CONTENT

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-37
UDC 159.99

L.S. Vygotsky: History of the Future

Yuri P. Zinchenko [1, 2], Vladimir S. Sobkin [2] ✉

[1] Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation
[2] Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ sobkin@mail.ru

Abstract
Background. The current article reflects the central concept of thisjournal issue, dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the death of L.S. Vygotsky — an outstanding Russian scientist, whose works had a notable influence on the development of psychology and pedagogy worldwide.
Objectives. The goal is to demonstrate the relevance of the principles of the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vygotsky in current psychological and pedagogical science and practice.
Results. The article reveals the content of the publications of the journal issue devoted to the sources describing the emergence of Vygotsky's scientific school, his biography, and empirical, theoretical and methodological research carried out in line with the cultural-historical approach. It also displays Vygotsky's invaluable contribution to the development of education and science both in Russia and abroad.
Conclusion. The articles presented in this issue discuss the fundamental principles and postulates of the cultural-historical approach, and outline ways to concretise research into the the idea of the systemic and semantic structure of consciousness. The significant contribution of the Faculty of Psychology at Moscow State University to the development of research in the field of cultural-historical psychology is especially noted. The wide presentation of the results to the scientific community and their introduction into pedagogical practice are highlighted.
Keywords: cultural-historical psychology, L.S. Vygotsky, Faculty of Psychology, Moscow State University, history of psychology, interdisciplinary research, theoretical research, empirical research

For citation: Zinchenko, Yu.P., Sobkin, V.S. (2024). L.S. Vygotsky: history of the future. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 6–15. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-37

In the year preceding the 270th anniversary of Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Faculty of Psychology at Moscow University turns to the figure of L.S. Vygotsky to recall the unprecedented role he played in the development of global psychological science. The memorial issue of "Lomonosov Psychology Journal" was prepared for the 90th anniversary of th death of the greatest psychologist of the 20th century, Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896–1934). Without reaching the age of fourty, he had left behind remarkable works in various fields of psychology, which, in their scientific depth and audacity of thought, were far ahead of their time. They are still relevant today, almost one hundred years later. Moreover, the principles of the cultural-historical approach to the study of the human psyche formulated by Vygotsky are acquiring increasing theoretical and methodological significance in the context of today's global historical events, socio-cultural transformations and rapid techno-evolutionary processes.

For the Faculty of Psychology at Moscow State University, the moral, ethical and ideological position of Vygotsky is especially important i.e., his personal attitude towards science. This is understandable, since his closest students and colleagues — A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Luria, B.D. Elkonin, A.V. Zaporozhets, P.Ya. Galperin, B.V. Zeigarnik and others — played a significant role in the creation of the faculty. Each of them followed their own scientific paths, but sought to implement an approach to solving professional problems that saw them as personal and meaningful, preserving and developing the scientific school of Vygotsky. The "Psychologist's Day", approved by order of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, in 2023, is inextricably linked with the achievements of this school.

Most of the articles in this issue were prepared by the students of these founders, or by students of their students. So, in line with the well-known "six degrees of separation" theory, many of the authors of this issue are just one or two "handshakes" away from Lev Semenovich Vygotsky himself. In this regard, not only the recording of the key concepts of his theory, but also the desire to reveal their inner meaning is of particular interest in these articles. This determines the uniqueness of the problematisation of a wide range of key issues of Vygotsky's theory: on the identification of contradictions as a fundamental principle of the dialectical method for analysing mental processes, on the relationship between experience and ideal form in a social situation of development, on the need to conduct research on psychological processes in phylo- and ontogenesis, on the need for structural-functional analysis, on the relationship between natural and higher mental functions, on the interiorisation of social relations as a mechanism of socialisation, on personally significant tasks in the learning

process, on artistic experience and catharsis, on overcoming the crisis in modern psychology, etc.

The materials of the current issue are grouped into four substantive sections: 1) "Theoretical Research", 2) "Empirical Research"; 3) "History of Psychology"; 4) "Discussions, Reflections". Below is a brief description of the works contained in the issue.

In the first section, the collective article by T.Yu. Bazarov, E.P. Belinskaya, O.A. Tikhomandritskaya pays special attention to the problem of contextual interaction. The authors emphasise the methodological significance and relevance of L.S. Vygotsky's works for social psychology in studying the relationship between social context and social changes. Such a principle turns out to be especially productive in studying issues related to social choice and a person's ability to resist the power of a situation.

In the article by N.E. Veraksa, the main emphasis is placed on discussing dialectical analysis, which L.S. Vygotsky used to study problems of mental development in childhood. It is emphasised that Vygotsky singled out relations of opposites as invariant units of analysis. This allowed him to conduct a holistic study both at the structural and content levels, and such transitions from the structural level to the content level allowed him to describe specific development options.

The article by O.A. Karabanova is devoted to the analysis of experience and the "ideal form" in the structure of a social situation of development in relation to the dynamics of psychological age. The author emphasises that the unit of the social situation of development is an experience that implements the active-effective biased position of the child in relation to the world. At the same time, the social environment provides ideal forms as standards of historically developed forms and human abilities that contain the development potential specific to each of the age stages. These forms are assigned, according to Vygotsky, on the basis of cooperation through experience in connection with the development of the sphere of motivation and need during the period of age-related developmental crises. Using the example of a comparative analysis of crises at three and seven years of age, the article shows the age trajectory of the allocation of experiences, their differentiation, and awareness of the attitude to the Self.

In his original article, E.V. Subbotsky raises the issue of the need to rethink the relationship between the significance of innate psychological abilities and the role of culture in development. The author emphasizes that Vygotsky's cultural-historical method, based on the use of symbolic (sign) forms, does not take into account the significance of natural mental functions in human development, "squeezing" living consciousness into

channels programmed by logic and culture. However, this method, in the author's opinion, is insufficient for studying subjective experiences, motivation, emotions, and creative thinking.

The article by E. Tunes and Z.R. Prestes discusses the problem of translating concepts of cultural-historical theory into other languages, and in particular into Portuguese. Using the example of translating the concept of the "zone of proximal development", it is shown how the originality of L.S. Vygotsky's concept is distorted ("simplified"). The authors emphasise that the basis for translating a text should be the philosophical, ethical and historical-cultural ideas of the translated author.

G.A. Zuckerman and O.L. Obukhova in their article, which is extremely important for modern education, highlight Vygotsky's widespread thesis that "learning leads development", emphasising the importance of the ability to learn at primary school age. In this regard, the very concept of "the leading role of learning" presupposes the development of subjectivity when a person encounters a personally significant task. That is, understanding one's deficiencies and the ability to compensate for them. However, in their opinion, "learning subjectivity" can only enter the "zone of proximal development" upon a certain organisation of the educational environment. Therefore, it is extremely important to trace the connection between the structure of the "learning task" and the structure of the ability to learn. At the same time, it is important to determine the role of an adult both in designing the learning task and in organising the children's work by setting the learning task andsearching for means of solving it.

The second section "Empirical Research" presents three articles that differ in their goals and objectives, as well as in their research methods. In a collective article, D.A. Bukhalenkova, A.N. Veraksa, U.D. Guseva, and E.S. Oshchepkova, based on Vygotsky's idea of the unity of affect and intellect, set themselves the goal of studying the relationship and mutual influence of speech and emotional development based on the volume of vocabulary, emotional vocabulary and the level of understanding of emotions at preschool age. When examining a representative sample of two groups of children aged 5 and 6 years (341 children) using a battery of test techniques, the authors discovered that speech development affects the understanding of emotions in preschool children. At the same time, with age there was found to be an increase in the volume of general and emotional vocabulary of children, as well as the ability to understand emotions.

Another type of empirical research is presented by A.M. Lutsenko and A.S. Spivakovskaya, whose article is devoted to the analysis of the experience of "family pain" in the context of the cultural-historical approach of

L.S. Vygotsky. This study involved 52 mentally healthy people who grew up in alcoholic families and attended the rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics". In this case, "family pain" is defined by the authors as a constant experience that accompanies a person throughout life due to past traumatic experiences. Using phenomenological analysis, the authors identified six motives for people who grew up in alcoholic families to turn to a self-help rehabilitation programme (overcoming communication difficulties, loss of parents, the desire to find people with similar experiences, seeking emotional support, justifying their own failures, the desire to cope with negative current states regarding childhood experiences).

The reason for the study conducted by V.S. Sobkin and T.A. Lykova was Vygotsky's article "On the Question of the Psychology of the Actor's Creativity" (Vygotsky, 1984), where the problem of the relationship between personal characteristics and professional activity was formulated. The authors conducted a comprehensive survey of 76 second- and third-year drama students using specially selected personality questionnaires. The questionnaires of R.B. Cattell (16 PF), G. Eysenck (EPI), "Big Five" (B5-10), the Dark Triad questionnaire, and the Empathy Questionnaire of A.A. Mehrabyan were used. As a result of the factor analysis of the respondents' indicators, 10 factors were identified that characterise complex personality formations: emotional excitability, sensitivity to moral restrictions, empathy, openness to experience, publicity, sincerity, emotional inclusion in the group, insight, individualism, and freethinking. These complexes of personal characteristics are considered from the standpoint of the content and organisation of the actor's training process.

The third section, "History of Psychology," examines a wide range of issues that concern the modern perception of cultural-historical theory (N.N. Veresov), the heuristic potential of L.S. Vygotsky's concept (T.D. Martsinkovskaya), the importance of Vygotsky's early works on the psychology of art (V.S. Sobkin).

N.N. Veresov analysed texts of L.S. Vygotsky relating to different stages of his scientific path, including biographical materials and analytical publications of authors studying the legacy of Vygotsky, which enabled the reconstruction of the logic and driving forces behind the development of the theoretical approaches of L.S. Vygotsky.

The article by T.D. Martsinkovskaya presents a complete picture of the dynamics of Vygotsky's views on the issues of development of the psyche, sign-based tools, the social situation of development and crises as factors determining the boundaries of possible changes in personality.

Therelationship between affect and intellect throughout ontogenesis and the transformation of the concept of "interiorisation" is revealed.

A detailed analysis of Vygotsky's work "Psychology of Art" (Vygotsky, 1925, 1968) is presented in the article by V.S. Sobkin. It shows that, when studying aesthetic reactions and cathartic experiences, Vygotsky used not only the principles of structural, functional and genetic analysis of a work of art, but also a wide range of psychotechnical techniques aimed at interpreting its meaning. It was revealed that subsequent critical assessments of the "Psychology of Art" were clearly influenced not only by the theoretical principles of various authors, but also by ideological subtexts.

Of particular interest is the article by N.L. Savchenko and M.V. Siyan presenting the text of three previously unknown letters from Vygotsky to E.I. Kheifets, which were written by him in 1918, 1920, and 1921, and discovered by the authors in the archive of D.I. Vygodsky. The analysis conducted by the authors showed that the letters represent unique material for understanding the experiences and moral and ethical views of the young Vygotsky.

The issue ends with the section "Discussions, Reflections". It presents an extremely relevant article by G.G. Kravtsov and O.G. Kravtsov, which emphasises Vygotsky's role as the creator of the scientific psychology of the future. The article argues that the deadly crisis for psychology, which Vygotsky analysed, has not gone away but hastransitioned from an acute to chronic form. The authors see the main reason for the impasse that psychology has reached as the eclecticism of theoretical foundations and the desire of psychological science to become similar to the positive sciences in the field of natural science.

The article discusses the fundamental principles and postulates of the cultural-historical approach and outlinesways to concretise research into the idea of the systemic and semantic structure of consciousness.

* * *

The contribution of L.S. Vygotsky to the development of education and science was reflected in the establishment of a number of Russian and international awards. In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, on the proposal of the Faculty of Psychology of Moscow University and the Russian Psychological Society, established the L.S. Vygotsky Medal. In the same year, the L.S. The Vygotsky Center in Lisbon (Portugal), together with its branches in Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Luanda (Angola), in collaboration with the Faculty of Psychology of Moscow University and the Russian Psychological Society, held a Confe-

rence in Memory of L.S. Vygotsky in Estoril (Portugal). In 2019, the XVI European Psychological Congress was held for the first time in Russia at Moscow University, where followers of L.S. Vygotsky's theory from all over the world met. Thanks to the efforts of the Russian Psychological Society, the International L.S. Vygotsky Prize was established for the first time at the Congress.

The cultural and historical line of research is currently being implemented within the framework of the plan of the main events held within the Decade of Childhood, approved by the Government of the Russian Federation in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin No. 240 of May 29, 2017 "On the declaration of the Decade of Childhood in the Russian Federation". Among the most important tasks of this plan is the implementation of activities aimed at researching modern childhood. Over 1,000 teachers and 300 researchers from various regions of the Russian Federation are already participating in the childhood research project "Growing Together", initiated by Moscow University together with the Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research. The results of the project are reflected in more than 300 scientific publications and more than 200 media appearances, as well as in methodological materials addressed to teachers and parents. Every year, the Faculty of Psychology of Moscow State University holds a summer school for young scientists of the project "Psychology of Education: Modern Research", in which over200 participants from Kazakhstan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Serbia, and more than 20 regions of the Russian Federation took part in 2024.

Every year, more than 300 experts in the field of education, linguistics, medicine, psychology and other sciences from 40 countries speak at the open international forum "Child in the Digital World", organised by the Faculty of Psychology at Moscow State University together with the Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research with an audience of over 10,000 specialists from all over the world.The Forum has received the general auspices of UNESCO, and the support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, the Federation Council Committee on Science, Education and Culture, and the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO (more information about the Forum can be found on the website https://digitalchildhood.org).

Presentation of research results in the field of cultural-historical psychology to both Russian and international scientific community is the most important task implemented by the Faculty of Psychology of Mos-

cow State University. Thus, in the last few years alone, invited editors and authors from the Faculty of Psychology at Moscow State University have organised the publication of special issues devoted to the cultural-historical understanding of childhood in prestigious scientific periodicals such as the National Psychological Journal (issue 3 (47) for 2022, dedicated to the research of E.O. Smirnova, invited editor — V.S. Sobkin), Psychology in Russia (issue dedicated to the works of P.Ya. Galperin, invited editors — O.A. Karabanova, I. Ingenes; issue 14 (4) for 2021, dedicated to research in the mainstream of cultural-historical psychology, invited editors — Yu. Solovyova, A. Kuttsoklenis), International Journal of Early Years Education (issue 30 (3) for 2022, dedicated to research on play and toys in the works of E.E. Kravtsova and E.O. Smirnova, guest editors — N.E. Veraksa, B. van Ours), "Frontiers in Psychology" (a section devoted to the relationship between play and learning in preschool age, guest editors — N.E. Veraksa, E. Colliver, I. Pramling Samuelsson). Lomonosov Psychology Journal (issue 2 for 2023) published a thematic issue for the anniversary of L.S. Vygotsky's follower — A.N. Leontiev (guest editors — A.G. Asmolov, E.V. Bityutskaya, B.S. Bratus, D.A. Leontiev, D.V. Ushakov). More than 100,000 specialists around the world have read these publications, indicating a high level of demand for works in this area.

The last few years have been marked by the publication of monographs based on research materials in the field of cultural-historical psychology, many of which have attracted great attention from the professional community (Smirnova, 2022; Zinchenko, 2021; Zinchenko, Morosanova, 2020, etc.). In 2011, a book in French was published: "Vygotsky, une théorie du développement et de l'éducation" ("Vygotsky: Theory of Development and Education"), edited by Yu.P. Zinchenko and F. Yvon (Yvon, Zinchenko, 2011). In 2021, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Professional Development of Spain, the book "Las investigaciones actuales sobre las teorías de Vygotsky en Educación Infantil" ("Current research in preschool education based on the theory of L.S. Vygotsky") edited by N.E. Veraksa, S. Sheridan (Veraksa, Sheridan, 2021) was published. Springer has published two monographs in English dedicated to the results of joint theoretical and empirical research by Russian and international experts: "Piaget and Vygotsky in the XXI century: Discourse in early childhood education" edited by N.E. Veraksa, I. Pramling Samuelsson (Veraksa, Pramling Samuelsson, 2022) and "Child Development in Russia: Perspectives from an international longitudinal study" edited by A.N. Veraksa (Veraksa, 2022). The authors of the monographs were more than 30 researchers from

8 countries, which once again emphasises the importance of developing this approach to understanding and studying childhood.

In addition, a series of works researching the field of psychology of art can be singled out as a special area (Sobkin, 2015; 2022). In 2023, a special issue of the National Psychological Journal dedicated to the psychology of art was published (issue 3 (51), guest editor — V.S. Sobkin). In the same year, the All-Russian scientific and practical conference "Problems of the Psychology of Art" was held at the Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research together with the Moscow City Pedagogical University and the Faculty of Psychology at Lomonosov Moscow State University, onthe materials of which a collection of articles was published (Sobkin et al., 2023). In Brazil in 2023, a reprint of the journal "Veresk" by L.S. Vygotsky was published (Prestes et al., 2023) with an introductory article, comments and notes by V.S. Sobkin. In 2024, the author's issue of the journal "Educacio em FOCO" (Brazil) O Tríptico de L.S. Vigotski was published, based on three author's articles by V.S. Sobkin in Portuguese, dedicated to the religious quest of L.S. Vygotsky (Sobkin et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c).

Introducing this issue of the journal, we hope that the materials published in it will evoke a lively response from readers.

References

Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Lopes, J.J.M., Chaves, M. (Orgs.). (2023). Veresk. Edição comemorativa de 100 anos. São Carlos: Pedro & João Editores.

Smirnova, E.O. (2022). Psychological and pedagogical studies of preschool childhood. Selected articles. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2015). Comments on Lev Vygotsky's theater reviews. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education of the Russian Academy of Education Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2022). Lev Vygotsky's "Tragicomedy of Searches": an attempt to reconstruct the author's meanings. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A., Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Santos, d.A.E. (2024a). "Linhas do Luto": Sobre a Autodeterminação Nacional e Cultural de L.S. Vigotski. *Educação em Foco*, (29), e29005.

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A., Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Santos, d.A.E. (2024b). Lev Vigotski: Sobre Alegria e Tristeza: Comentários ao artigo & quot; Ideias e ânimos & quot. *Educação em Foco*, (29), e29006.

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A., Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Santos, d.A.E. (2024c). Lev Vigotski: Quem Somos, de Onde Viemos e Para Onde Vamos? Acerca da questão da Identidade Nacional e Religiosa. *Educação em Foco*, (29), e29007.

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A., Klimova, T.A., Tashkeyeva, E.I. (eds.). (2023). Problems of the Psychology of Art: Proceedings of the All-Russian Scientific and Practical

Conference. Moscow: Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research Publ.; Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, A. (ed.). (2022). Child Development in Russia: Perspectives from an international longitudinal study. Vol. 3. Springer Nature.

