' identities (Laclau 1994). Mindful of their localities in time and space, people enter the social processes of meaning production in which common sense is merely a stage in a 'communication circuit', not its end (Lyotard 1984). Sociocultural heterogeneity and multivoicedness in cultural discourses prevent the closure of meaning and hence the final formulation of what is true and common to all. Therefore, the incommensurability of knowledges and meanings marks the crisis of modern ideology and universal cultural literacy that mediates that ideology, naturalising the hegemonic relations of semiotic domination and epistemological subjugation in education and other spheres of social life.

To sum up the time-scale of cultural phylogeny in the analysis of development and learning, it is important to say that cultural history must be taken into account to understand the nature of human psychological processes (Cole 1996). Rooted in practical-semiotic activities and mediated by material-ideal artefacts, these processes can not be separated from this larger historical consideration. Since cultural artefacts are accumulated through generations, cultural history enters into any analysis of psychological processes through the ideality - preferred meanings - sedimented in signs and texts. As such, cultural-semiotic artefacts can not be conceived as the natural and unproblematic mediators of socialisation and learning. Rather, they carry with them social purpose and embody the cultural teloi of psychological development. Signs, first and foremost, are political tools in control of meaning-making practices. As they are deployed to influence the other, they function as psychological tools, shaping the consciousness (and the unconscious) of particular individuals.

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Cultural phylogeny, however, is not a linear progression toward a harmonious end-point. For instance, the contemporary crisis of cultural development in general, and of cultural literacy in particular, reflects a contradiction between specific 'funds of knowledge' and the universal task of national education that tends to surpass them. The paradox of new conditions on the time-scale of cultural phylogeny lies in the impossibility of a common ground, which always legitimises a particular ideology - a "mission predetermined by universal history - whether that be the mission of a universal class, or the notion of a privileged race, or an abstract principle" (Laclau 1994: 1). It is for this reason that we need to place an emphasis on the production of new meanings that transcend the common sense imposed by the dominant ideology.

These changes are true marks of historicity both in the cultural development of consciousnesses and in the semiotic sphere that mediates this process. To paraphrase Bakhtin (1981), cultural consciousness takes shape, and never stops taking shape, in a process of interaction among various discourses. But above all, it is never deadened by one ideology, never something finished. Rather, the semiotic-ideological dimension of cultural practices, if we take its heterogeneity and incompleteness seriously, carries a kind of impulse toward the future, toward new meanings and conditions that are still to come. Because the cultural mind is never whole and social experiences are diverse, the cultural-ideological development of the psyche reflects the intense struggle of semiotic multiplicity. In Bakhtinian terms, the development of the psyche is 'not finite' but is open to the extent the ideological tension of cultural discourses is able to reveal 'ever newer ways to mean'. It is in this sense, too, that Vygotsky (1994d) argued against the totalising, oppressive and 'one-sided' view of development and for the construction of a new system of education and practice that would cater for the multifaceted cultural unfolding of people's cultural psychology.

4.1.3 Ontogenetic development and the 'natural history of the sign'

If the domain of cultural phylogeny focuses predominantly on the historical production of and socialisation into cultural ideology and literacy, ontogenesis is more concerned with the development of practical intellect and learning-in-practice. Vygotsky uses this domain to focus on the individual level of organisation and mastery of the semiotic means and forms of cultural behaviour. Semiotic activity remains the central category on all levels of historical analysis in Vygotsky's theory. But on the level of ontogenetic development, sign use is related to the biogenesis and sociogenesis of a person. As Scribner (1997: 249) points out, while the "cultural history of development *displaces* the biological, in ontogenesis both lines of development co-occur and are fused". Owing to Vygotsky's consistent materialist

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position, the human mind is not only culturally embedded but also embodied; it is a part of the biological system.

Of course, the biological and cultural lines of development are not to be conceived of as equal. Biological functions such as elementary memory, attention and perception are seen by Vygotsky as the result of biogenesis and in the preverbal stage they are not very different from those of apes (Vygotsky 1978). However, these elementary functions make possible the sociogenesis of the higher psychological functions. Thinking, attention, memory and perception become sign-mediated and verbal as the child starts to master his/her behaviour in intelligent and culturally specific ways (Vygotsky & Luria 1994). This marks the beginning of a *new* history in the process of child development, in which 'the comparatively primitive strata of behaviour' is reorganised culturally. Therefore, the ontogenetic domain of individual development is a time-scale of the individual life trajectory consisting of two connected but not coinciding lines: the biological and the cultural (see Figure 4.1).

According to Vygotsky and Luria (1994: 148), these two lines constitute a unity (but not identity) of the psychological system. They, rather, co-exist as the internal and external dimensions in the ontogenesis of the child, and become integrated or intertwined in the sphere of symbolic and practical activities:

> Within this general process of development two qualitatively original lines can already be distinguished: the line of biological formation of elementary processes and the line of the socio-cultural formation of the higher psychological functions; the real history of the child is born from the interweaving of these two lines.

