

Sociocultural theories draw on L. S. Vygotsky's (1978, 1987) insights into the social nature of learning but also on the work of more contemporary theorists who have extended and modified his ideas (e.g. Wertsch 1998; Rogoff 2003). Lave & Wenger's (1991) work has been used by many language researchers allied with sociocultural theory, especially with respect to their construct, LEGITIMATE PERIPHERAL PARTICIPATION, which represented their view that communities are composed of participants who differentially engage with the practices of their communities, and that this engagement or participation in practice is 'learning'. Stressing the importance of local analysis of communities, they pointed out that conditions vary with regard to ease of access to expertise, to opportunities for practice, to consequences for error in practice, and so on. Lave & Wenger discussed the importance of not sequestering newcomers away from participation in community activities, if they are to learn. Such studies are sometimes more psychological in orientation (examples are Lantolf 2000; Lantolf & Thorne 2006; Swain et al. 2010); sometimes they are more anthropologically– and sociologically– focused (Kostogriz & Tsolidis 2008; Toohey 1998, 2000; Toohey & Norton 2010). Vygotsky (1978) argued that humans act on the world with tools (both physical and symbolic), and emphasized the symbolic tool of language, proposing that children gain 'increasing control over the mediational means made available by their culture, including language for interpersonal (social interaction) and intrapersonal (thinking) purposes' (Lantolf 2000: 8). Sociocultural theories have been frequently drawn upon in studies of SLA