Veraksa, N., Pramling Samuelsson, I. (eds.). (2022). Piaget and Vygotsky in XXI century: Discourse in early childhood education. Vol. 4. Springer Nature.

Veraksa, N., Sheridan, S. (2021). Las investigaciones actuales sobre las teorías de Vygotsky en Educación Infantil. Ediciones Morata.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1925). Psychology of Art. Analysis of Aesthetic Response. Moscow: Text from the Vygotsky Family Archive. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1968). Psychology of Art. Moscow: Iskusstvo Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). On the Psychology of Actor's Creativity. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 6. Scientific Heritage. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Yvon, F., Zinchenko, Y.P. (2011). Vygotsky, une théorie du développement et de l'éducation: recueil de textes et commentaires. Moscou: Université d'État de Moscou Lomonossov. Faculté de psychologie.

Zinchenko, Yu.P. (ed.). (2021). Psychological Support of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Zinchenko, Yu.P., Morosanova, V.I. (eds.). (2020). Psychology of Self-Regulation. Evolution of Approaches and Challenges of the Time: Collective Monograph. Moscow, St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriya Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Yuri P. Zinchenko, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education, Dean of the Faculty of Psychology, Head of the Department of Methodology of Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University; Director of the Federal Scientific Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Editor-in-Chief of the Lomonosov Psychology Journal, Moscow, Russian Federation, zinchenko_y@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9734-1703

Vladimir S. Sobkin, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Academician of RAE, Head of the Center for Socio-Cultural Problems of Modern Education, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Editor-compiler of the issue of the Lomonosov Psychology Journal, Moscow, Russian Federation, sobkin@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2339-9080

Received: 26.08.2024; revised: 06.09.2024; accepted: 16.09.2024.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-38
UDC 316.6

Cultural-Historical Theory and Social Psychology: A Nexus of Ideas

Tahir Yu. Bazarov, Elena P. Belinskaya, Olga A. Tikhomandritskaya ✉

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ otihomandr@mail.ru

Abstract

Background. The relevance of the stated topic is determined by two circumstances: the need to determine the main directions of the theoretical and methodological reflection of modern social psychology and the task of explaining the socio-psychological aspects of cultural-historical theory.

Objective. Consideration of the relationship between the main ideas of the cultural-historical theory of L.S. Vygotsky and the subject field of social psychology.

Methods. The article uses methods of deductive (axiomatic and hypothetico-deductive) and comparative analyses.

Results. The main theses of cultural-historical theory set the development and instantiation of the subject field of social psychology, starting with the well-known discussions of the 1920s. The main provisions can be identified as follows: the idea of the internalisation of social relations as a constructive mechanism of human socialisation; understanding the process of communication as instrumentally mediated by a system of signs which act as a means for a social subject to master his social behaviour; approval of the idea of human activity in interaction, the finite task of which is the formation of a common system of meanings. Using the example of similarities and differences in the historical views of L.S. Vygotsky and J.G. Mead, the authors analyse the possible range of understandings of interaction contextuality. It was the attention of cultural-historical theory to the analysis of interaction that largely determined the further interest of social psychology in the problem of "personality and/or situation", the solution to which is still debatable.

Conclusions. The determining role of L.S. Vygotsky's position for universal social psychology as well as for Russian is associated with the unremitting attention of researchers to one of the fundamental problems in the analysis of man and society, namely, to the problem of human interaction with the surrounding socio-cultural

environment. The requirement to consider the social context as a methodological imperative of modern social psychology sets the main direction for the further development of theoretical and methodological reflection. This main direction is the analysis of possible relationships between the social context and social changes, leading to the need for empirical development of two problems: the individual psychological foundations of social choice and a person's ability to resist the power of the situation.

Keywords: cultural and historical theory, social psychology, socio-cultural determination, social situation, sign, symbol, social context, personality

For citation: Bazarov, T.Yu., Belinskaya, E.P., Tikhomandritskaya, O.A. (2024). Cultural-historical theory and social psychology: a nexus of ideas. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 16–29. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-38

Introduction

Basic ideas of cultural-historical theory and the formation of the subject field of social psychology

Lev S. Vygotsky is one of the most significant figures, not only in Russian psychology of the 20th and 21st centuries, but also in global science. Works of L.S. Vygotsky formed the basis of interdisciplinary knowledge that united a variety of humanities, including psychology, paedagogy, defectology, anthropology, and cultural studies. First, he created the cultural-historical theory, which became one of the methodological foundations for various areas of modern scientific knowledge, including Russian social psychology.

To discuss the role L.S. Vygotsky played in the formation of social psychology as a scientific discipline in Russia, we must turn to the 1920s, when the so-called "first stage" of discussion about the subject matter of social psychology took place.

As is widely known, the discussion of the subject matter framework and, in general, the possibility of such a scientific discipline as social psychology, was started by G.I. Chelpanov. From his point of view, social psychology should have been created within the framework of Marxism, while general psychology should have remained an empirical science, free from any ideological worldview. This idea of G.I. Chelpanov was not supported by a number of psychologists (especially by L.S. Vygotsky), who at that time were striving to rebuild the philosophical foundations of all psychology (Vygotsky, 1983b).

In essence, the discussion started by G.I. Chelpanov touched upon the problem of including psychology in the system of Marxist knowledge, but also posed the problem of defining the subject matter of social psychology; of identifying what, unlike other branches of psychology, this science was supposed to deal with. A variety of proposals were made (for more details see; Andreeva, 1997), but it still was not possible to solve the problem of creating Marxist social psychology in the 1920s. A clear definition of the subject matter of this science was not found. As G.M. Andreeva points out, two different versions of its understanding were mixed. On one hand, social psychology was considered a science of the social determination of mental processes; on the other hand, it was intended to study a special class of phenomena generated by the joint activities of people included in various groups (ibid.). L.S. Vygotsky, participating in the discussion, said that the subject matter of collective psychology (as he called modern social psychology at the time) should be "personal psychology in conditions of collective manifestation (for example, troops, church)" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 20).

As a result, during this discussion in the 1920s, only one aspect of the definition of the subject matter of social psychology was recognised, namely, the doctrine of the social determination of the psyche. However, this same idea extended to other branches of psychological science, which in turn hampered the recognition of social psychology as an independent discipline, delaying this point for several decades until the end of the 1950s (Andreeva, 1997, 2013a).

It can be considered that the very existence of a discussion regarding social psychology set the tone for further development of this science in Russia. Regarding the role of L.S. Vygotsky in the formation of social psychology, it should be noted that the ideas of cultural-historical psychology expressed by him in the 1920s and 1930s turned out to be consistent with that which, in the future, constituted the essence of social psychology. It formed its disciplinary sections and made it possible to subsequently most accurately determine the subject matter and the main theoretical and applied directions of social psychological research.

The theory of higher mental functions by L.S. Vygotsky is most directly related to the development of social psychology. It substantiated the social determination of the human psyche. From the idea of the historical origin of higher mental functions, L.S. Vygotsky proceeded to substantiate the cultural and historical determination of the process of their development. In essence, it is social (sociocultural) influence that is the main source of the formation of higher mental processes. His provisions on the indirect nature of mental functions and on the origin of internal mental processes

from activity, initially "interpsychic", led to the conclusion that the main mechanism of mental development is the mechanism of the assimilation of socio-historical forms of activity (Andreeva, 1997).

This interpretation was fundamental for solving many socio-psychological problems and determined the main vectors for the development of Russian social psychology. Thus, the internalisation of social relations as a constructive mechanism of human socialisation is still important for social psychology. L.S. Vygotsky said that a child, having just been born, is already a carrier of a certain culture and certain social connections (Vygotsky, 1983c). This, in turn, becomes manifest during the child's shared activities with the people around them, leading to the child's mastery of cultural values. In general, it is in communication with other people that a person's identity is formed, determined by the type of society and culture in which they carry out practical activities (Martsinkovskaya, Khoroshilov, 2022).

Processes of communication and interaction: signs, symbols, situation

The process of communication according to L.S. Vygotsky is based on the understanding and transmission of thoughts and experiences with the help of the systems of signs that have arisen in culture, primarily language. Being special psychological tools, these signs act as a means for an individual or social group to master their social behaviour. The latter means that social relations and social interaction are essentially instrumentally mediated. In other words, cultural signs serve as tools, using which the subject, influencing another person, forms their inner world, the main units of which are meanings and senses. As L.S. Vygotsky writes: "Thus, we can say that through others we become ourselves..." (Vygotsky, 1983a, p. 144). L.S. Vygotsky gives us an understanding of exactly how personality is formed in a sociocultural environment: in interaction with other people, which was and is a fundamental point for the socio-psychological understanding of the problem of personality. It is the inclusion of a person in the system of social relations through activity and communication, the development of social functions and the development of self-awareness that is the basis for socialisation. This will later be consistently revealed, substantiated and supplemented in the works of one of the founders of Russian social psychology, Professor G.M. Andreeva (Khoroshilov, 2019).

An interconnection of socio-psychological ideas and the creativity of L.S. Vygotsky can be seen in the intersection of the conceptual apparatus of cultural-historical theory and social psychology. Today, followers of L. S. Vygotsky around the world use several typical socio-psychological

concepts (role behaviour, social ideas, etc.) (see: Tolstykh, 2020). There are several reasons for this, including the decisive significance that the cultural-historical model of human development has had in psychology as a whole; the growing interdisciplinary connections of general, developmental, and social psychology; the general epistemological trends of modern psychological knowledge, which, despite all modifications, retains interest in one of the fundamental problems in the analysis of man and society, namely, the interaction of a person with the surrounding sociocultural environment, which thereby becomes an integral part of the cognitive system (Falikman, 2017).

As noted above, it is precisely the problem of interaction and thereby the analysis of the phenomenology of social behaviour (as a system of actions in relation to both the objective and social worlds), as well as the associated search for factors determining this interaction, that substantively unite the theoretical positions of L.S. Vygotsky and many ideas of social psychology. The widely known and already mentioned thesis of the creator of cultural-historical theory that "a personality becomes for itself what it is in itself, through what it presents to others" (Vygotsky, 1983a, p. 144) leads to various investigations, including through what means this presentation initially occurs. If some invariant of the subject field of social psychology was and remains a reference to the social context, which "always presupposes the presence of a person in the social environment, in communication and dialogue" (Grishina, 2017, p. 11), then the question also arises of how and by what means this presence is organized, by what means communication is carried out and what can be the result of the dialogue that occurs.

To answer this question, it is useful to take a closer look at some of the key ideas of L.S. Vygotsky, which seem relevant for modern social psychology, such as his understanding of the role of signs and symbols, as well as the situation (social context) of interaction.

The unquestioned merit of L.S. Vygotsky is the substantiation and development of the idea that human consciousness has a cultural and historical character, that the formation and development of the image of the surrounding world occurs based on a sign, "the interpretation of which is carried out by the individual in the process of social communication" (Martsinkovskaya, 2004, p. 19). Therefore, let us dwell on the similarities and differences in the understanding of the role of the sign in cultural-historical theory and in social psychology, in particular in symbolic interactionism.

To begin with, we note that the possibility of comparing various aspects of the cultural-historical theory of L.S. Vygotsky and symbolic

interactionism of G.H. Mead is obvious for many reasons. First, both concepts practically coincide in the time of their emergence, responding to certain epistemological challenges of the 1920–1930s. A certain coincidence can be noted in the choice of the main subject of analysis: both the theory of L.S. Vygotsky, and the concept of G.H. Mead puts the study of the mechanisms of social influence on the process of mental development at the forefront. Furthermore, these theories are comparable in terms of the level of their delayed impact on the further development of humanitarian knowledge. Although not fully appreciated by their contemporaries, both determine the main trends in the understanding of fundamental problems such as the relationship between the individual and the social in a person, the role of signs and symbols in the developmental processes of the individual and society, and the influence of interaction on the degree of arbitrariness of behaviour. Moreover, a detailed development the ideas of both L.S. Vygotsky and G.H. Mead (not only the final formation of these theoretical models, but also their empirical verification) occurred after the death of the creators, now representing a branched and often quite heterogeneous whole, at least from the point of view of its disciplinary incarnations. Thus, both the cultural-historical theory of L.S. Vygotsky, and the symbolic interactionism of G.H. Mead "live" today not only in the original fields of knowledge (psychology and sociology, respectively), but also within the framework of philosophy, cultural studies and linguistics. These lines of similarity often give rise to different definitions among science historians. For example, in foreign works on the history of sociology, one can find the qualification of cultural-historical theory as a Soviet version of symbolic interactionism (Abels, 1999), and in Russian works, accordingly, indications of American embodiment of cultural and historical ideas in the works of G.H. Mead (Martsinkovskaya, 2004). Although many of the leading American researchers of later times recognised the role that acquaintance with the work of L.S. Vygotsky played for them after the translation of his works in the USA (see, for example: Dafermos, 2016), in this case it is not possible to talk about borrowing. The thinkers did not know one another and did not suspect each other's existence. It is all the more interesting to trace the parallels of their views using the example of any of the system-forming ideas of creativity. As such, it seems interesting to choose their understanding of the sign and its functions.

L.S. Vygotsky presented the first version of his idea of the sign in "The History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions", written in 1931 (Vygotsky, 1983a). He understands signs as incentives and means, artificially created by humanity to control one's own and/or other people's

behaviour. It is the process of a person's appropriation of a set of certain initially external stimuli-means, and the process of their internalisation that, according to Vygotsky, constitutes the basis of human voluntariness — both in terms of activity and cognitively, leading to the formation of higher mental functions. At the same time, signs are not an "individual invention" of each person; they are acquired during communication (for example, communication between an adult and a child) and, accordingly, bear the imprint of the culture of the society in which this communication occurs. In other words, the idea of a sign appears to L.S. Vygotsky to prove the thesis that any psychological function exists first in a form distributed among several members of a social group, and only then turns into an internal form. Let us note here that the word is naturally thought of as a universal sign, which, in fact, sets the final "cultural context" of the entire position.

Similar reasoning forms the basis for one of the initial theses of symbolic interactionism, according to which human interaction is based on a system of common meanings. A detailed substantiation of this thesis is presented in the only work by G.H. Mead who preferred the oral tradition, Mind, Personality and Society (Mead, 1934), which would appear three years after his death in 1931. To analyse the interaction process, Mead introduces the concept of gesture, describing the evolution of gestural regulation of one's own and others' behaviour through the identification of gestures of different types: from direct behavioural manifestations to symbolic gestures. According to Mead, the beginning of any social interaction is the gesture, since the establishment of a connection between the gesture and the further detailed behaviour of a person creates the meaning of further interaction for the communication partner. The gestural response leads to a modification of the original gesture, the adequacy of which is confirmed or refuted. At the same time, Mead identifies two types of gestures: simple, characteristic of the early stages of evolution (for example, facial reactions of interaction partners as direct responses to each other's actions, which can also be observed in animals) and symbolic, i.e., available at later stages of evolution, during which there is an exchange of conventional meanings (i.e., gestures that have a fixed and common meaning for partners, causing the same reaction in them). The most "convenient" gesture-symbol, which has a generally accepted meaning, is the word ("voice gesture" in Mead's terminology). In other words, gestures-symbols (or meaningful gestures) are created by a person to regulate their own and others' behaviour in the process of communication, they are created jointly, and it is such communication that is human, and therefore cultural (according to Abels, 1999).

The similarity between these two arguments is clear. However, differences between them are of much more interest.

For L.S. Vygotsky, the appeal to the idea of a sign was generally of a subordinate nature and was caused by a predominant attention to the voluntary processes of thinking and activity (which is why the sign for Vygotsky was primarily instrumental in nature), but for G.H. Mead it had an independent meaning, since it is through the process of constructing symbolic signs that the process central for Mead, the process of interaction, is explained (and therefore the sign was not instrumental, but symbolic). Moreover, the ability to use such symbolic-signs formed during interaction to designate objects in the environment was thought of by Mead as a fundamental feature of human consciousness, underlying the formation and development of personality (due to the ability to imagine, among other things, oneself in the form of an object).

The idea that initially the psyche exists in a distributed form between communication partners and then passes into an internal form (see: Abels, 1999; Shotter, 1996) also stands out differently for these two thinkers. L.S. Vygotsky focusses on internalisation as the main mechanism of development, showing the process of "growing" signs into the fabric of higher mental functions. Similar processes described by G.H. Mead are largely formal in nature. Thus, for Mead, the formation of a reflexive "me" in a child is the result of his assimilation of an adult's responses in the form of significant symbols to his initially impulsive behaviour; as a result, the child begins to play out the roles that adults expect. However, the actual mechanism of this transition from the impulsive "I" to the reflexive "me" is not considered by Mead.

Finally, the attitude of the two thinkers to the idea of interaction, in which an important role for both scientists is assigned to signs and symbols, is also different. G.H. Mead focusses primarily on the interpersonal interaction, the main content of which is the construction of joint meaning, a common symbolic interpretation of what is happening, which can be thought both in isolation from an activity basis and within the broader social context. For L.S. Vygotsky, the fundamental fact is that in any interpersonal interaction a certain logic of culture is imprinted, and therefore its specific type (for example, children's play) is characterised not only by interpersonal relationships and those private agreements that follow from them, but also by a set of certain general rules that do not depend on a specific social group.

Understanding the social context: the legacy of L.S. Vygotsky and modern socio-psychological knowledge

It is in the formulation of the problem of the sociocultural environment as a context of interpersonal interaction as a situation that acts as a condition for the development of the human in a person, that one can see another point outlined in the works of L.S. Vygotsky which is significant for social psychology. Therefore, it is of interest to study how the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky overlap, mutually enrich and come into conflict with the views presented in socio-psychological research based on the analysis of a person's social environment, as well as the context of his existence and development.

The topic of the environment and the influence of external circumstances on the behaviour of people and groups has been the focus of attention in almost all areas of social psychology from the beginning of its emergence. This includes the study of cooperative groups, which made it possible to detect the effects of social facilitation and inhibition, and the experimental studies of interactive groups that have become standard. The latter served as an excellent basis for identifying key phenomena of group dynamics. We emphasise that an important feature of the approach of K. Lewin's school of group dynamics was the possibility of a new consideration of the opposition "personality — group", which involuntarily began to be understood as "internal and external" and "subjective and environmental".

It should be noted that the initial understanding of the context of human existence did not differ from the ideas of ordinary consciousness, which separates man and the environment: the environment of human existence was considered as a certain set of conditions external to him, as something external to the subject and independent of him, although influencing his behaviour and state (Grishina, 2016).

The external context of the lives of people and groups cannot be limited to the space of an experimental laboratory. The requirement to consider the social context as a broader framework of human life gradually turned into a methodological imperative for socio-psychological knowledge (Andreeva, 2013b).