These two lines are linked through a number of transitional forms directly connected to 'the natural history of the sign'. Vygotsky places a particular emphasis on the sign to describe how the child utilises signs differently in the process of her ontogenetic development. The history of sign uses by the child shows that her higher mental functions unfold in their genetic connection with the natural forms of behaviour that have their own prehistory - biological roots and organic dispositions. The biological functions, according to Vygotsky (1978: 63), "are processes that have gone through a very long stage of historical development and have been fossilized". Consequently, biological functions are the point of departure in the development of social sign-mediated forms of behaviour.

Blonsky (1964), who was Vygotsky's teacher and who survived his student, makes an important point in this connection to show the unfolding interaction between the two lines in the child's developing cultural psychology. He argues, in particular, that the elementary

(biological and historically evolved) functions such as attention and perception first play a key role in the development of social forms of thinking. He traces the social origin of the mind to the very early communicative experiences of children, arguing that the formation of cultural thinking is taking place already when children hear and attend to the speech of others but can not yet speak. Listening to words in early childhood, according to Blonsky (1964: 451), is always accompanied at first by audible and later on by soundless repetition - 'simultaneous reproduction' of the other's speech:

> Listening to speech is not simply listening: to a certain extent we, as it were, talk together with the speaker. There is, of course, no complete repetition of his [sic] words here, not even complete internal repetition. But it is possible that it is precisely here that we have the rudiments of inner speech. (my translation)

In developing this position, Blonsky criticises Vygotsky's hypothesis that inner speech evolves from egocentric speech, i.e., rather late in the life of the child (at school age). He argues instead, that sign-mediated communication leads to the formation of verbal thought much earlier in the child's ontogeny. This implies that the cultural formation of the child's psychology starts from the first days of her living socially. The learning of social discourse by young children involves their unconscious internalisation of "adult scripts", in which adults embody (ideal) cultural trajectories for children in the contexts of everyday communicative events (Cole 1996: 218). The field of immediate sign-mediated actions in those events determines the field of meanings that children learn spontaneously.

According to Holzman (1997), spontaneous language learning involves instruction but this is not the goal in itself. In communicative events the shaping and reshaping of the 'rudimentary' speech by the 'developed' forms of adult speech happens indirectly as children participate in a collective activity. Because of this, children do not just mimic the words (this would be the goal of direct teaching) but already participate in the interaction as communicative beings. They learn in and through the stream of practical activity. In this way they both adapt to social 'ways with words' and internalise word meanings contextually: learning in social interaction *leads* their cognitive development (Vygotsky 1978). As an example of spontaneous learning, consider the following interaction between an adult and a 21-month-old child taken from the study by Bloom, Hood, and Lightbown as presented in Holzman (1997: 62):

> Child: (opening cover of tape recorder) open/open/open
> Adult: did you open it?
> Child: (watching tape recorder) open it
> Adult: did you open the tape recorder?
> Child: (watching tape recorder) tape recorder

Vygotsky describes the cognitive development of children in similar situations as follows. First, signs are used as direct representations (names) of objects or things in the visual field of the child; the visual field and the field of meaning are not yet separated. He stresses on many occasions that the function of naming is not the child's 'discovery' but, rather, this occurs as the 'natural history of a sign' in social practice: "at the beginning of speech formation the child does not discover that every object has its own name, but rather learns a new way of dealing with them - and that is what gives them names" (Vygotsky & Luria 1994: 152). It is only later that s/he starts to utilise signs as a means of mediated symbolisation, as psychological tools (Kozulin 1998). In this *instrumental* function, signs come to be included in the indirect (abstract) operations of thinking and memorisation, in which arbitrary connections between signs and meanings are established. The visual field becomes separated from the field of meaning, and the child's thinking becomes determined by ideas (meanings) instead of by objects themselves.

As a result of such an historical transition to sign-mediated activity, fundamental changes occur in the psychological system: the interpersonal processes become transformed on the basis of sign operations into intramental functioning. In the process of internalisation, intramental activity preserves all the basic features of social symbolic activity (Vygotsky 1984). Consequently, the elementary biological functions of mind 'cease to exist' as a distinct realm; they are "incorporated into [the socialised] system of behaviour and are culturally reconstituted and developed to form a new psychological entity" (Vygotsky 1978: 57).

From this standpoint, the use of signs in speech and in other symbolic forms of activity (e.g. in reading and writing) is a part of the history of the social formation of personality and consciousness (Vygotsky 1978). The sign appears in the child's behaviour primarily "as a means of social relations, as an interpsychological function" and hence "transfers the social attitude toward the subject within the personality" (Vygotsky & Luria 1994: 138). This transformation means that the child's personality, ways of thinking, perception, imagination and action are the product of the broader system of social relations or, to be more precise, the social ways of behaviour come to be applied by the child to her/himself as s/he participates in collective forms of practice:

> As an individual only exists as a social being, as a member of some social group within whose context he [sic] follows the road of his historical development, the composition of his personality and the structure of his behaviour turn out to be a quantity which is dependent on social evolution and whose main aspects are determined by the latter. (Vygotsky 1994d: 175-176)

