

# PLAY AS A MEETING SPACE OF THINKING AND SPEECH

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# Cultural development of a child

- Cultural development can be seen as the process of appropriation (acquisition) of **psychological tools** or cultural mediators (**word**, sign, symbol, etc.) that are used to regulate/master and control own “natural” psychological functions of perception, memory, attention, imagination, **thinking processes**, and etc.
- Play is the prototype environment for the cultural development of the child in early years (Vygotsky): *creative imagination* (flexibility of thinking), *narrativity* and *symbol construction* are developed in play.

# We understand children's play as:

- A movement from 'thinking' using body movements and actions (gesture language) to thinking in words (concepts)
- Nonverbal form of narration - organizing ones thoughts into a story form.

# The successive stages in the development of child's thinking

Ability to create an image in one's head serves as the basis for defining the development of child's thinking (cultural-historical approach):

- *visual-operational* [наглядно-действенный],
- to *visual-pictorial* [наглядно-образный],
- *abstract-logical* [абстрактно-логический].

Bruner (1996) proposed three modes of representation:

- *enactive representation* (action-based),
- *iconic representation* (image-based),
- *symbolic representation* (language-based).

# Play

- Vygotsky understood play and its role in the development of human consciousness as “movement from concrete operations to abstract thinking” and stressed that development of speech and thinking has a key role in this process. Therefore it is important to analyze the development of speech and thinking while trying to explain children’s play.

# The sequence of speech development (Vygotsky, 1997):

1. Pre-speech stage (before 9-months-of-age), natural, primitive – at this stage if the child needs something they make identical sounds (cries) in different situations, and this is purely external action, depending on direct or conditioned reflexes.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWsrsKnGulA&list=UL\\_JmA2CIUvUY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWsrsKnGulA&list=UL_JmA2CIUvUY)

1. Magical, natural stage (about 2–3-years) – a child relates to a word as one of the properties of a thing together with its other properties. The external connection of things is assumed to be the psychological connection or connections between things are seen as connections between thoughts.
2. External stage (about 4–5-years) – a child uses words as signs (egocentric speech). They discover basic external structure of speech; the child notices that there is a word for everything; that given word is the conditional designation of the thing (symbolic function).
3. Internal speech (about 9–10-years) – stage of authentic thinking.









The connections between the *object*, the *action* and *word* in role-playing (El'konin, 1999; Lukov, 1937; Vygodskaia, 1966)

- At the beginning of imaginary play two relatively separate systems coexist:
  - 1) system of connections between the word and **actions**
  - (2) system of connections between the *object* and **actions**.
- At the end of this period, “the connections between actions and an object and with the word signifying the object constitute one single dynamic structure” (El'konin, 1999, p. 56).



# References:

- <http://herkules.oulu.fi/isbn9789514296147/isbn9789514296147.pdf>
- <http://forumoswiatowe.pl/index.php/czasopismo/issue/view/1>
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