The approach formulated by L.S. Vygotsky allowed him to "remove" the contradiction between the individual and the environment in his own way. For Vygotsky, the social situation acts as a source of development. Using specific, namely, age-related psychological material, he showed that the social situation of a child's development is made up of connections and

relationships between the child and adults and the social environment. These connections and relationships are characteristic of each age stage. Moreover, it is stated that the social situation determines the child's entire lifestyle, including the characteristics of his consciousness (Vygotsky, 1983c, p. 248).

Here, it is appropriate to recall the seemingly paradoxical remark of S. Moscovici, with which he begins the first chapter of "The Age of the Crowd": "If you asked me to name the most significant invention of our time, I would not hesitate to answer: the individual. And it is for a very obvious reason. From the emergence of the human race until the Renaissance, man's horizon has always been us: his group or his family, with whom he was bound by strict obligations. But from the moment when great travel, trade, and science singled out this independent atom of humanity, this monad, endowed with its own thoughts and feelings, possessing rights and freedoms, man placed himself in the perspective of I or myself" (Moscovici, 1996, p. 17).

The issue of the relationship between a person and a situation remains controversial. Attempts to discover and describe a "whole situation", without giving priority to either the contribution of the individual or the force of circumstances, allowed K. Lewin to propose the term "psychological living space" to designate the entire set of facts that determine the behaviour of an individual at a particular moment (according to: Grishina, 2016). However, among this essentially endless set of facts, one can also find those that do not allow the "power of the situation" to be realised. They certainly belong to the individual. It seems that it is this side of "situationism" as a paradigm that can be subjected to problematisation as proposed by L.S. Vygotsky.

What can counteract the influence of the situation on an individual level? Such a force, according to Vygotsky, is will. This is precisely "freedom from the situation" (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 158) and an understanding of the opposition to the power of a situation over people. Vygotsky points to the significance of meaningless judgments and actions — "nonsense that is possible only in humans." A senseless act is volitional because it requires a certain freedom from the power of momentary circumstances. Let it be the most minimal — freedom only in words, and not in deeds, thanks to the ability of the word to raise a person above the currently perceived situation, "creating an equivalent of perception in thinking" (L.S. Vygotsky's Notebooks, 2017, p. 346).

For now, let us leave aside the question of how to combine Vygotsky's expressed ideas regarding the situation of a child's development and a meaningless act that allows one to withstand the pressure of the external

situation. It is possible that there is no contradiction here, since for an adult the development of the will is the main indicator of successful passage through the "zone of proximal development". The goal of education then becomes quite clear — to prepare the child to withstand pressure from the situation. This assumption needs to be discussed separately.

From the point of view of modern social psychology, situational context is all that is associated with the era of permanent social change. Issues requiring research reflection are related to the relationship between social context and social change. Specifically, they can be formulated as follows. How do people make their choices today? How capable are they of resisting the power of the situation? L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes: "The most characteristic thing for mastering one's own behaviour is choice" (Vygotsky, 1983a, p. 274).

According to G.M. Andreeva, we can talk first about the inclusion of communication in the cognitive process. This idea is based on two postulates: 1) there is a predictable series of similarities in the behaviour of all people, based on ideas about common human nature acquired through experience; 2) there are also several undoubted differences in the behaviour of individuals or some types of them (Andreeva, 2013a). Therefore, there can never be two identical opinions even about one person, not to mention some more complex social objects.

As a continuation (or rather, based on the historical sequence, a prerequisite) L.S. Vygotsky's position is quite expected. In his opinion, just as people plough the earth with the help of a plough, they "plough" their psyche and behaviour with the help of signs. "A sign... is a means of psychological influence on behaviour — someone else's or one's own, a means of internal activity aimed at mastering the person himself; the sign is directed inward" (Vygotsky, 1983a, p. 90).

More than half a century later, G.M. Andreeva continues: "Since people must somehow understand each other, they inevitably exist in some common cognitive space, that is, share — perhaps within certain limits — the meaning of certain objects they cognise. The means of "sharing" meanings is communication, when the image of the social world is developed jointly, which involves a constant exchange of information" (Andreeva, 2009, p. 6).

Vygotsky's position here is quite consistent: "It is not thinking that thinks, it is man who thinks". Vygotsky further explained what he meant: "Since a person thinks, let us ask: what kind of person (Kaffir, Roman..., rationalist Bazarov, Freudian neurotic, artist, etc., etc.). With the same laws of thinking... the process will be different, depending on the person in whom it occurs. The whole point is in who thinks, and what role, function in the

personality thinking performs. Autistic thinking differs from philosophical thinking not in the laws of thinking, but in its role" (Vygotsky, 2005, p. 59).

We have already noted the peculiarity of how the concept of "role" is introduced into psychology in Vygotsky's understanding: as a function of one or another mental phenomenon in the general structure of the mental processes of a particular person of a certain historical era. Another concept is closely related to this one: the concept of psychological "role", which is defined, by analogy with the role of an actor, as "the natural range of capabilities of each function, determining the scope of its possible roles" (ibid., p. 60).

Perhaps this distinction between role and line, not sufficiently used by social psychologists, makes it possible to differentiate the contribution of the personal to the general situation. Apparently, the phenomenon of role acceptance is combined with the individual's agreement to accept the power of the situation and follow the norms and rules imposed by it. As for the role, as L.S. Vygotsky notes, there is a "change in the role of the mental process in the circle of its role". He clarifies "it is one thing for a neurotic to have a dream, which can "serve" sexual desire, another thing for a Kaffir tribe leader who views his dream as a guide to future actions" (ibid., p. 61).

Instead of a conclusion

In an amazing way, L.S. Vygotsky's texts help transform the existing (or emerging) approach to the study of the "personality — situation" dichotomy. His views cannot be clearly attributed to any of the camps known today: person-centred or situation-centred. The uniqueness of Vygotsky's view lies in the fact that he was able to show how an individual can resist the power of a situation. It is also surprising that, in Vygotsky's concept, the power of the situation is realised through a role model, and opposition to this power is possible through the development of will and the presence of a role. This means that the point is not in a contradiction as such, but in a unique interaction, which can be either balanced and developing, or conflicting and destructive.

To summarise, we emphasize once again: the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky laid the methodological foundation for Russian social psychology, as well as providing an understanding and instantiation of the subject area. They currently provide the opportunity for the further development of various facets of socio-psychological problems, which, in turn, contributes to the enrichment of the cultural-historical theory.

References

Abels, H. (1999). Interaction, identification, presentation. An introduction to interpretive sociology. St. Petersburg: Aleteya Publ. (In Russ.)

Andreeva, G.M. (1997). On the History of the Formation of Social Psychology in Russia. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 14. Psikhologiya = Moscow University Psychology Bulletin, 20*(4), 6–17. (In Russ.)

Andreeva, G.M. (2009). Social Psychology: Vectors of a New Paradigm. *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological Studies*, *2*(3). (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.54359/ps.v2i3.1000

Andreeva, G.M. (2013b). Social Psychology in the Space of Modern Science and Culture. *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological Studies*, *30*(6), 1–11. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.54359/ps.v6i30.677

Andreeva, G.M. (2013a). Social Cognition and Social Problems. *National Psychological Journal*, *9*(1), 39–49. (In Russ.)

Dafermos, M. (2016). A Critical Analysis of the Acceptance of L.S. Vygotsky Theory in the International Academic Community. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 12*(3), 27–46. (In Russ.)

Falikman, M.V. (2017). Vygotsky's New Wave in Cognitive Science: the Mind as an Unfinished Project. *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological Studies, 54*(10). (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.54359/ps.v10i54.361

Grishina, N.V. (2016). Situational Approach: Research Tasks and Practical Opportunities. *Vestnik SPbGU. Seriya 16. Psikhologiya. Pedagogika = Bulletin of St. Petersburg State University. Series 16. Psychology. Pedagogy*, (1), 58–68. (In Russ.)

Grishina, N.V. (2017). Context in social psychology and social psychology of context. In: O.V. Solovyova, T.G. Stefanenko, (eds.). Innovative resources of social psychology: theories, methods, practices: collection scientific works. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Khoroshilov, D.A. (2019). The Continuity of the Knowledge in Social Psychology, Could it Be Possible? Commemoration to the 95th Anniversary of G.M. Andreeva. *Sotsial'naya Psikhologiya i Obshchestvo = Social Psychology and Society*, *10*(3), 196–201. (In Russ.)

Martsinkovskaya, T.D. (2004). History of psychology. Moscow: Academy Publ. (In Russ.)

Martsinkovskaya, T.D., Khoroshilov, D.A. (2022). Scientific School of Social Psychology G.M. Andreeva: Traditions and Modernity. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 14. Psikhologiya = Moscow University Psychology Bulletin, 45*(3), 8–21. (In Russ.)

Mead, G.H. (1934). Mind, self, and society: from the standpoint of a social behaviorist. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moscovici, S. (1996). The Age of Crowds. Historical treatise on mass psychology. Moscow: Center for Psychology and Psychotherapy Publ. (In Russ.)

Notebooks of L.S. Vygotsky. (2017). Favorites. Moscow: Kanon+ Publ. (In Russ.)

Shotter, J. (1996). M.M. Bakhtin and L.S. Vygotsky: Interiorization as a "Border Phenomenon". *Voprosy Psikhologii*, (6), 107–117. (In Russ.)

Tolstykh, N.N. (2020). Social Psychology of Development: Integration of Ideas of L.S. Vygotsky and A.V. Petrovsky. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *16*(1), 25–34. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983a). History of the development of higher mental functions. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 3. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983b). Historical meaning of the psychological crisis. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983c). The problem of age. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 4. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983d). The problem of consciousness. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1987). Psychology of art. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (2005). Concrete human psychology. Psychology of human development. Moscow: Smysl Publ.; Eksmo Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tahir Yu. Bazarov, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor at the Department of Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, tbazarov@mail.ru, https://orcid.org./0000-0002-1591-3932

Elena P. Belinskaya, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor at the Department of Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, elena_belinskaya@list.ru, https://orcid.org./0000-0002-3057-5273

Olga A. Tikhomandritskaya, Cand. Sci. (Psychology), Associate Professor at the Department of Social Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, otihomandr@mail.ru, https://orcid.org./0000-0002-9072-1826

Received: 04.02.2024; revised: 06.02.2024; accepted: 25.05.2024.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-39
UDC 167.7; 159.9.07; 159.95

Dialectical Analysis as a Research Method in the Works of L.S. Vygotsky

Nikolay E. Veraksa [1, 2] ✉

[1] Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation
[2] Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ neveraksa@gmail.com

Abstract

Background. The cultural-historical theory of the development of higher mental functions by L.S. Vygotsky remains relevant and continues to be discussed by specialists from various countries. Its usefulness is largely due to its employment of the dialectical method, the analysis of which is the focus of this article.

Objectives. The aim is to reveal the essence of the dialectical method which allowed L.S. Vygotsky to analyse mental development processes. The first task was to define units of analysis as well as to describe their role when applied to a method. The second task was to show two types of analysis: substantive and structural.

Methods. The dialectical method of analysis was applied in the process of solving theoretical problems. The current article systematically raises questions about the characteristics of the method, the requirements for units of analysis and their properties. Several difficulties with analysing units were summarized.

Results. Dialectical analysis as a method of cognition, as applied by L.S. Vygotsky, was based on an invariant structural representation of the processes of mental development. At the same time, the task of meaningful interpretation of the development of the child's psyche remained. The solution to this problem was based on the search for units of content analysis that simultaneously had two possibilities: to be invariant to any content and to be included into any content. An analysis of the works of L.S. Vygotsky showed that he considered the relations of opposition as such units.

Conclusions. The use of dialectical analysis by L.S. Vygotsky was associated with the consideration of the studied material on two levels: structural and substantive, as well as in transitions from one level to another. To make such transitions, L.S. Vygotsky identified opposites in the content that interested him. Opposites had both substantive properties and represented formal invariant units independent

of specific content, which made it possible to carry out transformations at the invariant (structural) level before returning to the substantive level. As soon as the content of the problem under study was transmitted into a structural plan, it was subjected to dialectical transformations, through the sequential implementation of various operations using opposites. These operations corresponded to the elementary dialectical structures, characteristic of both mental transformations and the processes of various entities in development. Content analysis, which included operating with opposites, allowed L.S. Vygotsky to describe the processes of development of complex structural systems of human consciousness.

Keywords: cultural-historical psychology, method, dialectical thinking, dialectical method of analysis, opposites

For citation: Veraksa, N.E. (2024). Dialectical analysis as a research method in the works of L.S. Vygotsky. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 30–47. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-39

Introduction

This article is devoted to the study of dialectical analysis as a special method of cognitive activity, which was successfully used by L.S. Vygotsky to develop a number of psychological theories. V.S. Sobkin points out the dialectical nature of L.S. Vygotsky's approach. Considering Vygotsky's early work, devoted to the analysis of Ecclesiastes, he notes that one of the defining lines of analysis is based on the idea of development: "It is one of the central ideas in Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. We constantly encounter it in his various works devoted to various psychological issues of both theoretical and applied nature. The significance of development is recorded in the originality of conceptual methodological principles, and in ontological concepts, and in the scientific language of the theory..." (Sobkin, 2022, p. 19). At the same time, V.S. Sobkin emphasizes that "for Vygotsky, the factors that underpin development and determine its essence are dialectical moments associated with contradictions, the struggle of opposites" (ibid., p. 67). When we talk about a method, we mean an instrument of cognition that maintains its integrity and unity, regardless of the characteristics of the object being studied. A similar position, in our opinion, is taken by V.S. Shevyrev. He notes: "The method presupposes a known sequence of actions based on a clearly understood, articulated and controlled ideal plan in a variety of types of cognitive and practical activities in society and culture" (Shevyrev, 2010, p. 551).

In addition to the system of actions, the method of analysis, being a tool for the intellectual activity of the subject, must include units of analy-

sis. They determine the depth of the analysis, acting as its limiters. P. Janet pointed out this function of units of analysis: "...philosophers divide an apple or a lamb into pieces, while people, dividing apples in a basket, stop when one apple remains. This is the rule of the individual — it cannot be divided indefinitely. From the moment the lamb is cut into pieces, and we cannot act like a shepherd towards it, it is no longer a lamb; So, let's stop, let's not go that far. Division has its limit" (Janet, 2010, p. 191).

Units of analysis limit the depth of immersion in the content, and provide no opportunity to go off-topic, maintaining only the context of the analysed material. On this occasion, T. Parsons wrote: "The division of any phenomenon into units that go beyond the context, where this phenomenon is considered as a means or condition of action, automatically leads us to other, irrelevant theoretical schemes" (Parsons, 2002, p. 99). He gave the following example as an explanation: "... the speed of a person falling from a bridge at the moment of contact with water is a physical fact. But if this is a suicide, then the proclamation of this physical fact in no way proves that everything that preceded this was a cause that can be explained in terms of the theory of mechanics" (ibid., p. 76). From the above example, it follows that an inadequate choice of units of analysis leads to a violation of context retention and an erroneous explanation of what is happening. Thus, the characteristics of the analysis method must necessarily contain units of analysis that are appropriate to the context.

The question arises as to how one can maintain context without going beyond the chosen units of analysis. S.L. Rubinstein saw such an opportunity in the search for an adequate unit of analysis, which contains all the elements that form a single content being studied: "In order to understand diverse mental phenomena in their essential internal relationships, one must first of all find that "cell", in which one can reveal the rudiments of all elements of psychology in their unity" (Rubinstein, 1940, p. 142).

L.S. Vygotsky associated the solution to this problem with the use of a special method of analysis, dividing "a complex whole into units" (Vygotsky, 1982b, p. 15). In this case, the unit must have all the properties of the whole (Bespalov, 2014). In other words, according to L.S. Vygotsky, a unit of this kind is capable of maintaining the context of the analysed content by retaining all the basic properties of its whole. He explained: "By unit we mean such a product of analysis, which, unlike the elements, has all the basic properties inherent in the whole, and which is further indecomposable living parts of this unity" (Vygotsky, 1982b, p. 15).

Any method of analysis, if it is a tool for the intellectual activity of a subject, in addition to actions and units of analysis, must be aimed at solving

a certain range of issues. Dialectical analysis as a method in this regard is no exception. It is aimed at analysing development processes.

L.S. Vygotsky, while studying child development, reduced all theories to two main concepts. According to one of them, development was considered as a process in which there is "nothing new — just an increase, unfolding and regrouping of those moments that were already given from the very beginning. According to another concept, development is a continuous process of self-movement, characterized primarily by the continuous emergence and formation of something new that did not exist at previous stages. This point of view captures something essential in development for the dialectical understanding of the process" (Vygotsky, 1984a, p. 248).

The emergence of something new is an essential characteristic of development. However, it does not exhaust the entire content of development, which includes two sides: change and preservation. A similar understanding of development is presented in modern philosophical literature: "Development is a characteristic of qualitative changes in objects, the emergence of new forms of existence, innovations and novelties, and is associated with the transformation of their internal and external connections. Expressing, first of all, processes of change, development presupposes the preservation of the (systemic) quality of developing objects" (Gritsanov, 2001, p. 847).

In psychology, when describing development, such aspects as its form, course, specificity, conditions, sources, driving forces, etc. are highlighted (see, for example, Lubovsky, 2005). In our opinion, these indicators relate to the substantive characteristics of the development process. In each specific case both the developmental process itself and the emergence of new things during its course will be unique in their content. This means that the analysis strategy for each option must be developed anew. It makes little sense to discuss *method* under these conditions, since a method is a system of actions with a single, stable structure that must operate with different content units. Hence, difficulties arise. Firstly, one must understand the conditions under which one can talk about operating with units of analysis, despite their substantive differences. Secondly, it is necessary to determine how to describe the development of various objects to make it accessible to the application of the method as a single structured system of transformations. Thirdly, a way to represent both change and conservation at the same time must be found.

Before discussing the possibility of overcoming the noted difficulties, let us pay attention to a detail in the characteristics of the method of analysis by units. L.S. Vygotsky wrote that psychology must "replace methods of decomposition into elements with methods of analysis that divide into

units. It must find these indecomposable, preserving properties inherent in any given whole, units in which these properties are represented in the opposite form, and with the help of such analysis try to resolve the specific questions that arise" (Vygotsky, 1982b, p. 16).

The question arises as to why L.S. Vygotsky indicated that properties should be represented in units of analysis in the opposite form. The same feature was highlighted by V.P. Zinchenko and S.D. Smirnov. They strongly emphasized that the unit of analysis "must contain the properties of the whole in the form of opposites" (Zinchenko, Smirnov, 1983, p. 88). The position of L.S. Vygotsky can be understood in the context of the dialectics of development, which presupposes the presence of internal contradictions. However, as noted by V.P. Zinchenko and S.D. Smirnov, the use of opposites was rather a compromise for L.S. Vygotsky (ibid.).