To 'follow the road' means to interiorise and verbalise the meanings of one's social and cultural becoming, which is never a solo activity but "is achieved by social means, through the people surrounding him [sic]" (Vygotsky & Luria 1994: 116). Therefore, Vygotsky insists on the essential role of the social other in shaping and defining the ontogenetic development of thinking, consciousness and personality. The formation of higher psychological functions, in this regard, is not the result of physiological or biological principles of growth but is, rather, based on sociological and historical principles. Vygotsky's position in this strikingly resembles Voloshinov's (1973: 25) argument that "the conscious psyche is a socioideological fact" and that the process of its formation occurs *outside* the individual organism, albeit involving the participation of the biological functions. Internal experiences in this ontogenetic model are included in the objective unity of the social experience.

However, Gee (1996b: 274), while supporting the Vygotskian view of sociogenesis, sees one major problem that is connected to the double nature of the child's social experience of learning:

> On the one hand, it [the Vygotskian perspective] demonstrates how crucial cooperative social interaction is - how riven the mind already with the social, the cultural, the interactive, the ideological. And, indeed, this is a cornerstone of nearly all sociocultural theories of language, literacy, and cognition. On the other hand, such a process of the translation of the social into the mental does not allow children to gain much, if any, reflective or critical insight into the "representations" they have "swallowed".

Regarding this problem, Holzman (1997:45) explains the double nature of learning-in-practice in developmental (cultural-historical) terms: young children understand (and learn) unconsciously from participation in immediate cultural activities and it is only later, in cultural adaptation, that they become knowers of the social reality. This, according to Holzman, happens due to 'intrapsychic alienation' - a gradual increase in the distance between the knower and the known.

Indeed, in a close reading of Vygotsky's works we can find many instances where he emphasises the importance of distancing oneself from the immediate environment for the development of social (meta)awareness. For instance, Vygotsky (1978) puts a particular emphasis on the historical transition from the spontaneous ('not known') to the more abstract (and conscious) grasping of social reality in play. Children in play reflect on how social practices are patterned. Moreover, they creatively reconstruct real-life situations, due to their newly emergent ability to separate meaning from a particular object and transfer it to another object. Vygotsky (1978) says, for example, that in play a stick can substitute for a horse on the basis of a semiotic operation of detaching the meaning of 'horse' and

applying it to another object (a stick). If previously in the child's history the field of objects determined meaning, now the field of meanings determines how objects are to be used in a play-activity. Hence, in such activities children come to know the world of real-life practices, creating imaginary situations within and beyond the limits of the social-ideological field.

Another instance, which deserves our attention here, is Vygotsky's idea that signs are lexically inert unless and until they become a part of the child's intrasubjective and emotional experiences. The child understands and interprets the semiotic-material context of activity according to her previous social history and experience; internalisation involves a certain degree of externalisation and reflection. Vygotsky uses the concept of internalisation to argue that the 'individual' is not equal to the autonomous 'subject' or the biological specimen (which is to say, to individuality). Owing to the internalisation of signs by individuals, their psyche and personalities are "as social as is the ideology" of the cultural or social groups that use those signs (Voloshinov 1973: 34). Once internalised the cultural-ideological history of signs becomes the individual's history of psychological development. However, the higher psychological functions of individuals are developed differently in different social persons and bear the imprint of particular practice environments that are "refracted through the prism of the child's emotional experiences [*perezhivanie*]" (Vygotsky 1994e: 340).

Hence, while the child in her life-history becomes more socially dynamic, she is constituted as a different person in different discourses. The child is a multiply constructed person, performing, in Lemke's (1995) terms, different agentive roles prescribed in various social practices. And yet she is an historical person (cf. the biographical individual in Lemke 1995) who in her social dynamics has some sort of invariant sense of self, in moving from the immediate practices of socialisation or 'primary Discourses' to other practices or 'secondary Discourses' (1996a). As such, the ideological effect of a particular practice would be emotionally experienced [*perezhit*] in an historical (biographical) relation to other practices and discourses and thus understood or reflected upon according to *different* degrees of awareness. This is not yet a critical reflection, or even a self-reflection, but, rather, a reflection on the other, on difference, which is due to the 'surplus of vision' people have in their social dynamics (Bakhtin 1990). This kind of knowing and learning can be understood as the developing (meta)awareness of how to go about and weave together discourses, concepts, literacy activities and identities in several different communities of practice.

In sum, Vygotsky exposes the individual's psyche on the time-scale of ontogenesis as localised not within the 'brain' but somewhere on the *borderline* between internal biological

functions and external social activity. On this borderline, a special encounter takes place between the organism and the outside world, and this encounter occurs in practical sign-mediated activity, in the realm of meaning. According to Voloshinov (1973: 39) too, the psyche is constituted, observable and interpretable in the materiality of the sign:

> Outside the material of signs there is no psyche; there are psychological processes, processes in the nervous system, but no subjective psyche as a special existential quality fundamentally distinct from both the psychological processes occurring within the organism and the reality encompassing the organism from outside, to which the psyche reacts and which one way or another it reflects.

Due to the sociogenesis of higher mental functions, the psyche enjoys 'extraterritorial status' in the body - "it is a social entity that penetrates inside the organism of the individual person" (ibid.). Therefore, the individual history of psychological development (ontogenesis) is included by Vygotsky within the social history of semiotic practice ('the natural history of the sign'). The difference between these is not qualitative but a matter of degree.

4.1.4 Microgenesis in dialogical events

The microgenetic domain of developmental analysis can be conceived of as a chain of dialogical events on the shorter time-scales which constitute ontogenesis - the historical life-trajectories of social individuals (see Figure 4.1). Vygotsky's (1978, 1984) interest in the education and socialisation of children gives rise to a particular model of dialogical events, known as the joint construction zones of learning and development. He uses the analysis of microgenetic events to show how in dyadic interactions between a child and an adult, the child 'enters into relationship with a situation' through another person by creatively imitating, syncretising and appropriating the actions and words of the 'more advanced' other (Holzman 1997). Learning in such dialogical events is a cooperative activity in which the child performs beyond her 'actual developmental level' - her previous sociogenetic history. As Vygotsky (1978: 90) puts it, in the dialogical events of a collective activity and in cooperation with others, "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes". In the first instance, it awakens inner speech and verbal thinking. Furthermore, social communication, according to Radzikhovsky (1987), is transferred to the inner speech of the child, in which the dialogicality and sociality of outer speech are retained to organise the inner psychic life.

To illustrate the hidden dialogicality of intramental functioning, Wertsch (1991) offers an empirical analysis of a series of interchanges between a child and her mother during a puzzle-copying task. Briefly, the goal of the mother-child interaction during the placement

of puzzle pieces was to direct the child's attention to the model puzzle. In analysing the first two episodes in the mother-child interaction, Wertsch has observed that the child was directed explicitly (in the external dialogue) to consult the model with each successive step. By the third episode the child was consulting the model independently of her mother's explicit directives. As Wertsch (1991: 88-89) remarks, "the child's egocentric and inner speech (intramental plane) guided this process... She did not rely on the adult to provide a regulative utterance but presupposed the utterance that would have occurred on the intermental plane and responded in egocentric and inner dialogue". This study supports the Vygotskian idea that learning in communicative events leads both to the cognitive and language development of the child.

In the communication between the child and the other a sign-mediated space is created. In this space, according to Bakhtin (1984: 385), the child comes to organise her thoughts through *appropriation* of the other's words (see also Leont'ev 1978 and Vygotsky 1987):

> Words are, initially, the other's words, and foremost, the mother's words. Gradually, these 'alien words' change, dialogically, to become one's 'own alien words' until they are transformed into 'one's own words'.

From this perspective, dialogicality is a necessary condition for these microgenetic changes in thinking and consciousness. New qualitative changes occur in communicative events when the word of the other becomes one's own word, i.e., "only when the speaker populates it [the word] with his [sic] own intention, his own accent" (Bakhtin 1981: 293). This process is full of contradictions, because prior to appropriation the words do not exist in some neutral medium. Rather, they are *already* 'populated' with the intentions of others and carry historical traces of meaning. Therefore, the process of word appropriation in inner or outer speech is a two-sided act, involving a dialogical tension between self and other. It is a contextually situated activity in which both semiotic resources and verbal thought come to life.

By defining inner speech as dialogical or as the inner dialogue with the other (even though it resembles a monologue), sociocultural psychologists such as Wertsch (1998) and Wells (1999) take an utterance as a unit of analysis of thinking on the microgenetic time-scale. An inner utterance as a verbal form of human *action* is directly tied to an external utterance (e.g. in outer speech) and to the social situation in which it occurs. However, as Voloshinov and Bakhtin assert, an inner utterance is neither an output of a mandatory system of linguistic laws (*langue*), nor a free combination of language forms (*parole*). Because inner speech resembles more "the alternating lines of a dialogue", it can not be reduced to the forms of external language such as the lexicological, the grammatical, and the phonetic

(Voloshinov 1973: 38). These linguistic categories pertain, rather, to sentences. But inner speech, like outer speech, takes place in utterances:

> [Utterances] are joined with one another and alternate with one another not according to the laws of grammar or logic but according to the laws of *evaluative* (emotive) *correspondence, dialogical deployment,* etc., in close dependence on the historical conditions of the social situation and the whole pragmatic run of life. Only by ascertaining the forms of whole utterances, and, especially, the forms of dialogical speech, can light be shed on the forms of inner speech as well as on the peculiar logic of their concatenation in the stream of inner speech. (ibid.)