We assumed that the establishment of relations of opposition between the properties of units of analysis was necessary for L.S. Vygotsky in order to use dialectical analysis. Its application involves searching for adequate units of analysis. Their adequacy is associated with compliance with several requirements. First, they must admit both invariant, i.e. content-independent, and content-specific description. In other words, units should be selected so that they can be viewed from two positions: both as elements of a formal structure and as specific fragments of the analysed content. If this condition is met, these units allow operation at both the invariant and the meaningful level. Operations performed on units in this case can also be described formally (invariantly) and meaningfully. Such a description should allow transformation into a single structured system (Veraksa et al., 2022a). This system must be able to transform into a more complex structure, while preserving the foundations of the original system.

As follows from the requirements for the proposed units of analysis, they are formulated in such a way that, on their basis, it is possible to describe development in a generalised, invariant form. A generalised representation of developing objects and systems allows the use of dialectical analysis due to the identity of the original units. We should emphasise once again that such a description must be formalised in such a way that makes it independent of the content of the developing entity, and at the same time flexible enough to allow for transfer to various aspects of development. In other words, the description should reflect the structure of development and allow for the possibility of transition from general universal schemes to specific content.

It is necessary to establish a definition of structure. L.S. Vygotsky paid much attention to the concept of structure. In his works, development was

associated primarily with structural changes. Two excerpts from his lectures on paedology support this thesis. In the first, he emphasised the role of structural changes that arise when any separate function is isolated in the system of consciousness: "The isolation of each individual function means a change in the activity of the entire consciousness as a whole... thanks to one singled out function... the entire consciousness as a whole is already acquiring a new structure, a new type of activity" (Vygotsky, 1996, p. 108).

In second excerpt, L.S. Vygotsky understood how structural changes in consciousness are hierarchical: "...following the process of external differentiation, the process of isolating a given function from the whole consciousness, there follows a period of internal differentiation of this function, its maximum development and maximum internal dissection, that is, the emergence of a complex, hierarchically organized structure" (ibid., p. 109). The hierarchical nature of the organization of children's consciousness, in our opinion, allows us to solve the problem of simultaneously maintaining the previous structure in the process of transforming it into a new system.

L.S. Vygotsky's understanding of structure is presented in the following. He explained the meaning of structure in psychology: "Structure is usually a name for such integral formations that are not summed up from individual parts, representing an aggregate, but themselves determine the fate and meaning of each part included in their composition" (Vygotsky, 1982b, p. 256).

If we analyse this understanding of structure in detail, we can see that the "part — whole" relationship lies behind it. This whole is not derived from its parts since the whole itself sets the principle by which the content is combined not into a single whole. Thus, structure is understood as content organised in accordance with the principle, the bearer of which is this whole. That minimal content, which is sufficient to retain the principle, acts as a meaningful unit of analysis. The principle is the rule by which all content is organised.

Further, we can assume that the rule not only organises the content, but also separates the content that corresponds to the principle from the content that does not correspond to it. To illustrate this, let us consider a circle. It is clear that the content of the circle includes the points that are part of the line of the circle. The rule organising the location of points is their equidistance from the centre. The rule allows you to distinguish between points that belong to the circle and points that do not belong to it (Veraksa, Sheridan, 2021; Veraksa, Samuelsson, 2022). The structure can be considered the shape of the arrangement of points in accordance with the rule of equidistance from the centre of the circle. In our case, the

dialectical structure is built on the principle of opposition between the central point and the periphery.

Opposites as units of invariant dialectical structure of developing content

We started the description of dialectical analysis as a method of cognition, which was used by L.S. Vygotsky, with the search for an invariant structure of development. To solve this problem, it was necessary to find units that had two simultaneous possibilities: to be invariant to any content and to be a part of any content. It made sense to consider the relations of opposition as such units, supported by the fact that, as noted above, L.S. Vygotsky had identified opposites as units of analysis. Furthermore, preschoolers show sensitivity to opposite relations, which indicates the fundamental nature of opposite relations for understanding human mental development (Veraksa, 1981; 1987; Colliver, Veraksa, 2021; Veraksa, Basseches, 2022; Veraksa et al., 2022b; Veraksa et al., 2023a).

If we consider opposites as units of analysis, it is easy to see that they have the following properties:

- There are always two opposites.
- Opposites posit each other, i.e. the presence of one of them presupposes the existence of the other.
- Opposites are mutually exclusive.

We find examples of such relations between opposites in Hegel's work "The Science of Logic". He described them as follows: "If we take the most trivial examples: up and down, right and left, father and son, etc. ad infinitum, then they all contain opposites in one. Top *is* what *is not* bottom; the definition of a top is simply not to be a bottom; there is a top only insofar as there is a bottom, and vice versa; in one definition lies its opposite. The father is the other of the son, and the son is the other of the father, and each is given only as this other of the other; and at the same time, one definition exists only in relation to another; their being is a single presence" (Hegel, 1971, p. 67).

Analysis of this excerpt shows that Hegel's reasoning presents such an understanding of opposites, according to which their properties correspond to the properties of the opposites given in our description. Indeed, it is shown that opposites exist in pairs: "up and down," "right and left," "father and son," etc. Further, Hegel illustrates the positing of one as the opposite of another with the help of the following expressions: "the father is the other of the son," "the son is the other of the father." These phrases convey the idea that the definition of "father" contains its opposite, "son," and the

definition of "son," as its opposite, contains the definition of "father." In addition, Hegel shows the property of exclusion of one opposite by another. He explains this property as follows: "the definition of top consists only in not being bottom." This statement, in our opinion, precisely means that opposites do not complement each other, but rather exclude each other.

Thus, given the correspondence of our hypothesis with Hegel's understanding of opposites, there remains one further step. It consists in abstracting from the substantive side of the opposites in the examples given, i.e. to answer the question: is it possible to consider opposites as invariant units in relation to any content? We are inclined to give an affirmative answer, since, in our opinion, opposing fragments can be found in any content. So, we have every reason to consider opposites as invariant units of the developing whole.

If we accept this interpretation, it becomes clear why L.S. Vygotsky introduced into the characteristics of units of analysis the requirement to consider their properties as opposites. In this case, several problems are solved simultaneously: 1) the question of finding a basis for constructing an invariant dialectical structure of the analysed content is resolved; 2) the direction of its content fragmentation is determined; 3) a meaningfully hierarchical scheme for understanding the process of mental development is drawn up. In other words, a system of steps that allows full understanding of the method being used has been established.

It is necessary to consider that which is behind the process of translating meaningful fragments into opposites. As it progresses, various aspects of the content are examined, they are contrasted with each other and designated as opposites. In this way, the transformation of specific content occurs not only into invariant units, but also into a form independent of the content as a whole. Why is this transformation taking place? The point is not to transform for the sake of transformation. This means that such a transformation is carried out for the sake of something that is not yet understood, not manifested. With such transformation, the material being studied would lose its uniqueness. It would become structurally identical to any other material. There can only be one explanation for the expediency of such a step. Apparently, some transformations can also be made with this abstract material. Perhaps some other operations can be applied to these abstract (invariant) opposites other than opposing them to each other. These abstract opposites may still be in some other relationships. The conclusion therefore is as follows: at the structural level there must be a variety of transformations that differ from one another, allowing different results to be obtained. These transformations must be identified.

To do this, it is necessary to keep in mind the existing duality regarding the transformation of opposites. There must be a distinction between processes that occur objectively, i.e. in the reality around us, and the processes that we carry out in the subjective plane, i.e. transforming images or concepts.

Elementary dialectical structures

The main goal of the current article is to reveal the essence of dialectical analysis, which L.S. Vygotsky used as a special epistemological method.

As it has already been said, the units of analysis, and in our case, opposites, must allow various transformations. This means that, in addition to the relations of positing and exclusion, opposites can possess other relations associated with their transformation. Such relationships can be described using various rules. These relationships were identified and the rules formulate. The rules themselves can be understood from two points of view: substantive, i.e. seeing structures that take shape during the processes occurring in reality under the influence of objective factors; and structural, i.e. from a procedural position, interpreting them as the result of operations performed by the subject at his own discretion on opposites. In any case, behind each rule there is a relationship between opposites and a transformation or operation corresponding to these relationships.

It was necessary to consider that the rules had to be formulated in relation to opposites as invariant units of developing content. In this case, the rules become universal. They appear simultaneously substantially, as elementary dialectical structures, and structurally, as dialectical operations being performed. We conducted several studies (Veraksa 1990; Veraksa et al., 2023b), which made it possible to detect various options for such transformations performed on opposites.

We gave each elementary dialectical structure its own name. In fact, we have created a language with which you can make an invariant description, i.e. abstracted from content, connections between opposites. The universality of language makes it an important tool for the structural analysis of developing content.

Language makes it possible to interpret the relationships into which opposites have entered on an abstract level, and at the same time to understand which operations, like objective transformations, can be performed on the mental plane.

Returning to the characteristics of the dialectical analysis used by L.S. Vygotsky, we note that its use is due to the movement of thought in two planes simultaneously: structural and substantive. In addition, it should be noted that L.S. Vygotsky was not developing a specific language to describe

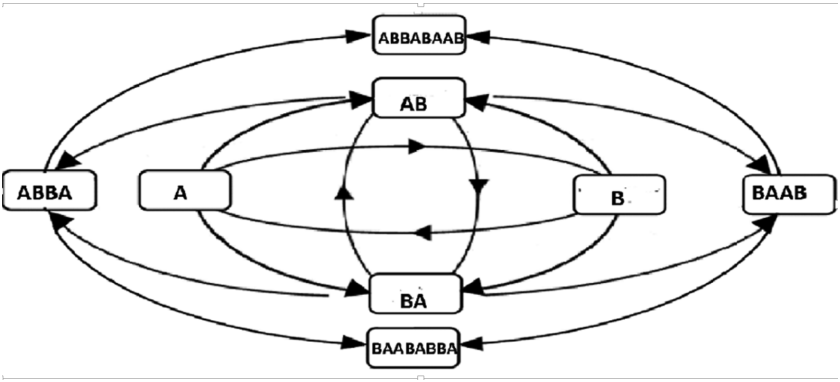
elementary dialectical structures. Nevertheless, it is possible to find some fragments in which his thoughts are clearly presented in structural or substantive terms.

A description of elementary dialectical structures is presented in a number of our publications (see, for example, Veraksa 2021, 2006; Veraksa, Basseches, 2022). The following elementary dialectical structures were identified: transformation, transition, reversal, unification, mediation, change of alternative, closure, identification, etc.

As the analysis of the elementary dialectical structures themselves has shown, since they also represent some content, in addition to the fact that they form the terminology of a dialectical language with their inherent meanings, there are also structural relationships between the terms that can be described using the same language. For example, it turns out that the transformation of mediation is unification, and the transformation of seriation is reversal. This means that mediation and unification are opposites, just like seriation and reversal. This allows the elementary dialectical structures of seriation and reversal to form a dialectical cycle. The dialectical cyclic structure thus obtained has structural properties such that not only the initial and final links of the cycle are opposite, but so are its intermediate links. These properties of the dialectical cyclic structure are projected onto the structure of cycles described meaningfully. In other words, in substantive dialectical structures, opposites are defined not only by substantive, but also by dialectical structural relations.

In this case, the method works, since only the identification of the dialectical invariant structure allows us to see the systemic properties in a meaningful way. Some examples of meaningful cyclic structures are described in the following. It should be taken into account that cyclic structures can be spatial and temporal and even be transformed into one another. Let us consider several cycles: the daily cycle (day — evening — night — morning), the family cycle (mother — son — father — daughter), the geographical cycle (North — East — South — West). As follows from the structure of these cycles, their initial and final states are opposite to each other: "day and night", "mother and father", "North and South"; but the intermediate states of these cycles are also opposite: morning — evening, son — daughter, East — West.

All this provides the basis for combining all elementary dialectical structures into a single structure. A possible mathematical version of such a combination was suggested by S.A. Zadadayev (Veraksa, Zadadayev, 2012). A simplified image of the mathematical model of the dialectical structure by S.A. Zadadayev on the example of the third level structure is shown in Figure.



Figure

A simplified image of the mathematical model of the dialectical structure by S.A. Zadadayev. (The arrows denote dialectical transformations of opposites. Mathematically, they are understood as morphisms that determine the co-product at the corresponding level.)

In this model, a complex structure was built from elementary dialectical structures that described the development process as a movement from one level to another. The presented structure is abstract. Its units (opposites) are expressed by the symbols A and B, the content of which is not presented. However, it conveys those patterns that characterize the dialectical structure of content as an integral system. This model reproduces the stable framework that is preserved when analysing various developing contents.

We consider dialectical analysis as a special epistemological tool. It is aimed at identifying the dialectical structure of developing objects. The method also makes it possible to describe this structure meaningfully and present it in the form of a dialectical system of concepts. The dialectical structure is revealed and not ascribed. L.S. Vygotsky used dialectical analysis in his scientific work. To prove this, it is necessary to show that he moved in both the structural and substantive plane, as well as in transitions from one to the other.

We distinguish between the process of applying dialectical analysis and dialectical thinking. The difference lies in the fact that dialectical analysis is aimed at identifying a generalised, invariant dialectical structure in the analysed content, and dialectical thinking is the process of solving a dialectical problem.

The generalised dialectical structure is built hierarchically from elementary dialectical structures and is expressed in a system of concepts that are in dialectical relationships. The dialectical structure is described by the terms we have introduced. The search for elementary dialectical structures and the construction of a general dialectical structure may include the solution of dialectical problems. Moreover, the movement of dialectical thinking can correspond to the structure of the content.

However, there are differences between constructing a dialectical structure and dialectical thinking. The dialectical structure of an object or situation is revealed. To do this, possible options for constructing elementary dialectical structures and their subsequent organisation into a more complex dialectical structure, reflecting the process of development of the object under study, are tested. The description of the structure of objects and phenomena in the dialectical system of concepts differs from the solution of dialectical problems. These are two opposing search strategies. The grounds for similarity are caused, first, by the fact that both the formation of a dialectical structure using dialectical analysis and dialectical thinking require the subject's ability to identify the relations of opposition (Veraksa et al., 2013).

Moreover, elementary dialectical structures correspond to dialectical transformations. Structures reflect transformations that occur objectively, and dialectical operations characterise transformations that occur in the mental plane. Moreover, the names of structures and actions are the same due to their similarity. Nevertheless, fundamental differences remain. It is one thing when transformations occur objectively, another when the subject, solving a problem, makes mental transformations. In fact, dialectical thinking acts as one of the tools of dialectical analysis. In one case, the subject thinks about how to record what appears in front of him, and in the other, he performs and transforms the content of his consciousness himself.

Dialectical analysis in the works of L.S. Vygotsky

Before discussing the application of dialectical analysis by L.S. Vygotsky, it is necessary to describe the sequence of steps that are associated with the implementation of the method under discussion: 1) content analysis in order to highlight opposites in the analysed content; 2) identification of basic opposites; 3) construction of a space of possibilities; 4) selection of an elementary dialectical structure, the implementation of which will ensure development; 5) construction of a dialectical structure of developing content as a single whole; 6) a meaningful description of the developing dialectical system. L.S. Vygotsky sought to identify opposites

in almost any content. In his work "Psychology of Art", for example, he contrasted, i.e. identified opposite positions characteristic of aesthetics: "psychological" and "non-psychological" (Vygotsky, 1987). L.S. Vygotsky identified the main opposites, which corresponds to the requirements of dialectical analysis.

To confirm this, we consider the following two statements by L.S. Vygotsky. First: "But now the immediate and sole purpose of our reasoning is to contrast two fundamental points of view on the process of mental development of a child" (Vygotsky, 1983a, p. 9). Second: "Two assumptions arise which we must immediately reject without consideration: one — as clearly untenable and rejected by science long ago, the other — as being generally outside the boundaries of science" (ibid., p. 28). Questions arise as to why L.S. Vygotsky wrote these arguments. In what sense were they carried out: structurally or substantively? We are inclined to answer that both statements refer to the invariant structural plan.

Formulating these provisions, L.S. Vygotsky did not focus on the meaningful content. However, since each statement implied two meaningful fragments that had already been interpreted earlier and contrasted with each other as opposites, it is clear that L.S. Vygotsky operated on them structurally. This was required by the method used by L.S. Vygotsky. Moving from one plane to another, L.S. Vygotsky ended the discussion of this issue in structural terms: "We can, without further discussion, part with both assumptions, one of which removes the problem that interests us, simply denying the presence of cultural development of mental functions, the other dissolves culture itself and its development in the history of the human spirit" (there same, p. 29).

It may seem that this fragment presents not only a structural plan, but also a substantive plan. However, we do not think so. Since L.S. Vygotsky did not specifically develop the language of elementary dialectical structures; the content characteristics of the quoted statement largely performed a significative function, denoting structural components. Since the identified opposites in the dialectical analysis turned out to be untenable from the point of view of their further use in constructing a psychological theory of development, L.S. Vygotsky was forced to turn to the construction and analysis of the space of possibilities. In his statement, the need for such a construction was expressed as follows: "We are again faced with the same question: what is the development of higher mental functions without changing the biological type?" (ibid., p. 29). We believe that this question indicates the need to analyse the space of available possibilities (in the context of the question posed) in order to search for an option associated with

an elementary dialectical structure, the implementation of which would ensure progress in the analysis of the problem.

On this path, L.S. Vygotsky came to the following substantive conclusion: "... the development of higher mental functions is one of the most important aspects of the cultural development of behaviour. The idea that the second branch of cultural development outlined by us, namely the mastery of external means of cultural behaviour and thinking or the development of language, counting, writing, drawing, etc., hardly needs any special evidence, also finds complete and indisputable confirmation in the data of ethnic psychology" (ibid., p. 29).

Behind this description of further progress in the field of analysis of the problem of mental development, an elementary dialectical structure, which we call "mediation" can be found. In fact, this structure was named in the excerpt by L.S. Vygotsky. In its essence, it is expressed in the fact that the development of the psyche is associated with the mastery of external means of cultural behaviour.

L.S. Vygotsky, conducting dialectical analysis, identified various elementary dialectical structures. They are presented in Table 1. These structures are necessary when constructing a generalized content structure that reflects mental development in childhood.

When developing a psychological problem, L.S. Vygotsky used dialectical analysis, completing it with a hierarchically substantive dialectical system, presented with the help of corresponding concepts. For example, when developing the problem of game development, he used the following terminology to describe it: visible field, imaginary field, field of meaning, imaginary situation, role, plot, affect, rule. In this system, opposites appear: visible field — imaginary field, role — plot, semantic field — imaginary situation, affect — rule. They constitute the generalised, meaningful, and dialectical structure of the game.