It should now be clear why sociocultural psychologists place such an emphasis on dialogical microgenetic events. The starting point of social interaction becomes not the interplay of signs and not the grammatical units of a text but the *performative* units of speech in living events. That is, dialogicality provides the ground for an epistemological position to escape both the view of complete structural overdetermination of the psyche and the view of the disinterested play of signifiers. Of course, an individual in a communicative event operates within the ideological systems of a culture (Voloshinov 1973) which implies a constitutive and shareable cultural 'apperceptive mass' (Vygotsky 1987). Yet as Voloshinov (1973: 118) argues, the historical individual is not "a mute wordless creature that receives an utterance, but a human being full of inner words", i.e., the totality of dialogues within:

> All his [sic] experiences - his so-called apperceptive background - exist encoded in his inner speech, and only to that extent do they come into contact with speech received from the outside. Words come into contact with words.

Furthermore, in the interaction of communicants their inner and outer utterances are a vehicle of contextual meaning-making. While words take on 'a life of their own' within an utterance - a unit of 'living language' - the speakers will attempt to 'bend' them to their intentions. This occurs within the processes of addressivity and responsivity to the words of the other in a concrete intersubjective situation (theme) and in relation to the broader social milieu (Bakhtin 1986; Voloshinov 1973).

Therefore, the microgenetic perspective on the dialogical nature of inner psychic life presupposes an increasingly dynamic view of consciousness as a generative, word-saturated, borderline phenomenon stemming from the ideological practice of interaction. Thoughts and ideas, for Voloshinov (1973: 26), are not generated in the isolated consciousness of the individual, and not even as a result of the interrelationship of ideas but, rather, "the inner psyche ... can only be understood and interpreted as a sign". That is, the psyche is inescapably mediated by meanings, lying on the interdiscursive *border* between self and other.

According to Bakhtin (1984), thinking and speaking are not mere self-expression but a *sociology of consciousness*. In his analysis of Dostoevsky's artistic novels, for example, Bakhtin (1984: 32) comes to the conclusion that:

> Consciousness is formed *alongside* other consciousness; it cannot concentrate on itself and its own idea, on the immanent logical development of that idea. Instead, it is pulled into interaction with other consciousnesses...; it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person.

Precisely because consciousness lies on the border, we cannot conceive of it as something static and unitary or as an internal property of the individual. In a dialogical interaction with the other, consciousness constantly changes and is uniquely created and recreated contextually.

Now, we can recast Vygotsky's stance on the ZPD in the dialogical events of a collective activity. In his article *The Problem of the Environment* , Vygotsky (1994e: 348) makes it clear that in communicative events between the child and the mother the fully developed speech, which the child is supposed to master, is already present in the socio-ideological environment. What constitutes the developmental telos of the speech situation is not the mother's knowledge of language grammar (e.g. syntax) or vocabulary, to be transmitted to the child. Rather, this appears in the forms of utterances "being toned down for the child's benefit". The words of the mother thus are oriented toward the situation (theme and genre) of the communicative event and toward the addressee (the child). They meet the child's words and her responsivity to the situation. In this way the communicative event acquires a form of a 'language game' in which the ZPD is constructed for the child to perform beyond her 'level of actual development'. The dialogue is directed toward the future ideal forms of the child's speech development. They appear in the particular conditions of the interaction and somehow influence the very first language steps of the child. As a result, the child's learning in communicative events (in the social-semiotic acts of dialogicality) comes to lead her language development.

There is another important implication from this dialogical or microgenetic view of learning-leading-development. Communicative events are nested in the fields of socio-ideological normativity that tend to centralise the heteroglossia and polyphony inherent in living events. Consequently, every discourse presupposes an interested action in which the speakers use value-laden words to express this ideological normativity (preferred meanings) and to take a particular position of power in relation to the other. As Bakhtin (1981: 401) puts it:

> When we seek to understand a word, what matters is not the direct meaning the word gives to objects and emotions - that is the false front of the word; what

matters is the actual and always self-interested use to which this meaning is put and the way it is expressed by the speaker ... Who speaks and under what conditions he [sic] speaks: this is what determines the word's actual meaning.

Hence, in analysing the dialogical events of learning, it is not enough to say that discourse structures subjectivities and their developmental telos. Rather, through these evaluative viewpoints, speakers seek to perform the preferred meanings or to resist their closure. Dialogicality within systems of meaning presupposes both the acts of power directed to normalise developmental teloi, stylising speech patterns and finalising meanings, and the acts of heteroglossic ('cacophonous') resistance to power, subverting the language of the powerful, renewing meanings and diversifying developmental trajectories.