Practical use

The practical significance of the results obtained in the study consists, firstly, in justifying the use of elementary dialectical structures, which open up opportunities for constructing complex structures and explaining their functioning. The transition from structural to substantive characteristics makes it possible to build a complex substantive system that describes a specific development option. Secondly, the detailed steps that are taken during dialectical analysis will allow researchers and practicing psychologists to independently apply the algorithm to analyse the content of developing psychological structures.

Table
Examples of identifying elementary dialectical structures by L.S. Vygotsky

No	Fragments of text from the works of L.S. Vygotsky	Elements of dialectical structures
1	"According to the law, the forces driving the development of a child at a particular age inevitably lead to the denial and destruction of the very basis of development of the entire age, with internal necessity determining the annulment of the social situation of development..." (1984b, p. 260).	Seriation
2	"The researcher does not always have to follow the same path... often the opposite path is more fruitful" (1982a, p. 294).	Conversion
3	"...the question is not to add any essential moment to the traditional description of the emotional process, but solely to change the sequence of these moments, to establish the true relationship between them, to put forward as the source and cause that which was previously considered its consequence and result" (1984b, p. 105).	Seriation + Conversion
4	"If the previous task in the study of dynamics determined the path of direct movement from the child's social existence to the new structure of his consciousness, now the following task arises: to determine the path of reverse movement from the changed structure of the child's consciousness to the restructuring of his being" (1984b, p. 259).	Seriation + Conversion
5	"Thus, we formulate — in an albeit negative form — the main methodological points that determine the plan and direction of our entire research. The same points in their positive form must find expression in the research itself" (1983a, p. 23).	Transformation
6	"... the concept of life in biology has been brought to great clarity, science has mastered it... but it has not coped with the concept of death... it is understood as not life... But death is a fact that also has its own positive meaning, it is a special kind of being..." (1982a, pp. 335–336).	Transformation
7	"Actual research shows that the negative content of development during critical periods is only the opposite, or shadow, side of positive personality changes..." (1984b, p. 253).	Transformation
8	"...let us say from the very beginning: the James-Lange theory must be recognized as a fallacy rather than the truth in the doctrine of the passions. With this we expressed in advance the main idea, the main thesis of the entire present chapter of our research" (1984b, p. 98).	Transformation
9	"...the paradoxical organic process that transforms illness into superhealth, weakness into strength, poisoning into immunity, is called overcompensation" (1983b, p. 34).	Transformation

Conclusions

Dialectical analysis as an epistemological method used by L.S. Vygotsky has a number of properties. It involves identifying units of content, which are opposites. Opposites can be considered on two levels: structural and substantive. Dialectical analysis is aimed at studying developing content systems. Units are selected in such a way as to simultaneously act as dialectical fragments of content and invariants of the dialectical structure.

Units are the material for operating both at the structural and substantive levels. Operations on units can be described either substantively or structurally. Within the framework of dialectical analysis, elementary dialectical structures and operations on these structures are distinguished. The difference between structures and operations is that structures convey those transformations of fragments of content that occur independently of the subject and appear in the form of substantial relations between opposites. They are also described either invariantly (structurally) or meaningfully (substantively).

Dialectical operations are transformations over units of content that are carried out by the subject. The content is represented with the help of mental images or concepts. Dialectical operations and structures are described with a special language. This language is based on terms, the meaning of which is determined by the peculiarities of transformations of opposites as invariant units of developing content. In this case, the meanings of dialectical operations and elementary dialectical structures coincide, which makes it possible to analyse processes and structures substantively and structurally.

The application of dialectical analysis involves carrying out several sequential steps. The key is to search for meaningful fragments that are opposed to each other. Then, the possibilities for developing an invariant structure are identified. For this purpose, various elementary dialectical structures are tested and then one invariant structure of the phenomenon under study can be determined. Next, the universal structure is transformed into a meaningful or substantive one, and methods and strategies for the development of the corresponding mental function are determined. Depending on the nature of the research and objectives facing the analyst, the sequence of steps may vary.

Dialectical analysis allowed L.S. Vygotsky to describe various meaningful dialectical systems that were the result of solving several psychological problems related to understanding child development.

References

Bespalov, B.I. (2014). Logical-semantic Analysis and Developmentof Ideas of L.S. Vygotsky About the "units" and "elements" of Psychological Systems. *National Psychological Journal*, *13*(1), 20–33. (In Russ.)

Colliver, Ye., Veraksa, N.E. (2021). Vygotsky's Contributions to Understandings of Emotional Development through Early Childhood Play. *Early Child Development and Care*, *191*(2), 1–15.

Gritsanov, A.A. (2001). World Encyclopedia: Philosophy. Moscow: AST Publ. (In Russ.)

Hegel, G.V.F. (1971). The science of logic. Collected works: in 3 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Mysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Lubovsky, D.V. (2005). Introduction to the methodological foundations of psychology. Moscow: MPSU Publ. (In Russ.)

Parsons, T. (2002). On the structure of social action. Moscow: Academic Project Publ. (In Russ.)

Rubinshtein, S.L. (1940). Fundamentals of general psychology. Moscow: State educational and pedagogical publishing house of the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR. (In Russ.)

Shevyrev, V.S. (2010). Method. New philosophical encyclopedia: in 4 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Mysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2022). "The Tragicomedy of Quest" by Lev Vygotsky: the experience of reconstructing the author's meanings. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E. (1981). Features of The Transformation of Contradictory Problem Situations by Preschoolers. *Voprosy Psyhologii,* (3), 123–127. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E. (1987). Development of Prerequisites for Dialectical Thinking in Preschool Age. *Voprosy Psyhologii*, (4), 135–139. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E. (1990). Dialectical Thinking and Creativity. *Voprosy Psyhologii*, (4), 6–14. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E. (2006). Dialectical thinking. Ufa: Vagant Publ. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E. (2021). Dialectical thinking of a preschooler (opportunities and cultural contexts): monograph. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E., Airapetyan, Z.V., Tarasova, K.S. (2023a). Dialectical and Formal Thinking in the Context of Understanding Emotions by Young Children. *Teoreticheskaya i Eksperimental'naya Psikhologiya = Theoretical and Experimental Psychology, 16*(3), 70–89. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E., Basseches, M. (2022). Dialectical Thinking. In: N.E. Veraksa, I. Pramling Samuelsson, (eds.). Piaget and Vygotsky in XXI century (pp. 41–64). London, New York: Routledge.

Veraksa, N.E., Basseches, M., Brandao, A. (2022a). Dialectical Thinking: A Proposed Foundation for a Post-modern Psychology. *Frontiers in Psychology*, (13), 710815.

Veraksa, N.E., Belolutskaya, A.K., Vorobyeva, I.I., Krasheninnikov, E.E., Rachkova, E.V., Shiyan, I., Shiyan, O. (2013). Structural Dialectical Approach in Psychology: Problems and Research Results. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, (6), 65–77.

Veraksa, N.E., Samuelsson, I.P. (2022). Piaget and Vygotsky in XXI century. Discourse in early childhood education. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG.

Veraksa, N.E., Sheridan, S. (2021). Current researches on Vygotsky's theories in Early Childhood Education. Madrid: Morata Publ.

Veraksa, N.E., Veresov, N., Sukhikh, V.L. (2023b). Cultural Actions in The Play of Preschool Children. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 19*(1), 54–61. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E., Veresov, N.N., Sukhikh, V.L. (2022b). The Play Matrix: a Tool for Assessing Role-play in Early Childhood. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *30*(3), 542–559.

Veraksa, N.E., Zadadayev, S.A. (2012). Dialectical Thinking and W-measure of the Development of a Two-dimensional Dialectical Structure. *Vestnik RGGU. Seriya «Psikhologicheskie nauki» = Bulletin of the Russian State University for the Humanities. Series "Psychological Sciences",* (15), 57–86. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982a). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Issues in the theory and history of psychology. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982b). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. Problems of general psychology. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983a). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 3. Problems of mental development. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983b). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 5. Fundamentals of defectology. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984a). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 4. Child psychology. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984b). Collected works in 6 vol. Vol. 6. Scientific heritage. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1987). Psychology of art. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1996). Lectures on pedology. Izhevsk: Udmurt Univ. Publishing House. (In Russ.)

Zhane, P. (2010). Psychological evolution of personality. Moscow: Academic Project Publ. (In Russ.)

Zinchenko, V.P., Smirnov S.D. (1983). Methodological issues in psychology. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nikolay E. Veraksa, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor at the Department of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University; Leading Researcher at the Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, neveraksa@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3752-7319

Received: 12.02.2024; revised: 05.03.2024; accepted: 11.04.2024.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-40
UDC 159.9.019, 159.922

Experience and "Ideal Form" Within the Social Situation of Development

Olga A. Karabanova ✉

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ okarabanova@mail.ru

Abstract

Background. The study of L.S. Vygotsky's scientific heritage enables the clarification of the theoretical basis for the role of the social environment in children's mental development and the key regularities of children's mental development at varying ages and stages of development in the context of transitivity and the social uncertainty of modern society.

Objectives. The currently article analyses the significance of the social situation of development as an alternative to the understanding of the environment as a factor of development in L.S. Vygotsky's doctrine of the structure and dynamics of psychological age.

Results. Experience is the indivisible "unit" of the social situation of development as a dynamic unity of personality and environment in the form of age-specific attitude. The experience acts as an integration of affective and intellectual components and acquires features of awareness and meaningfulness as the child's thinking develops. The social environment contains ideal forms as a standard of historically developed human properties and abilities, determining the greatest originality of the child's developmental path — the future is already represented in the present and sets the vector for development. The ideal form embodies the age-specific normative content of the developmental potential of higher mental functions at each age stage, being appropriated in the course of cooperation. Experience determines the individual trajectory and the result of development. A comparative analysis of the crises of three and seven years convincingly proves the change in the type of experience: from the child's singling out of relations and himself as the subject of these relations to the singling out of experiences, their differentiation and realisation of the attitude to Self. The social situation of development determines the boundaries for the zone of the child's proximal development (ZPD).

Conclusions. Experience realises the child's active position in relation to the world through the prism of age characteristics. Transformation of the social situation

of development, according to L.S. Vygotsky, occurs in the form of changes in the types and methods of experiencing in connection with the development of the motivation and need during the period of age-related developmental crises.

Keywords: social situation of child development, experience, environment, ideal form, zone of proximal development (ZPD)

For citation: Karabanova, O.A. (2024). Experience and "ideal form" within the social situation of development. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 48–62. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-40

Introduction

In the cultural-historical concept of L.S. Vygotsky, it is difficult to find a concept that has been more often quoted and has more inexhaustible heuristic potential than the "social situation of development". This concept continues to pose new questions to the researcher, giving rise to a need for reflection, debate and discussion. The concept was proposed by L.S. Vygotsky in his doctrine of the structure and dynamics of psychological age in its significance for understanding the specifics and patterns of children's mental development. The purpose of the current article is to analyse the structure and dynamics of this concept.

The social situation of development is a fundamental, theoretical, system-forming concept that reveals the nature of psychological age, the conditions of genesis, personal and cognitive development of the child, and the psychological mechanisms of the formation and development of the specifically human psyche. For L.S. Vygotsky, the study of the environment as a determinant of development acted as a study of *the role of the environment in children's mental development*. The social situation of development reveals the dynamic unity of the environment and the individual during development, acting as an alternative to the "heredity — environment" dichotomy in understanding the driving forces in the development of the child. It determines the psychological mechanism for implementing the function of the social environment as a source of development and establishes the role of the "ideal form" in the development of the child and the formation of higher mental functions as specifically human forms of the psyche. It also allows us to identify the essential psychological conditions that determine the "breadth" of the child's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Research results

1. Environment as a dynamic and relative formation

In the work "Lectures on Paedology", L.S. Vygotsky dwells in detail on the fundamental difference in understanding the role of the environment as a stimulus in behaviourism and in cultural-historical psychology (Vygotsky, 2001). L.S. Vygotsky criticizes the idea of immutability, constancy, and *absoluteness* of the environment in the life and development of a child. In his opinion, it is necessary to distinguish between absolute and relative characteristics of the environment — "to approach the environment ... not with an absolute, but with a relative standard" (ibid., p. 71). The problem is that the objective qualities and properties of the environment, which seem to remain constant for a long time, determine the development of the child, depending on what kind of relationship forms between the child and its environment at a given age. In other words, only relative characteristics determining *children's relationship with the environment* reveal the dynamic unity of children and the environment, in which they into various relationships with the environment: interaction, discovery, learning, exploring, transforming and creating both the environment and themselves. Moreover, due to the children's activity, even "...the same environment in its absolute terms is something completely different for a one-year-old child, 3 years old, etc." (ibid., p. 212).

L.S. Vygotsky offers a new understanding of the object of development. It is not an individual, but a child in the unity of social relations. The role of the environment in the development of a child is necessarily realised through the child's attitude to individual aspects of the environment and the meaning attached to them through the child's active position in relation to the environment. L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes that the significance of each element of the environment in development is not determined by the content of this element, but by the "relation by which this element stands to the child" (ibid., p. 42). This position was later developed by D.B. Elkonin in his definition of one of the characteristics of leading activity, namely the provision that leading activity connects the child with those elements of environment that play a leading role in development and in relation to which the child has a special sensitivity and selectivity in his environment (Elkonin, 1989). The child's activity, determined by his place in the system of social relations, his social position, expressing an active and effective attitude towards the environment, is the connecting link between the individual and the environment, determining the "dynamic and relative

understanding of the environment" (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 88), and its significance in development.

Objecting to the view of the environment as the absolute and unchanging environment of the child, L.S. Vygotsky identifies several patterns of changes in the environment as age develops.

Firstly, there is an expansion of the environment as a space for the child's cognition and transformation of the world. From a world centred on the child's own sensations and processes, the child moves to the "world at a distance", discovering it for himself and mastering new areas. However, it is not enough to consider only the expansion of the environment as a spatial characteristic — such expansion creates a fundamentally new area of significant relationships that opens up potential opportunities for the development of the child. This idea of L.S. Vygotsky's can be found today in various theories on children's mental development. For example, it is in agreement with E. Erikson's position on expansion of the radius of significant relationships of the child in the course of development (Erikson, 2021), and W. Bronfenbrenner's structural ecological model of the ontogenetic development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1998), which argues that the child's mastery of new microsystems and the expansion of interaction with various social environments is subsequently transformed into mesosystems that unite a number of microsystems and thereby expand the environmental space of development.

Secondly, at each age stage, a new developmental educational environment arises, purposefully constructed by society, reflecting the characteristics of historical time and socio-cultural conditions — "... each age has its own environment, organized in a certain way for the child..." (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 72).

And thirdly, the development of the child himself leads to the fact that, while remaining constant in its absolute characteristics, the environment changes for the child, reflecting the new cognitive capabilities and acquisitions in development, the growth of personal potential, changing the child's attitude towards the environment. L.S. Vygotsky argues that "...even when the environment remains little changed, the very fact that the child changes in the process of development leads to the fact that the role and meaning of these environmental moments, which seem to remain unchanged, change. One and the same environmental situation or event in the environment of different people, at different age stages, has a different impact on their development (ibid., p. 74). At the same time, "not only the child changes, the attitude of the environment towards him changes, and the same environment begins to influence the child himself in a new way".

This dynamic and relative understanding of the environment is the most important thing from which to draw when talking about the environment in paedology" (ibid., p. 88). The last statement about changing the attitude of the environment towards the child seems extremely important. This implies that a qualitatively new level of development changes not only the child himself, but also his position in the social world, and, accordingly, the system of expectations and requirements and tasks that society in the form of parents, family, kindergarten, schools sets for him.

Categorically objecting to the understanding of the environment as the setting for a child's development, L.S. Vygotsky offers an alternative concept: the "social situation of development". The social situation of development is ***"...a completely genuine, specific for a given age, exclusive, unique and unrepeatable relationship between a child and the surrounding reality, primarily social"*** (Vygotsky, 2000, p. 903, emphasis mine — O.K.). The importance of the social situation of development is difficult to overestimate. It is precisely what, according to L.S. Vygotsky, determines the entire way of life of a child, his social existence, the peculiarities of his consciousness, representing the starting point for all dynamic transformations of age, the basis of the child's mental development. The social situation of development during the development of the child disintegrates and undergoes a radical restructuring, reflecting the contradiction between the achievements in the child's development and his previous social position, methods of social cooperation, and the previous system of expectations and demands from the social environment. The transformation of the social situation of development is carried out during age-related developmental crises, defining new tasks and the vector of the child's mental development.

L.S. Vygotsky considered experience as an indivisible "unit" of personality characteristics and situational characteristics, embodying the relationship between the individual and the environment in development and realizing the child's active position in relation to the world. Experience as "the internal attitude of a child as a person to a particular moment of reality" (ibid., p. 994) determines exactly what influence this or that characteristic of the environment has on the child's development. In other words, "the environment determines the child's development through the experience of the environment... the attitude of the child to the environment and the environment to the child is given through the experience and activity of the child himself; environmental forces acquire guiding significance through the child's experiences" (ibid., p. 995).

Due to the psychological complexity of the phenomenon being studied, L.S. Vygotsky does not limit experience to the emotional modality.

Experience acts as a unity of two sides of the psyche — the affective, the need and motivation, which determines the emotional colouring of the experience, and the intellectual, the symbolic and semantic, which determines the meaning of a particular event or situation for the child. In psychological content, experience embodies the principle of the unity of affect and intellect, and thanks to the generalisation of affect, it determines the meaning of the child's actual relationship with the social environment and the awareness of this meaning, giving rise to a world of internal experiences. It is this unity that, according to L.S. Vygotsky, is a special "...prism that determines the role and influence of the environment on the development... of the child's character, on the child's psychological development..." (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 75). The intellectual component of experience, features of children's thinking and the ability to generalise, are especially significant in determining the nature of the experience, and their significance increases with the age of the child and the development of the ability to understand and comprehend events. L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes that due to the significance of the experience, the result of the influence of the environment on the child's development will be determined by the degree of understanding, awareness, and comprehension of what is happening in the environment. "If children perceive differently, it means that the same event will have a completely different meaning for each child... children at different stages of development generalise and comprehend differently the surrounding reality and environment. Consequently, "the very development of children's thinking, the very development of children's generalisation is also associated with the influence of the environment on the child..." (ibid., pp. 77–78). In the cultural-historical theory of a child's mental development, the identification of experience as a "unit" of the dynamic unity of the social situation of development, as a kind of generalisation of the child's affective experience, seems important and necessary. After all, the path to arbitrariness of behaviour and the formation of the entire system of higher mental functions occurs by the generalisation of meanings and awareness of them. To be arbitrary means to be free from environmental influences, taking a position of independence from external factors in choosing one's own line of development. Pointing out the importance of understanding an event as a decisive condition for a child's experience of it, as opposed to the objective characteristics of the event itself, becomes an explanation for the well-known phenomenon of *multifinality* of development, which consists in the fact that the same event can lead to directly opposite results. The resilience and vulnerability of a child in

relation to stressors is also fundamentally associated with the processes of awareness and comprehension of traumatic influences. Thus, a child's experience of life turns out to be inextricably linked with the development of thinking in the context of the formation of higher mental functions and the mediation of emotional processes by social signs and their meaning. The task of psychological research is to understand the specifics of the relationship between the two components of experience as a "unit" of the social situation of development at various stages of age development and the representation and interaction of objective and personal principles (Smirnova, 2022) in the nature and content of the experience. The dual nature of experience as integrity and unity, but not parallelism or simple interaction of two lines of development, received a new explanation in the hypothesis by D.B. Elkonin regarding the spiral development of the motivational-need and operational-technical (cognitive) spheres in the ontogenesis of periodisation of the child's mental development (Elkonin, 1971).

L.S. Vygotsky mentions orientation as one of the functions of experiencing using the term "biosocial orientation" (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 213), aimed at finding out what exactly a particular moment in the environment means for the individual, which determines the effect of its impact on development. Based on the concept by P.Ya. Galperin of orientation-research activity as a subject matter of psychological science (Galperin, 2002) and the theoretical provisions of L.F. Obukhova regarding the patterns of child development in ontogenesis (Obukhova, 2006), it can be assumed that experience as a "unit" of a social situation of development is, in fact, a special specific form of orienting activity, relatively free from the executive part of the action, i.e. external behaviour, integrating the personal and objective principles of the child's activity and expressing the child's internal position as a fusion of affective-need and operational-technical components of activity (Elkonin, 1971).

Another non-trivial function of experience is the resolution of age-related crises through the transformation of age-related ways of experiencing. According to L.S. Vygotsky, age-related crises act, first of all, as a restructuring of the old social situation of development, which constrains the progressive development of the child due to the emergence of a contradiction between the previous social situation of development as a system of social relations and age-related psychological new formations: "... with the internal restructuring of the child that is taking place, the crisis passes through the axis of social relations" (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 208). L.S. Vygotsky writes that "... the essence of any crisis is a restructuring of

internal experience, which, apparently, is rooted in a change in the main point that determines the child's attitude to the environment, namely in a change in the needs and motivations that drive the child's behaviour... the restructuring of needs and motivations, the reassessment of values is the main point in the transition from age to age" (ibid., p. 218).

The psychological mechanism of the age crisis as a restructuring of the social situation of development is a change in the basic types and ways of experiencing the child's social relationships in connection with the restructuring of the child's motivation, need, and value-semantic systems. L.S. Vygotsky (2001) explains this point using the example of a comparative analysis of two well-known crises — the crisis of 3 years and 7 years. The crisis of 3 years is a crisis in which the child discovers his relationships with other people, in which he himself is their active builder. The seven-star pattern of symptoms of the 3-year-old crisis indicates that the child discovers that he "... can produce such relationships in relation to others" (ibid., p. 225), and actively explores them through his purposeful opposition to an adult. At the end of this crisis, there is a natural transition to role play, recognised as the leading activity of preschool age as a symbolic-modelling activity aimed at exploring social and interpersonal relationships, testing them through the adoption of roles and playing out game actions in accordance with the social regulations of these roles. That is, the discovery of relationships is followed by orientation in these relationships and their exploration.

The 7-year-old crisis is associated with the child's discovery of the fact of his experiences, which is due to the development of the semantic structure of experiences, allowing the child to outline, identify and understand their meaning. The way of experiencing changes — with the emergence of meaning, for the first time, a generalisation of experiences occurs, the logic of feelings is built, and thereby the basis for the formation of new connections of experiences and a focus on creating new relationships is created. "Meaningful orientation in one's own experiences" (ibid., p. 231) not only gives rise to an internal struggle of experiences, but also creates the possibility of differentiating the external from the internal and highlighting the Self as the subject of these experiences. Generalisation of relationships creates the basis for the formation of a child's self-esteem and understanding of his own value. Thus, the result of the crisis of 7 years is the genesis and crystallization of a new attitude towards the Self, which determines the vector of personality development. "The child's social attitude towards others and the affirmation of a certain tendency that has arisen in relation to himself, his "I", is the main motive of behaviour (ibid., p. 222). In the

studies of L.I. Bozhovich, this tendency finds expression in the formation of a new psychological formation during preschool age — the child's internal position as a system of internal factors, primarily a system of needs and motives, refracting and mediating the influence of the environment and acting as a direct driving force for the development of new mental qualities in the child (Bozhovich, 2008). The child's internal position determines the attitude towards objective social position, which he occupies or would like to occupy, and expresses the child's active attitude towards social reality. An actual change in the child's social position, for example, the transition to the role of a student at the beginning of schooling, is not enough to change the direction and content of development; it is necessary that this new position be comprehended and accepted by the child himself. The internal position marks a turning point in the development of the individual and allows us to state a transition to a new level of subjectivity as the actual authorship of one's own development trajectory, with the limitation of purposeful planning of the development scenario by the child himself. This allows us to assert that L.S. Vygotsky views age-related crises not only as a restructuring of the social situation of development, i.e. a restructuring of the child's social relationships with people around him, but also as a restructuring of the child's attitude towards himself. In a crisis, a new content of the child's orientation activity arises in the form of search, research, testing a new attitude towards the Self. The basis for changing social relations is a change in attitude towards oneself, which paves the way to self-determination of development in the existing system of cooperation and interaction with other people through testing the ideal form (Elkonin, 1994; Polivanova, 2000). L.S. Vygotsky interprets the dynamic unity of the social situation of development as a cycle, including a movement from "the social existence of the child to the new structure of his consciousness" (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 189) and then, on the basis of "the changed structure of consciousness to the restructuring of his existence" (ibid.). The idea of self-determination of development, based on the child's activity, guided by his internal position, even if not according to the letter, not according to the definition given by L.S. Vygotsky, but in the spirit of the author's concept, according to the fact that the child's *attitude* to the environment constitutes the essence of the social situation of development, is present in the works of L.S. Vygotsky in the statement that the child himself creates his own being: "... a child who has changed the structure of his personality is already a different child, whose social being cannot but differ in the most significant way from the being of a child of an earlier age" (ibid.).

2. Social environment as a source of development. The role of the "ideal form" in the development of the child and the formation of higher mental functions

L.S. Vygotsky saw the specifics of the human psyche in the social nature of human existence, in the fact that man, being a social being, has those properties and abilities that developed during the historical development of society, primarily consciousness and higher mental functions. Their development is impossible outside society, outside interaction with the social environment. Higher mental functions, according to L.S. Vygotsky, are not given from birth, but are given as the "ideal form" of a person's higher generic abilities (Vygotsky, 1983; 2000). The formation of higher mental functions occurs in the process of a child's mastering "forms of activity and consciousness that were developed by humanity in the process of historical development" (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 88). The environment becomes a source of development since it contains "developed forms" of mental functions and "acts in relation to the development of higher human-specific properties and forms of activity as a source of development... in the sense that these historically developed properties and characteristics of a person exist in the environment..." (ibid.).

The qualitative uniqueness of the nature of the human psyche determines the special path of its development. The uniqueness of child development, in contrast to other types of development, lies in the fact that the Future is already existing in the Present, although the Future itself has not yet arrived. The Future of development is set through ideal forms. "Ideal" in this context means reference forms — examples of the final form of development. "The greatest feature of child development is that this development occurs ... when the ideal form, the final form, the one that should appear at the end of development, not only exists in the environment and comes into contact with the child from the very beginning, but it ... actually influences the primary form, ... [as] something that should take shape at the very end of development" (ibid.). This understanding of the path of development of a person's psychological abilities presupposes the purposeful construction of the human psyche through the child's appropriation of ideal forms, which to a certain extent brings the position of the cultural-historical approach closer to the position of social constructionism. If for one reason or another there is no ideal form in the social environment, we observe an impaired nature and disturbances in the development of higher functions. L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes that "in those cases when, due to certain external or internal reasons, the interaction between the final form existing in the

environment and the initial form mastered by the child is disrupted... the child's development becomes extremely limited and [there is] more or less complete underdevelopment of the corresponding forms of activity, the corresponding properties in the child" (ibid., p. 87).

The ideal forms are those "forms of activity and consciousness that were developed by humanity in the process of historical development" (ibid., p. 88). They are social in nature and must be appropriated by the child during development, which gives L.S. Vygotsky the basis for saying that the environment is the source of the child's social development. The social environment that a child inherits by the time he begins his journey already contains an ideal form, i.e. the model is the final form of development to which the child should come as a result of the age stage, which, once mastered, will constitute his "internal property" (ibid.). The assignment of ideal forms is a key mechanism for the development of the child's psyche. The ideal, standard result of development is set in the environment from the very beginning of age-related development and in the course of development, the process of appropriation of what initially acts as a form of external interaction with the environment occurs; namely, as L.S. Vygotsky clarifies it, as any form of cooperation between a child and an adult, since "the development of the internal individual properties of a child's personality has its closest source in cooperation (understanding this word in the broadest sense) with other people" (ibid., p. 202).

The law of the development of higher mental functions, which reveals the mechanism of the human psyche and consciousness generation, "lies in the fact that the highest psychological functions of the child, the highest properties specific to a person, arise initially as forms of collective behaviour, as forms of cooperation with other people, and only subsequently do they become internal individual functions of the child himself" (ibid., p. 90). In joint activity with an adult, the genetically original form and structure of psychological abilities takes shape for the first time, and the formation and interiorization of new forms of mental activity occurs. A child acquires subjectivity as an integrative quality of personality in the system of social connections and relationships, in the process of entering and mastering the position in the "event community" as a form of joint activity of the child and social environment (Slobodchikov, Isaev, 2013). In modern psychology, the concept of "developmental educational environment" implies not only a subject-spatial environment, but also forms, methods and means of cooperation and communication, social relationships of the child with adults and peers significant for his development (Rubtsov et al., 2022; Yasvin, 2001; Smirnova, 2022). The social institution

of mediation, which sets the tasks, content, and forms of communication and cooperation of the child with adults and peers as carriers of ideal forms that must be appropriated by the child, provides conditions for the interaction between final ideal and initial forms, modelling the Future of development in the Present.

The significance of cooperation as a mechanism for the formation and development of consciousness and higher mental functions, specifically human properties and qualities, is revealed by L.S. Vygotsky in his doctrine of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), the theoretical significance of which goes far beyond the problem of the relationship between learning and development. Arguing that the future is present in the present through the ideal form, and the final form of development interacts with the primary forms of development at the very beginning, we inevitably come to the question of the ontological status of the ideal form and its interaction with the initial forms of mental functions. The concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1996) reveals the mechanism of such interaction. The ZPD, which defines the space of development within the boundaries from the actual to the potential level, includes the adult as the bearer of the ideal form and the child as the subject of the initial forms of development. The cooperation of a child with an adult, who reveals an ideal form to the child, the possibility of appropriating it through jointly shared activity in the process of problem solving, "is a special case of the interaction between ideal and initial forms, which we talked about above as one of the most general laws of social child development" (Vygotsky, 2001, pp. 203–204). The breadth of the ZPD is determined by L.S. Vygotsky's term "maturing abilities" of the child, i.e. internal logic and the level of development of higher functions, and forms of cooperation and joint activity offered to the child by an adult or a more competent peer. The social situation of development, acting as the child's relationship to the environment, determines the boundaries of the ZPD through the presentation by the social environment of the "ideal form" of development that needs to be mastered, through cooperation with carriers of the ideal form and the child's acceptance of a new social position. The child's activity is expressed in the regulation of cooperation with an adult and with a peer based on the formation of attitudes towards the proposed task, towards himself (self-esteem), towards a partner, social-role, and interpersonal interaction. These relationships determine the possibilities for realising the developmental potential of the ZPD in joint activities and the trajectory of the child's individual development.

Summary

In the teachings of L.S. Vygotsky about the structure and dynamics of psychological age, the social situation of development is the central psychological mechanism that reveals the laws of the origin and development of the child's consciousness and determines activity as the main cause of development. The child's activity is revealed through the experience, the mediating influence and role of the environment in the child's development through the child's sensitivity, selectivity, and biased attitude towards the environment, which is expressed in his activities. "The environment determines the child's development through the experience of the environment... This relation of the child to the environment and of the environment to the child is given through the experience and activity of the child himself... the environmental forces acquire guiding meaning thanks to the child's experience" (Vygotsky, 2001, p. 213). The nature and method of experiencing allows us to clarify exactly what content of the developmental potential of the environment becomes the source of the child's development at a particular age stage. The ideal form sets the age-specific normative content of the development potential at each of the age stages, and the experience determines what the child will consider as a significant and meaningful moment of the environment, how this content will "move the soul" and what the result of development will be. The transition to a new age stage is determined by the genesis of new types and ways of experiencing, in which the processes of generalisation, awareness and comprehension play a leading role.

Conclusion

In modern developmental psychology, the transition in the study of development from a nomothetic to an ideographic approach, from the study of universal laws of development to the identification of diversity and variability of development is becoming increasingly recognised. This trend is also projected into the study of the social situation of child development, which is justified by social stratification and diversification of childhood. Several works (Kondrashkin, Kirillova, 2012; Yudina, Alekhina, 2021) have studied types of social development situations in relation to one psychological age. The possibilities and prospects for the transition from an age-psychological description of the social situation of development to the identification of various types of social situation of development for each age, conditioned by the characteristics of the socio-cultural situation of education, are shown. At the same time, the question regarding the criteria

for identifying types of social development situations and their connection with the typology of ontogenetic development remains open. It should be noted that experience as a "unit" of the social situation of development determines not only the normative age of development and age-psychological characteristics of the child, but also the individual development trajectory in the normative space. Thus, the system-forming nature of the concept of the "social development situation" uncovers the prospect of constructing a typology of individual development options. The scientific heritage of L.S. Vygotsky rightfully occupies a leading place in modern psychology in the study and understanding of the laws of age development, miraculously combining deep theoretical analysis with unsurpassed practical value. It will remain a source of new ideas for developing the traditions of the cultural-historical approach for many years.

References

Bozhovich, L.I. (2008). Personality and its formation in childhood. St. Peterburg: Piter. (In Russ.)

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. Handbook of Child Psychology. New York: Wiley Publ.

Elkonin, B.D. (1994). Introduction to the psychology of development (in the tradition of L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory). Moscow: Trivola Publ. (In Russ.)

Elkonin, D.B. (1971). To the Problem of Periodization of Mental Development in Childhood. *Voprosy Psykhologii,* (4), 6–20. (In Russ.)

Elkonin, D.B. (1989). Selected psychological works. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Erikson, E. (2021). Childhood and society. St. Peterburg: Piter Publ. (In Russ.)

Galperin, P.Y. (2002). Lectures on psychology. Moscow: Book House "University". (In Russ.)

Kondrashkin, A.V., Kirillova, T.O. (2012). Social Situation of Development of a Modern Teenager in The Context of The Model of Socio-psychological Help in The Restorative Approach. *Psikhologicheskaya Nauka i Obrazovanie = Psychological Science and Education, 4*(4). URL: https://psyjournals.ru/journals/psyedu/archive/2012_n4/57076 (accesed: 09.02.2024). (In Russ.)

Obukhova, L.F. (2006). Age psychology: Textbook for universities. Moscow: Higher Education Publ.; MSUPE Publ. (In Russ.)

Polivanova, K.N. (2000). Psychology of age crises. Moscow: Academy Publ. (In Russ.)

Rubtsov, V.V., Isaev, E.I., Konokotin, A.V. (2022). Learning Activity as a Zone of Nearest Development of Reflexive and Communicative Abilities of Children 6-10 Years Old. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 18*(1), 28–40. (In Russ.)

Slobodchikov, V.I., Isaev, E.I. (2013). Psychology of human development: Development of subjective reality in ontogenesis. Moscow: PSTSU Publ. (In Russ.)

Smirnova, E.O. (2022). The problem of communication between child and adult in the works of L.S. Vygotsky and M.I. Lisina. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983). History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 3. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1996). The Problem of Learning and Mental Development at School Age. *Psikhologicheskaya Nauka i Obrazovanie = Psychological Science and Education, 4*(1), 5–18 (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (2000). The problem of age. Moscow: Eksmo-Press Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (2001). Lectures on pedology. Izhevsk: Udmurt University. (In Russ.)

Yasvin, V.A. (2001). Educational environment: from modeling to designing. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Yudina, T.A., Alekhina, S.V. (2021). Age Dynamics of Social Situation of Development of Younger Schoolchildren in Conditions of Inclusive Education. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 17*(3), 135–142. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olga A. Karabanova, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Head of the Department of Developmental Psychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, okarabanova@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2637-4353

Received: 19.02.2024; revised: 11.03.2024; accepted: 02.04.2024.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-41
UDC 159.95

Natural psychological functions as a source of living consciousness

Eugene V. Subbotsky ✉

Lancaster University, Lancaster, Great Britain

✉ subbotsky@me.com

Abstract

Background. L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach toward children's psychological development was first developed around one hundred years ago. It now requires re-evaluation in light of new experimental studies that have shown complexity and diversity of the innate psychological abilities of new-borns and infants, as well as other theoretical approaches towards understanding the role of culture and learning in cognitive development. Such a re-evaluation aims to draw our attention to those aspects of human psychology that L.S. Vygotsky, due to the limited empirical knowledge available to him and his early death, was unable or did not have time to illuminate.

Objectives. The aim is to consider L.S. Vygotsky's concept of natural psychological functions in a new perspective, as a forerunner of the 'heart' of human psychology — the living consciousness.

Methods. The research method is a comparative and logical analysis of concepts, illustrated by the results of the author's and his colleagues' long-term experimental research.

Results. A distinction between living consciousness, which includes subjective experiences (for example, perceptions, emotions, and creative thinking) and functions according to the laws of magic, and objectified consciousness, into which living consciousness is transformed for consumption by society and culture (for example, scientific concepts, logical thinking, and human artifacts) and which conforms to the laws of nature and formal logic, is proposed. It has been hypothesized that both living consciousness and higher mental functions are genetically related to natural mental functions. Differences between the structure, functions and methods of studying living and objectified consciousness are considered.

Conclusions. Natural mental functions are the psychological basis for two relatively independent but interconnected branches of mental development: living consciousness and higher mental functions. Living consciousness does not obey

the laws of formal logic and is the primary source of creative ideas and truly selfless morality.