While Vygotsky puts an emphasis on the role of finalised, shared (and most certainly privileged) forms of knowledge and meaning in constructing the ZPD for learning-leading-development, Bakhtin gives yet another perspective. In his view, the dialogical tension (a conflict) can be seen as leading *multiple* developmental trajectories. In cases when the social purview is not shared or is peripherally shared, the developmental telos for learning within the ZPD might be disrupted. This is, from the Bakhtinian perspective, not a negative thing at all. Rather, Bakhtin's (1981: 368) allegiance to heteroglossia provides a way of conceiving tension and difference as a productive force, leading to new forms of intellectual development in a dialogue of differences:

> It is necessary that heteroglossia wash over a culture's awareness of itself and its language, penetrate to its core, relativize the primary language system underlying its ideology ... and deprive it of its *naive absence of conflict...* (emphasis added)

Interacting consciousnesses neither coincide all the time and in all living dialogic events, nor can they be constantly consumed by each other. This gives the possibility for two thoughts to coexist instead of one, for many ways of seeing the world rather than the assumed correct one, for a double reading of a text instead of the sole appropriate one, etc. That is why Bakhtin (1990: 87) asks the questions: "In what way would it enrich the event if I merged with the other, and instead of *two* there would be only *one*? And what would I myself gain by the other's merging with me?" In his answer he rejects the notion of shared consciousness - and, similarly, of common knowledge - as the stable basis for conflict resolution. If we imagine that in a dialogic contact our social personality merged with the other's, then as Bakhtin (ibid.) points out:

> He [sic] would see and know no more than what I see and know myself; he would merely repeat in himself that want of any issue out of itself which characterises my own life. Let him rather remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my life.

Such relative independence of consciousnesses in the Bakhtinian model of dialogical learning should not be confused with extreme forms of relativism. Neither do the independence and coexistence of consciousnesses contradict the fact that the psyche is a socially and ideologically created phenomenon. A dialogue of differences is an interaction between different social and epistemological positions realised in the material of the sign. As such, the relative distinctiveness of consciousnesses represents a conflict between distinct and recognised ideologies. As Bakhtin (1981: 326) puts it, "oppositions between individuals are only surface upheavals of the untamed elements in social heteroglossia, surface manifestations of those elements that play on such individual oppositions, make them contradictory". Because the dialogical mind is a community of different and often conflicting overtones, a conflict in the Bakhtinian model is not a hindrance but, rather, a generative force enabling rich learning in the context of social semiotic and intellectual diversity.

Notwithstanding differences between Vygotskian and Bakhtinian views of learning in dialogical events (the former stressing a common ground and similarity and the latter emphasising a conflict of differences), their respective positions are mutually enriching rather than exclusive. If both are taken into account, they give a more systematic picture of the microgenetic unfolding of psychological functions in communicative situations characterised by the tension between the universal and the particular, the centrifugal and the centripetal, identity and alterity, inter- and intra-subjectivity.

4.2 Implications of the heterochronous method for L2 literacy research

The Vygotskian heterochronous analysis of language, literacy and psychological development has a number of implications for reconceptualising L2 literacy research. Specifically, this historical-systemic perspective proves that language learning occurs neither due to the 'language instinct' (Pinker 1994) nor as an unconscious reaction to the linguistic structuration of the psyche. Rather, it takes place in the realm of historical semiotically mediated practices of culture. In these practices the social and the mental collide. This is not a Newtonian collision after which one thing destroys the other, i.e., either 'mind' is a victor over 'social variables' or it gets swallowed by social structures and is reduced to unconscious responses. In Vygotsky's view, it is critical to understand this encounter historically. When the opposites collide, they create new 'phenomena in movement' realised in complex systems of cultural-historical practices, meanings and psychologies, and materialised in cultural-semiotic artefacts.

From this systemic perspective, the larger time-scales of historical practices give meaning to those events in which individuals participate 'here and now'. The intellectual development of individuals is inseparable from the broader historical development of humankind, its various cultural-semiotic practices and social institutions. As such, learning how to live culturally - how to participate in various social practices and how to use cultural-semiotic artefacts - means to inherit the cultural-historical patterns of behaviour (Vygotsky & Luria 1994). It is especially with the learning of language and literacy that "cultural-historical genesis and phylogenesis become intertwined, thereby creating uniquely human psychological functions" (Cole 1999: 89). This perspective on learning and development is of paramount significance for L2 literacy research, as it makes interconnections between learning in classrooms and the historical diversity of semiotic resources and technologies.

The focus on the time-scale of general history reveals that human beings have created and used multiple means of semiosis. While language is the primary and, arguably, the most powerful and versatile tool in the cultural-historical 'tool kit' of humanity (Bruner 1990), there is a variety of secondary semiotic systems such as various sign-systems, art, print literacies and the new techno-literacies. What becomes increasingly important in the new conditions of historicity is a critical engagement with the relationship of language education to the new semiotic technologies, with the connection of schooled literacy to multiliteracies (Green & Bigum 1993; Luke & Luke 2001; New London Group 2000). The challenge of L2 research in this regard is to reconceptualise L2 literacy education in connection to the effects and demands posed by new technological and multimodal literacies to ESL learners (Warschauer 2000).

The focus on the time-scale of cultural phylogeny reveals the interconnectedness of language, culture and learning. Of significance here is that every individual 'follows the road' of sociocultural groups, in learning how make meaning of the world, i.e., in learning how to speak, read and write, as well as to use other semiotic technologies of culture. The individuals recapitulate, as it were, the history of the community in the *present* as they participate in everyday activities. It is, therefore, by attending to the dimension of cultural phylogeny, that research can provide ongoing opportunities for understanding the role of culture in L2 and literacy learning more fully.