Keywords: L.S. Vygotsky, cultural-historical approach, natural psychological functions, higher mental functions, living consciousness, laws of magic

For citation: Subbotsky, E.V. (2024). Natural psychological functions as a source of living consciousness. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 63–80. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-41

Living consciousness

Fascinated by modern science, we try our best to be in harmony with the rules of reason and morality, but this does not always work out. Freud was one of the first psychologists to notice this and declare a person's right to be irrational. However, he did not go far enough and placed the irrational in the realm of the unconscious.

But take a closer look at what happens in our minds when it is hidden from the eyes and ears of others, and you see that our thoughts and feelings, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, are blissfully indifferent to the rules of logic and morality. However, the "fall from sin" is inevitable. Like Adam and Eve, who ate from the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, our secret thoughts and feelings lose their magical freedom as soon as they turn into knowledge accessible to others. We become reasonable and rational when our consciousness is fixed in the form of oral or written speech, dressed in the forms of logical thinking and morality. But there is a price to pay for entering the realm of rationality: having accepted logic and morality, we part with the magic of creativity.

Sometimes we become so accustomed to wonderful things and events that we stop noticing them. As if enchanted, these things become invisible. This refers to our inner subjective reality, or *living consciousness*. So, what is living consciousness?

Imagine that you are walking through a park on a beautiful sunny day. At some point you feel tired and sit down on a bench under a tree. You close your eyes and sit back, trying to relax. Suddenly, you realize that even though you are completely still and alone, there is something going on in your mind. You remember an episode from your childhood, then by association you return to the present, then you think about some event in the future. If you are a scientist, you keep thinking about the problem you have been trying to solve in recent days, if you are an artist, you are looking for an image most suitable for a painting or a novel, etc. In short,

despite the lack of external activity and direct communication with others, in your inner world, you continue to actively participate in problem solving, memories, imagination, and desire for things. At the same time, you notice that these internal processes are saturated with emotions. Remembering a difficult conversation with your boss, you feel angry and irritated, but when you switch to thinking about your plan to attend an interesting performance, you feel pleasure. You can directly control some of these inner mental processes; others, such as fears or dreams, appear and disappear independently of your deliberate efforts. This private activity of your mind, hidden from others, is your *conscious living consciousness*. It is *private* because no one else has an access to it unless you release it in a word or an action. It is *conscious* because you are aware of it. It is *alive* because it is happening here and now. And it is *consciousness* because it unfolds in the form of subjective experiences. Phenomenologically, living consciousness is *conscious and unconscious irrational*. It includes a wide range of its manifestations, such as movement control, experience, emotion, creative impulse, intuition, poetic inspiration, faith, dreams, phobias and even schizophrenia.

When you open your eyes, you find yourself in a world around you, full of physical objects. You see the trees in the park, and neatly manicured lawns and alleys. Behind the trees, you see the silhouettes of tall buildings and hear the noise of cars. All this was created by people with the help of their living consciousness. It also belongs to consciousness, but now it has become "dead" *objectified consciousness*, which we usually call matter. Unlike living consciousness, objectified consciousness is available to everyone. Most objectified consciousness e.g., cars and buildings, are the creation of the living consciousness of people, others e.g., mountains, trees and birds, are the creation of God or Nature, but the common feature of all things of objectified consciousness is that they exist objectively, outside your living consciousness and independent of your inner self. Taking a physics textbook out of your briefcase and opening it, you see another part of the objectified consciousness — letters, numbers, words, symbols, logical statements and formulas. Concepts and logical thinking also belong to objectified consciousness.

You further note that living consciousness and objectified consciousness are separate but not isolated parts of reality. There is a connection or exchange between them. Looking at buildings or formulas, listening to a lecture or to music, you take objectified consciousness inside, making it a part of your living consciousness in the form of perceptions, images, or thoughts. When objectified consciousness becomes part of your living con-

sciousness, it loses its stability and locality. For example, when you consider a building that is in front of you, you know that it has a fixed shape and size, unchanging unless the building is reconstructed or destroyed. However, in perception, the shape and size of the building change depending on the angle of the view and distance (with a slight correction for constancy). In the imagination, it is possible to mentally make the building higher or lower, to change its shape, size and/or location. Considering the laws of nature or logical thinking, you can start to "play" with them, imagining, for example, that 2 plus 2 equals 5 or that you can fly, defying the law of gravity. In other words, your creative inner self can experiment with its assigned objectified consciousness. We usually call this process the work of imagination. If you are an artist, you might want to recreate the results of your mental experiments in the form of strange paintings like the ones by Salvador Dali or of a supernatural novel like the ones by Franz Kafka. If you are a scientist, most of your creative combinations can be disregarded, but some of them may lead to the emergence of a new original theory, like Albert Einstein's special theory of relativity.

Sometimes it seems to us that we think in words. L.S. Vygotsky wrote: "Thought is accomplished in the word and not expressed only in it" (Vygotsky, 1982a, p. 162). Words are an example of objectified consciousness. The word "bird" is a pattern of four squiggles or sounds and has nothing to do with a feathered, bipedal creature with wings. When a child is born, they do not have language, but they can perceive the environment in various ways and compare perceived impressions in order to draw conclusions. Even in the womb, a child can distinguish the voice of his mother from the voices of other women, a newborn child can distinguish an image of a face with confused features from an image of a neutral face. At the age of three and a half months, children have been shown to display surprise when a large object that is moving from left to right moves behind an opaque screen and then appears on the other side of the screen without appearing in a window in the middle of the screen (Baillargeon, De Vos, 1991). Finally, we often have a thought but no words to express it. The poet is looking for the right words to "dress" his elusive feelings in socially acceptable "clothes", and the scientist thinks not in words, but in images that still need to be "put in the flesh" of words or numbers. If we thought in the form of so-called "inner speech," then it would not be difficult for the poet to find suitable words; he would simply have to voice what was already sounding inside. Vladimir Mayakovsky revealed the secret: "You exhaust for the sake of a single word / A thousand tons of verbal ore". The need for speech appears only when living consciousness encounters a complex problem and the

need arises to "objectify" thoughts in words in order to look at them from the outside and compare them with each other; there then appears what Jean Piaget and L.S. Vygotsky called *egocentric speech*.

Although irrational unconscious processes in the form of hypnotic states have been known since the Middle Ages (Braid, 2008), it was Sigmund Freud who gave irrationality its rightful place in the human psyche by placing it in the realm of the unconscious (Freud, 2013). There, in the unconscious "Id", the innate primitive drives act in accordance with the "pleasure principle", supplying the conscious "Ego" with energy. It is in the "Id" that our "slips of the tongue" and neurotic complexes arise, which become apparent when irrational and immoral drives meet the "principle of reality" in the form of the laws of logic and morality. But is the unconscious the only area where irrational processes reign? As already mentioned, this is not the case.

Indeed, when reflecting on the content of our living consciousness, we see that irrationality in the form of *magical thinking* flourishes there. Thoughts and images arise from nothing, sometimes merging, sometimes dissolving into the air like fog. In our dreams we can travel through time, walk through walls, talk to animals, and do things that would be considered immoral and even criminal in real life. The same magical transformations occur to our feelings. We can see another person or a piece of art and instantly fall in love with them, even though we know nothing about that person and have never seen that piece of art before. In psychology and anthropology, this ability of living consciousness is called "participation" or "co-communion."

The effect of participation is easy to see in such phenomena as disgust or fear of contagion. When we dine on the veranda of a restaurant and see a dead bird in the garden or smell a corpse, it can ruin the taste of the dish we are eating, even if it has been cooked by a gourmet chef. When shaking hands with a terminally ill person, we may experience the unpleasant feeling that the disease may infect us, although we know that it is not contagious. The most striking manifestation of participation is faith. Faith is the ability of our living consciousness to feel co-communion with something that we cannot perceive but only imagine. Even if we do not believe in God, we still believe in many things. We believe that the world will continue to exist after our death, although we will never see it. We believe that a feather placed in a vacuum will always fall to the Earth with an acceleration of 9.8 m/s^2, although to strictly prove this we would have to make an infinite number of measurements. We believe that two parallel lines will never meet on a plane, although we cannot personally trace these

lines to infinity. Being objectified, our faith turns into "inviolable" laws of nature, mathematics, and logic. Finally, living consciousness contains the most precious pearl of the mind — our inner Self. It is our inner Self that gives us a sense of freedom i.e., the ability to choose without coercion. In other words, in our inner subjective world, almost all things behave as if in a magical dream.

Almost all of them do, but not all. Some part of the objectified consciousness manages to penetrate our inner world. Mental arithmetic, logical thinking, and rational planning without external support resist the pressure of the magic of living consciousness, although such resistance requires significant effort from our inner Self. It is easy to calculate using a calculator, while mental arithmetic bears a significant chance of making a mistake. It does not take much effort to remember a phone number by writing it down, while memorizing it without writing it down is much more difficult. When we learn foreign languages, it can be difficult for us to remember unfamiliar words without the use of memory aids. If we are criticized by our boss, we may have negative feelings towards him, while continuing to act as if we like them. In other words, there is a bridge in our inner world that connects our living consciousness with the external objectified consciousness and subordinates our private feelings to moral and social norms. The objectified consciousness that functions in our inner world is the *internal objectified consciousness*. Internal objectified consciousness is a buffer region that connects our living consciousness with external objectified consciousness. Like living consciousness, internal objectified consciousness is private and unfolds "here and now". Unlike living consciousness, internal objectified consciousness is realized in the form of inner speech and is subject to the laws of formal logic and rational thinking. Most importantly, living consciousness and internal objectified consciousness play different roles in our lives. If living consciousness is a *generator of creativity*, internal objectified consciousness is a *transformer of the creative achievements* of living consciousness into a form accessible to others.

More precisely, a new idea arises as a result of a creative impulse that comes from the unconscious area of living consciousness into the sphere of conscious living consciousness, where it is recognized as inexpressible in words "creative languor". It is an elusive and not yet formalized internal tendency and goal that can go one of two ways. One way is that of *rational transformation*, when a verbally unformed idea falls into the buffer zone of internal objectified consciousness and is transformed into verbal, logical and rational forms, then passes through into the area of external

objectified consciousness, where it takes the form of a scientific discovery, realistic art, or rational behaviour. Another way is when the idea follows the path of *direct invasion*, penetrating into the area of external objectified consciousness, bypassing the buffer zone; the result is a "crazy" idea, a piece of magical art, or magical behaviour in the form of play, prayer, or witchcraft (see Figure 1).

While internal objectified consciousness is studied in disciplines such as psychology and psycholinguistics, and external objectified consciousness is a favorite subject of specialists in languages, logic, and artificial intelligence, living consciousness has predictably received far less attention. We study objectified consciousness using scientific methods, from a third-person point of view. Physical objects (such as minerals, plants, and animals) are first perceived as phenomena and then compared, measured, and transformed into symbols: numbers, drawings, names, and concepts. The same thing happens with human artifacts (such as man-made objects, languages, and concepts): we perceive them as external objects, and then remember and manipulate their meanings.

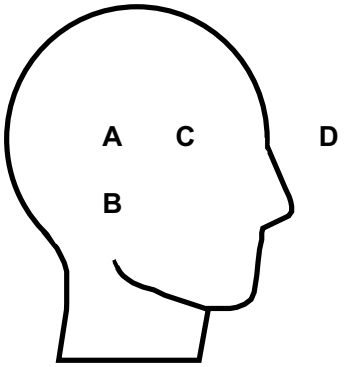


Figure 1

(A) Conscious living consciousness (private subjective reality functioning according to the laws of magic), (B) Unconscious living consciousness (unconscious subjective reality functioning according to the laws of magic), (C) Internal objectified consciousness (private subjective reality functioning according to the laws of formal logic and rational thought), and (D) External objectified consciousness (symbolically represented laws of logic and science, norms of culture and morality, culturally mediated forms of perception, verbal and real behavior and products of human activity). The path of rational transformation from (A) to (C) and to (D). The path of invasion from (A) to (D)

This is a relatively easy task, since objectified consciousness obeys the laws of stability and locality: it can be recorded in the form of words or symbols and operated accordingly, regardless of time. The question is how can we approach living consciousness when our own "observing device," our inner Self, is a part of our living consciousness and as such is invisible to itself? In addition, our thoughts, images, memories, and emotions are in a constant process of change and transformation. This is one of the reasons why living consciousness is mainly studied not by scientists, but by artists, writers, and poets. Let us at least remember the famous: "There is a whole world in your soul of mysteriously magical thoughts — They will be deafened by the outside noise — Daylight rays will disperse them — Listen to their singing — and be silent!" (Tyutchev, 1830).

Another reason for the underestimation of living consciousness by scientific disciplines is the successes of the natural sciences, which have plunged many scientists into the illusion that magical events are ancient history and exist today only in games and art, while all other magic is falsification or deception. This illusion reached its zenith in the mid-20th century, when semiconductors, portable radios, television, nuclear power plants, flights to the moon, the first computers, genetic engineering and other miracles of science led some scientists to believe that there was nothing in the world that was impossible to explain by science. However, this scientific optimism came at a high price: scientists became blind to their living consciousness. They began to look at the world as if nature and objectified consciousness were the only things that matter. Living consciousness became a shadow that accompanies brain processes but has no causal power. Inspired by the achievements of science, physicists began the search for a "theory of everything" — a certain unified set of laws from which all existing entities and processes could be derived. Artificial intelligence specialists have begun to dream of creating a digital copy of human consciousness. However, physicists and cybernetics study inanimate things, not human consciousness, and the so-called "theory of everything" misses the very source of this "everything", which is the living consciousness of the physicists themselves. Living consciousness fell "under the spell" of science and cybernetics, which was a grave mistake.

Natural mental functions as a source of living consciousness and higher mental functions

L.S. Vygotsky suggested that the age of approximately 2 years, a child's pre-verbal thinking (natural mental function) merges with pre-intellectual language and speech (verbal) thinking (higher mental function). Thus,

he writes: "...in ontogenesis, thinking and speech, up to a certain point, follow different genetic paths and only after a certain point do their lines intersect..." (Vygotsky, 1982b, p. 116), and further: "Everyone agrees that the initial forms of the child's intellectual reactions, established experimentally after Köhler's experiments by himself and others, are as independent of speech as the actions of chimpanzees... Further, everyone agrees that the initial stages in the development of a child's speech are pre-intellectual stages". Finally, in the final part of the chapter "Genetic roots of thinking and speech" L.S. Vygotsky writes: "We think that the previous parts showed with sufficient clarity that verbal thinking is not a natural form of behavior, but a socio-historical form and therefore distinguished mainly by a number of *specific properties and patterns* that cannot be discovered in natural forms of thinking and speech" (ibid., pp. 117–118). Considering the role of speech in detail, L.S. Vygotsky sees this role in the child mastering his own behaviour, reflecting on his actions "as if from the outside," planning actions and solving problems by creating "second-order stimuli," such as remembering through associations or thinking about a problem using egocentric speech (Vygotsky, 1984). He assigns the same role to speech in the behaviour of an adult. At the same time, the appearance of inner speech L.S. Vygotsky explains using the descriptive term "internalization," the psychological mechanism of which remains mysterious. Indeed, why is native and even foreign language easily acquired (interiorized) by a child and why is it so difficult for an adult to learn a foreign language? It would seem that the more developed the higher mental functions are, the easier the internalization of the external into the internal should occur, but the reality is the opposite. Often L.S. Vygotsky's idea that verbal thinking plays a leading role in the behaviour of an adult is accepted as an axiom. But let us think to what extent and in what situations does speech really determine our conscious actions?

More than half a century ago, the author of this article, under the leadership and initiative of A.R. Luria, was involved in research into so-called *programmed behaviour* in children. It was established that a child begins to subordinate his actions to verbal instructions (both those given by adults and those given by the child to himself) at the age of approximately 2.5 years (Subbotsky, 1976). These data confirm the hypothesis of L.S. Vygotsky that speech does not begin to influence behaviour immediately, but only at around 2 years of age (Vygotsky, 1982b). However, both before and after this age, most of a person's behaviour is regulated not by verbal instructions, but by living consciousness, and even if it is "programmed," it is not

by speech, but by the surrounding objective environment. Our walking, running, manual and other movements are conscious, voluntary, but not programmed by verbal instructions, and this gives our body the opportunity to feel natural. Let us imagine, for example, that we were asked to sit on a chair, subordinating the movement not to living consciousness, but to verbal instructions regulating the actions of the limbs and other parts of the body; carrying out such a programmed action would take a lot of time and effort, and the action itself would look clumsy. That is why we always unmistakably distinguish the living movement of a person or an animal from the movements of a robot, whose actions are subject to pre-created algorithms. Our actions and thoughts are subject to verbal programs only in a limited number of situations: in a social environment (school, hospital, theater), when driving a car on the road, when solving mathematical and logical problems; in most situations though, *actions and thoughts are regulated not by speech, but by living consciousness*.

Summarizing what has been said, it can be argued that L.S. Vygotsky's hypothesis that verbal thinking is born as a result of the merging of pre-speech thinking with pre-intellectual language raises some questions. In particular, (a) is pre-intellectual language free from logical structures, and (b) what is the psychological mechanism of internalization, that is, the transition of speech from an interpsychological form of existence to an intrapsychological one? From the perspective of the *theory of living consciousness*, we have to give a negative answer to the first question.

In fact, when an infant first hears the word "cat," it is nothing more than a chain of meaningless sounds accompanied by visual images, one of which subsequently becomes a special kind of animal and the other an image of an adult making sounds. Similarly, when a preschooler is first shown the letter "a", he does not know what a letter is. The child sees a visual image accompanied by a special sound, and an image of an adult producing this sound. It is the innate living consciousness in the form of perceptions, memory and associative thinking that allows the child to put things together, and with some practice begin to perceive the sound pattern "cat" as the name of an animal, and the visual pattern "a" as a letter included in the context of other letters ("b", "c", "d", etc.), and gradually master the ability to speak and then read. When babies create their first words, such as "cat," "mama," and "spoon," the *meanings of these words* already obey the laws of formal logic, such as identity, consistency, and excluded middle. In particular, the child understands that "mom" is always called mom, that this woman is called mom or not mom, but not both at the same time, and that this woman cannot be called both mom and cat. Thus, pre-intellectual language

as a *system of words with meanings* is a form of objectified consciousness that obeys the laws of logic.

However, the *formation of meanings itself* has a completely different psychological nature. Living consciousness, through its property of participation, allows the baby to identify the sound pattern "cat" with the visual image of a four-legged animal covered with fur. Such identification gives *meaning* to a meaningless combination of sounds, and thereby turns this sound combination into a *word*, but at the same time violates the logical laws of identity and contradiction, turning a series of meaningless sounds into a material object, and vice versa, identifying a material object with a chain of sounds. From this it is clear that it is the innate living consciousness that makes the emergence of early language possible.