As Moll (2000) argues, this can be done by research into communities' 'funds of knowledge' - the bodies of knowledge that underlie a variety of cultural activities. Literacy research inspired by Vygotsky "seeks culture" in present "human practices, situated in people's involvement with (and creation of) the multiple contexts that constitute their social world" (ibid.: 258). It is in this way that we can "look at and ... see within the individual child the

intellectual and labouring capacities of cultures in local microcosm" (Luke & Luke 2001: 93). According to Gutiérrez (2000), the recognition of linguistic and ethnic diversity as well as of diversity in mediational tools and learning contexts can bring about changes at the core of educational practices. However, research into the domain of cultural practices will not bring substantive change unless culture itself is reconceptualised as a dynamic phenomenon.

Despite Vygotsky's emphasis on cultural dynamics, the traditional usage of his theory in L2 research and education operates predominantly with a static and unexamined notion of culture. What is needed in sociocultural studies of L2 literacy is the recognition that today most immigrant-receiving countries have reached a critical juncture in their cultural-historical phylogeny. New cultural conditions are characterised by ideological flux triggered by the unprecedented flow of people, information, texts, material and cultural capital. While this dynamic has a tangible impact on sociocultural formations, practices and human development, the ideology of static and homogenous culture limits a potential diversity of resources for literacy learning to the dominant ones subjugating the 'funds of knowledges' and languages of students from migrant and minority groups. Therefore, Vygotskian L2 research must address classroom practices critically to show the constraints imposed on the participation, learning and, indeed, ontogenesis of children from minority groups.

In many ways research into cultural phylogeny (into the present conditions of cultural-historical dynamics) can lead to interventionist research on the level below - into an ontogenetic analysis of the new life pathways and learning experiences of L2 students. On this level of analysis 'the history of the sign' becomes connected to the historical making of the L2 learner in a new society. The life pathways of L2 students and their identities are characterised by changes and mutations that can not be grasped fully within the grid maps of traditional assimilative education and cultural politics. One way to understand this mutation is to study 'the history of the sign' - discourses and semiotic technologies - that constitutes L2 learners as particular types of persons.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the L2 learner is already constructed, as the foreign and marginal Other, even before s/he enters classroom practices of a new society (Toohey 2000). The hegemonic discourses of otherness on the level of cultural phylogeny naturalise certain evaluative judgements and hence, once internalised, function as psychological tools in constructing distinct sign-mediated practices and modes of intercultural communication. Because of this, the foreign Other is 'hailed' with racial prejudices and is positioned in the classroom as a linguistically and often cognitively deviant person. Thus, the ontogenetic development of L2 learners is historically re-shaped through the deployment of broader

cultural discourses in classrooms. The L2 student becomes systematically formed as a particular subjectivity and in this sense "categorised, classified and distributed along a scale, along a norm and, if necessary, is disqualified and invalidated" (Foucault 1972: 49).

Positive change on the level of ontogeny will not occur unless connections are made between the previous history of the L2 learner and the current making of her identity. The task of Vygotskian research in this regard is to contribute to the transformation of sign-mediated practices in educational settings, leading to the fuller participation of L2 learners in classroom activities. This requires both the recognition of the L2 learner as an historical person who has to 'repeat' her ontogenetic history in new cultural-linguistic conditions. That is, no matter how well the L2 learner orients herself in the discourses and practices of her culture, in the new cultural context she is "thrown back in time ... floundering in the depth of a vast, forgotten zone of earlier, less complete [language] development" (Verity 2000: 183). What has been automatic, subtle and fun in L1 communication is suddenly obscure, laborious and worrisome in the context of L2 learning. It is important then to understand the affective-emotional sphere of the L2 learner from this point of view rather than to interpret language and literacy learning difficulties as some sort of cognitive deficit. This may require fundamental changes in the ways classroom learning is discursively patterned and assessed.

To recognise the L2 learner as a different cultural-historical person means also to acknowledge that schooled literacy is not a perfectly ordered and finalised field of meanings. The monological patterns of the dominant epistemology can be disrupted within classroom communities of difference or, in Bakhtinian terms, within the 'eventness' of intercultural encounters. The recognition of difference in intercultural communication can transcend the finalisability of meaning and reveal "new semantic depth" through the 'surplus' of vision (Bakhtin 1986: 7). According to Bakhtin (ibid.), living and learning in a multicultural community presuppose a degree of 'living into' the cultural other and hence viewing "the world through the eyes of this foreign culture". Clearly then when one culture or group faces another, the experience is conditioned by the ideology of 'otherness'. But in the moral-evaluative sense one can also see something in the Other that one does not see in oneself. Therefore, research into the intercultural dynamics of L2 learners can be a promising direction to pursue to reveal the 'semantic depth' of psychological transformations and hence to capture cultural-semiotic hybridity in ontogenesis.

Lastly, the focus of research on microgenetic events is crucial for exploring the richness of dialogical events and collective ZPDs produced in the activities of L2 literacy learning. Again, it is important here not to lose one's sensitivity to ideological power, i.e., to its semiotic fluidity across microgenetic learning events. Bakhtin (1981: 279) emphasises that

a dialogical deployment of a word occurs in "an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object ... overlain with qualifications ... [and] charged with value". The process of internalisation of the L2 'words' simultaneously involves subjection - a constitution of speaking subjects (Foucault 1980b). Yet talking of lines of subjection, both Bakhtin and Foucault discuss lines of 'breakage' and of 'fracture' (Deleuze 1995). In untangling these lines within the social 'architectonics' of dialogical events, Bakhtin (1981: 276) says that:

> The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements, and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group.

Because L2 literacy learning occurs within this complex 'tension-filled environment', microgenetic meaning-making is open, at least potentially, to dispute. The potential to diversify or rupture meaning by L2 learners originates partly from their multiple cultural temporalities and incomplete developmental trajectories and partly from the possibility of deploying 'alien' words and ideas. Meaning in an 'elastic environment' of semiotic events will be shared only provisionally. Microgenesis, as a chain of living events, is not about a mere duplication of meanings. This will not entail anything new and enriching. Rather, a dialogue of the recognised differences will lead to rich intellectual outcomes only when meanings are unfixed critically and the diversity of perspectives and resources is utilised democratically.

Hence, heterogeneity must be an organising principle of educational practice and research into L2 dialogical learning. The studies conducted by Gutiérrez et al. (1995, 1999) show that diversity as a resource for mutually enriching learning leads the cognitive development of students in multicultural classrooms. It is important to advance this research direction further to explore the consequences and possibilities of those learning events in which diversity is not "reduced to a single consciousness" (Bakhtin 1986: 141). While traditional psycholinguistic approaches study the input-processing mechanisms within 'minds', they also edit out the role of the Other in meaning-making. By contrast, L2 researchers in the Vygotskian tradition (e.g. Hall 1995) put consciousness on the border between Self and Other to argue for the co-creative nature of understanding. L2 learning can not be localised within the artificially constructed borders of a single mind because this would involve the view of autonomous understanding as "a translation from the other's language into one's own" (Bakhtin 1986: 141). The co-creative view of learning-leading-development is not only about an alternative epistemological position. This is a political position emphasising L2 learners' performativity in the ongoing practice of learning critically. Significant here is that 'critical' does not represent a single consciousness but *multiple* perspectives born in the

intercultural 'symposium' of voices, searching for new meanings collectively and dialogically.

Conclusion

This chapter argues for the importance of heterochronous analysis in research of language and literacy learning and development. Four time-scales are identified from the literature for a more encompassing analysis of psychological phenomena in semiotically mediated social practices: *general history, cultural phylogeny, ontogenesis,* and *microgenesis.* These time-scales of analysis can be better understood as a system of relations in which every higher-scalar domain functions to reorganise domains below (Lemke 2000). With a particular emphasis on the role of language and other semiotic systems in human practices we can say that cross-historically there have emerged multiple systems of semiosis. These semiotic systems play a distinctive role in the formation of expressly human psychologies. Each culture utilises those semiotic systems in multiple ways to socialise its members to practices, discourses and knowledges or, in a word, to cultural literacies. Consequently, social individuals 'follow the road' of cultural phylogeny as they participate in practices, especially as they learn how to communicate, read, write, and make sense of the world. What happens in microgenetic practice events - 'here and now' - becomes necessarily embedded in larger 'genetic domains' of 'there and then'. This systemic heterochronous view of meaning-making, learning and development attends to culture as a connecting pivot of chronotopes. Cultural artefacts (texts, signs, images, etc.) tie temporalities together, flow across times and, indeed, both afford and constrain situated meaning-making.

However, in my discussion of heterochronous analysis I also elaborate the Vygotskian approach, especially with regard to complex mutations occurring across and between time-scales of development. In so doing, I argue against those interpretations of Vygotsky's theory that reintroduce unrepentantly structuralist, monosemic and linear conceptions of development. When the concepts of culture and cultural telos remain unexamined, learning and development are seen as a progressive adaptation to meanings fixed in signs. Culture in such conceptions tends to be peripheralised into the background as a 'one-size-fits-all' container or a monolithic entity determining human behaviour and action (Gutiérrez 2000). What we need today, then, is to reactivate 'culture' within the cultural-historical theory of learning and development and to rearticulate its centrality in literacy and language learning. Because Vygotsky's theory-method represents any phenomenon in contradiction and movement, we need to detect and build upon those ideas of Vygotsky that appeal to cultural diversity, social dynamics and semiotic hybridity. This work also requires some radical moves to make Vygotskian perspectives more congruent and sensitive to contemporary issues in language and literacy learning research.

In the next chapter I intend to elaborate the conception of culture as an historically mutating semiotic polysystem. In so doing, my next goal is to bring the problem of cultural dynamics to the fore to address the challenges of L2 literacy learning in the complex semiotic ecologies of intercultural practices.