Understanding this changes the way we think about early speech. If according to L.S. Vygotsky, before merging with innate forms of intelligence, the *initial stages* in the development of speech represent a lower psychological system not associated with intelligence, then the emergence of language on the basis of living consciousness makes it obvious that early language is already subject to the laws of formal logic, and therefore includes logical intelligence. In other words, language and intelligence mediated by logic appear *simultaneously as a single whole* — as a form of objectified consciousness, connected with the trunk of living consciousness thanks to the magical law of participation (co-communion) — the ability of living consciousness to identify sound patterns coming from society with visual ones and, thus, turn these patterns into words. Somewhat later, according to the same magical law of participation, written speech appears. It is the *natural mental functions* that, branching out, give rise to both living consciousness and objectified consciousness in the form of higher mental functions. The very process of "attaching" the social in the form of early speech to living consciousness is described by L.S. Vygotsky as the law of development of higher mental functions. "Every higher form of behaviour," Vygotsky writes, "appears on stage twice in its development—first as a collective form of behaviour, as an interpsychological function, and then as an intrapsychological function, as a known way of behaviour" (Vygotsky, 1982c, p. 115). With a certain approximation, interpsychological forms of behaviour can be associated with external objectified consciousness, and intrapsychological forms with internal objectified consciousness. The very process of transforming "intra" into "inter", designated by L.S. Vygotsky as internalization is nothing more than another manifestation of the magical law of participation — the ability of living consciousness to identify with

external stimuli, in this case — with words that came from society, literally *turning* an external sound pattern into an internal image of this pattern — internal speech.

This explains why learning foreign languages becomes more difficult with age, as well as the psychological mechanism of internalization. The point is that if interiorization were a simple translation of the external into the internal according to the principle of "accumulation," then the effectiveness of interiorization would not depend on the content of what is internalized. On the contrary, participation is most effective when it is free from the logic of the external world, which is subject to the laws of identity and contradiction. Therefore, the primary identification *of a word with an object* occurs naturally, but at the same time it introduces the logic of the external world into living consciousness. If a given type of animal is identified with the Russian word "sobaka," then identifying it with the English word "dog" means violating the law of contradiction (A or not-A). In childhood, when learning languages, this problem does not arise, since participation is based on immediate (natural) memory, free from logic, but at an older age, participation increasingly encounters already formed logical thinking, which makes participation difficult. As L.S. Vygotsky rightly assumed, already in adolescence, memory becomes dependent on logical thinking (see the next section of the article). Mediated memory promotes better memorization of new ideas, but interferes with the memorization of other designations for the same subject, that is, participation in the acquisition of a foreign language.

Living consciousness and cultural-historical method

Most applications of the cultural-historical method grew out of operating with the concept of higher mental functions. For example, in Russia such applications include the concept of the orientational basis of action by P.Ya. Galperin, school programmes for teaching generative concepts by D.B. Elkonin and V.V. Davydov, neuropsychological methods by A.R. Luria and others. These methods worked, but the properties of living consciousness remained a mystery. The goal of the cultural-historical method is to direct living consciousness along predetermined channels, using higher mental functions as "psychological tools." But, having devoted all its attention to the development of "psychological tools," the cultural-historical method loses sight of the very object with which these "tools" are intended to work — living consciousness.

Despite the fact that living consciousness has a common genetic basis with higher mental functions, phylo- and onotogenetically it develops as an independent branch. A monkey, pursued by a predator, jumping through trees, demonstrates the work of living consciousness in its *early phylogenetic form*. Even if the monkey could think in words, it would not have time to consciously decide which of the many branches of the tree ahead could support its weight; it makes decisions instantly, and every decision is vital, since a mistake means a fall and death. This is a model of how living consciousness works in humans, only instead of tree branches, our creative imagination "jumps" to images and ideas.

L.S. Vygotsky, in the same way as Jean Piaget, recognized that newborns have some mental abilities (i.e., reflexes, sensations, perceptions, mental abilities and movements), but insisted that these abilities are qualitatively different in their level of complexity from higher mental functions that come to the child through learning. Thus, he argued, for example, that orthoscopic perception, which includes the constancy of the size and shape of an object, is not innate, but is acquired during postnatal development as a result of the formation of higher psychological systems, including the interaction of perception, thinking and memory. Denying the claims of Gestalt psychologists that the integrity of perception is innate, L.S. Vygotsky wrote: "What then is the process of development of children's perception, if the most essential feature of perception, its structure, its holistic character, is equally evident both at the very beginning of development and in an adult at the very end of this development?" (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 367).

In fact, studies of the cognitive abilities of newborns and infants of the first year of life, about which L.S. Vygotsky could not have known, confirmed that the natural mental functions of infants are holistic and structural, although they differ from higher mental functions in such parameters as mediation by speech, interfunctional connections and voluntariness (Bremner, 1994; Subbotsky, 1996). It seems that in the course of cognitive development, the child does not internalize the externally given knowledge inside the "blank slate" of consciousness, but through participation identifies *those natural mental functions* that are prerequisites for rationality with similar structures of society, thus transforming natural structures into objectified "higher mental functions". Such natural premises of rationality are, for example, infants' early intuitions about physical causation and the constancy of physical objects (Baillargeon, 1987; Baillargeon & De Vos, 1991). Even language is not a purely social phenomenon, but relies on natural premises in the form of *generative grammars* (Dovey, 2015). *Other*

natural mental functions, such as emotions, magical thinking and creative imagination, develop as living consciousness (Figure 2).

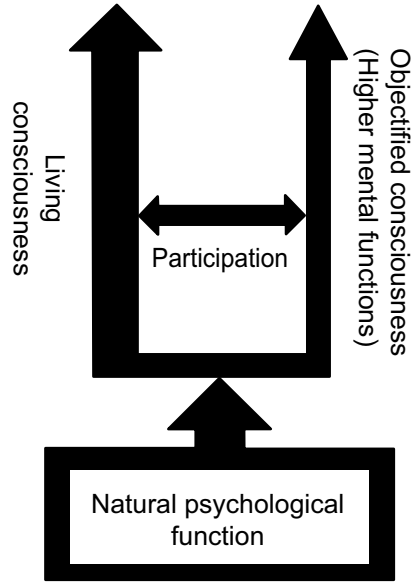


Figure 2

Development of living consciousness and objectified consciousness (higher mental functions) in ontogenesis

In ontogenesis, the development of higher mental functions occurs in the form of restructuring the connections in the system consisting of these functions. So, with regard to the development of thinking and memory, L.S. Vygotsky writes: "If the thinking of a pre-adolescence child was based on memory and thinking meant remembering, then for a teenager memory is based mainly on thinking: remembering is, first of all, looking for what is needed in a certain logical sequence" (Vygotsky, 1982c, p. 120). This restructuring of connections between verbal memory and thinking, expressed by L.S. Vygotsky theoretically, was later confirmed experimentally (Subbotsky et al., 2002). On the contrary, living consciousness is not a *system of individual functions, but a unity of interconnected forms flowing into each other, a "psychological polyhedron" of perception, thinking, imagination, feeling and faith*. Therefore, the development of living consciousness occurs not in the form of a restructuring of connections, but in the form

of an increase in the number of facets, awareness and volume of such a "polyhedron". Thus, in young children the number of forms of manifestation of living consciousness is limited and living consciousness is mostly unconscious, but at a later age most of it becomes a conscious subjective experience. An example of an increase in the volume of conscious living consciousness is an increase in the number of things that cause a feeling of disgust. Disgust is initially caused by entities that involve innate negative physiological responses (Curtis et al., 2011), but later the number of such entities increases due to cultural conditioning (Haidt et al., 1997). With age, the number of forms of manifestation of living consciousness increases, the forms of living consciousness differentiate and grow expansively: for example, a feeling of attachment to close adults can expand and include attachment to other people, imagination expands from covering the immediate childhood environment to covering almost the entire universe, and faith expands from belief in Santa Claus to faith in the universality of the laws of nature and in a single God.

Study of living consciousness in psychology

It so happened that the development of the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky followed the path of controlling living consciousness with the help of objectified structures of consciousness — symbolic formations, such as speech, logical thinking, scientific concepts, social norms or learning models. The cultural-historical method works with living consciousness through the construction of external "scaffolds" in the form of guidelines and algorithms. This method is effective in teaching scientific knowledge at school, developing cognitive skills, restoring lost cognitive functions in patients, and developing social and moral forms of behaviour based on the external control. However, this method is not applicable to the use of the *internal potential of living consciousness* as such: subjective experiences, motivation, emotions, non-pragmatic moral behaviour and creative thinking.

On the contrary, the method applicable to the study of living consciousness can be called the method of *liberating influence* — placing the subject in conditions where he can freely structure reality. Using an analogue from cosmology, we can say that this method creates conditions when living consciousness is considered as a "black hole" emitting "Hawking radiation" in the form of creative impulses (Alekseev, 2022). This method originated in psychoanalysis as a method of free association and analysis of fantasies and dreams, and later developed into other projective techniques.

Unlike the cultural-historical method, the purpose of which is to influence living consciousness through coercion, the method of "releas-

ing influence" allows living consciousness to unfold in the form of play, fantasy, participation with observable events, or behavior free from social control. In personality psychology, a way to reveal the creative potential of living consciousness is an altruistic style of communication, which, when consistently applied in the classroom over a significant period of time, has a stimulating effect on children's non-pragmatic moral behavior, critical thinking and creative activity (Subbotsky, 1979; 1981). In the field of cognitive development, research has shown that exposure to magical phenomena while watching films activates children's creative thinking (Subbotsky et al., 2010), improves recognition of commercial brands (Subbotsky, Matthews, 2011) and improves the ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality (Subbotsky et al., 2010; Slater, 2011).

As for the practical impact on living consciousness, it has long existed in the form of magic and religion, and in medicine — in the form of the placebo effect. Today, the influence on living consciousness is known under the names of psychotherapy, psychological assistance and suggestion, which are widely used in medicine, politics, commercial advertising, the entertainment industry and other areas of working with living consciousness. Any psychological therapy works on the basis of co-involvement — the client's participation with the therapist's message. Since the word in objectified form concentrates a living consciousness and experience of society, it has an inspiring magical effect on the individual, who involuntarily experiences involvement with the word addressed to him. This means that, along with positive aspects, therapy is fraught with the danger of intentional or unintentional manipulation of living consciousness in such forms as fraud, degeneration, overdose of influence, violation of the privacy of the inner world and energy vampirism (Subbotsky, 2022; 2023).

Conclusion

Despite L.S. Vygotsky's belief in the impossibility of the existence of complex natural mental functions, which did not stand the test in the light of new empirical research, his distinction between natural and higher mental functions has not lost its significance for understanding modern data on the cognitive abilities of infants. The analysis shows that the natural mental functions of infants of pre-speech age, the number of descriptions of which is steadily growing with the development of research technology, in parallel with their development in the form of living consciousness, must also go through the development path described by L.S. Vygotsky as the formation of higher mental functions.

References

Alekseev, S.O. (2022). Hawking radiation. Big Soviet encyclopedia. https://bigenc.ru/c/izluchenie-khokinga-39c57a (accessed: 10.01.2024). (In Russ.)

Baillargeon, R. (1987). Object Permanence in 3 1/2- and 4 1/2-month-old Infants. *Developmental Psychology*, (23), 655–664.

Baillargeon, R., De Vos, J. (1991). Object Permanence in Young Infants: Further Evidence. *Child Development,* (62), 1227–1246. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1130803?origin=crossref (accessed: 20.01.2024).

Braid, J. (2008). The discovery of hypnosis: the complete writings of James Braid, the father of hypnotherapy. London: UKCHH Ltd.

Bremner, G. (1994). Infancy. 2nd ed. New York: Wiley-Blackwell Publ.

Curtis, V., de Barra, M., Aunger, R. (2011). Disgust as an Adaptive System for Disease Avoidance Behaviour. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, *366*(1563), 389–401.

Dovey, D. (2015). Noam Chomsky's theory of universal grammar is right; It's hardwired into our brains. URL: https://www.medicaldaily.com/noam-chomskys-theory-universal-grammar-right-its-hardwired-our-brains-364236 (accessed: 20.01.2024).

Freud, S. (2013). A general introduction to psychoanalysis. New York: CreateSpace Independent Publ.

Haidt, J., Rozin, P., McCauley, C., Imada, S. (1997). Body, Psyche, and Culture: The Relationship between Disgust and Morality. *Psychology & Developing Societies*, (9), 107–131.

Subbotsky, E., Chesnokova, O., Greenfield, S. (2002). Inference-based memory failures in children and adults. Poster presented at the 3rd Tsukuba international conference on memory, University of Tsukuba, Japan. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376503177_Inference (accessed: 25.12.2023).

Subbotsky, E., Hysted, C., Jones, N. (2010). Watching Films with Magical Content Facilitates Creativity in Children. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *111*(1), 261–277.

Subbotsky, E., Matthews, J. (2011). Magical Thinking and Memory: Distinctiveness Effect in for TV Advertisements with Magical Content. *Psychological Reports*, *109*(2), 369–379.

Subbotsky, E., Slater, E. (2011). Children's Discrimination of Fantastic vs Realistic Visual Displays after Watching a Film with Magical Content. *Psychological Reports*, *112*(2), 603–609.

Subbotsky, E.V. (1976). Psychology of partnership relations in preschoolers. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Subbotsky, E.V. (1979). Shaping of Moral Action in a Child. *Voprosy Psikhologii,* (3), 47–55. (In Russ.)

Subbotsky, E.V. (1981). Genesis of Personality Type Behavior in Preschoolers and Communicative Style. *Voprosy Psikhologii,* (2), 68–78. (In Russ.)

Subbotsky, E.V. (1996). Vygotsky's Division Between Lower and Higher Mental Functions and Recent Studies on Infants' Cognitive Development. *Voprosy Psikhologii*, (6), 88–91. (In Russ.)

Subbotsky, E.V. (2022). Reason in the Cobweb: Magical Manipulation of Consciousness and Counteraction to It. *Psychologicheskaya Gazeta = Psychological Newspaper*. URL: https://psy.su/feed/10239/ (accessed: 14.12.2023). (In Russ.)

Subbotsky, E.V. (2023). Living Subjectivity and Cultural-Historical Method: Limits of Applicability. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *46*(2), 133–153. (In Russ.)

Tyutchev, F.I. (1830). Silentium! URL: https://www.culture.ru/poems/45928/silentium (accessed: 14.12.2023). (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982b). Thinking and Language. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982c). About Psychological Systems. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982d). Lectures in Psychology. Lecture 1. Perception and Its Development in Childhood. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982a). The problem of consciousness. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). Tool and sign in child development. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 6. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eugene V. Subbotsky, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Reader in Developmental Psychology (Emeritus), Psychology Department, Lancaster University, United Kingdom, subbotsky@me.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5663-0517

Received: 03.02.2024; revised: 14.04.2024; accepted: 22.05.2024.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-42
UDC 159.9

Bridges or walls: remarks on translating the concepts of cultural-historical theory[1]

Elizabeth Tunes [1], Zoia Ribeiro Prestes [2] ✉

[1] University of Brasilia, Brasilia, Brazil
[2] Fluminense Federal University, Niteroy, Brazil

✉ zoiaprestes@yahoo.com.br

Abstract
Background. The problem of translating scientific articles into other languages affects not only translators but also psychologists, since the accuracy of translation determines the adequacy of understanding and transferring of scientific concepts.
Objectives. The article focuses on the critical discussion of different variants in translating some concepts of L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory into Portuguese.
Study Materials. This article discusses the concepts of the "zona blijaichego razvitia", "learning", and "speech".
Results. The paper considers variations in the translations of L.S. Vygotsky's concept of the cultural-historical theory into Portuguese. Insufficient attention of translators to the theoretical and methodological foundations of the original scientific text, which generates substantive errors in translation and distorts (simplifies) the content of the original approach, is critically discussed.
Conclusions. Both literary and scientific translation should be understood as an unfinished process that requires constant revision and improvement. The philosophical, ethical and historical ideas of the translated author should be the basis for this. Only in this case will translation contribute to the communication and connection of people speaking different languages.

Keywords: zona blijaichego razvitia, cultural-historical approach, learning, translation, speech

[1] This article was published in Portuguese in the Journal Revista Educativa. Reference: Prestes, Z.R., Tunes, E. (2022). Pontes ou Muralhas: Exame Crítico de Traduções de Conceitos da Teoria Histórico-cultural. *Revista Educativa — Revista de Educação, 25*(1), 19 páginas. https://doi.org/10.18224/educ.v25i1.12439

For citation: Tunes, E., Prestes, Z. (2024). Bridges or walls: remarks on translating the concepts of cultural-historical theory. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 81–95. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-42

Introduction

Translating scientific texts involves great responsibility and gives rise to various difficulties, which can make this process almost impossible. Social, historical, linguistic and other cultural features inevitably influence the translator, predetermining choices in transferring concepts and translating terms. In this regard, the words chosen for translation and their meanings in the language reflect the way of thinking and cultural characteristics of both the translator and the country of origin. This inevitable circumstance gives rise to inaccuracies in the transmission of meanings and content of concepts, facts and scientific theories. It can be said that translation is "a way of thinking that explores the everyday processes of one language; ... to translate means to compete with the untranslatable, ... to create equivalents of communication..., to jump over abysses; to understand that there are different ways to say something; to give the opportunity to expand the horizons of one's own language, ... it is a reflection, an internalisation of someone else's thinking in search of a way to say something in a different way, to return to communication with an approximate solution. In general, translation is a reflexive activity" (Oliveira, 2017, p. 48).

This article critically discusses translations of concepts used in the works of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky into Portuguese. We assume that some terms of the cultural-historical approach, when translated, become a reflection of a specific Western way of thinking, the foundations of which do not fully correspond to those that L.S. Vygotsky had in mind when developing the cultural-historical theory. The following concepts were chosen for analysis: "zona blijaichego razvitia", "learning" and "speech". The article also discusses the widely held view that Vygotsky understands the function of the teacher as a mediator. The popularity of this interpretation may be due to the fact that the main task of the teacher seems to be the organisation of sign-based mediation. This approach distorts Vygotsky's understanding of the role of the teacher and knowledge in the relationship between learning and development.

On the possibility and legitimacy of translation

Let us start this section with a quote from Vilém Flusser: "Society is the basis of reality <...>, a person is real only as a member of society <...>,

intelligence is not real, it is real only in the process of thinking in any language" (Flusser, 2004, p. 25).

In the search for order, man transforms the world from chaos into cosmos. As Vilém Flusser puts it, this act is realised through language. In his opinion, there is a structural identity between language and the cosmos: most of the information that our intellect has, the original raw material of our thinking, is words: "The intellect *sensu stricto* (in the strict sense) is a weaver that uses words as threads. The intellect *sensu lato* (in the broad sense) has an antechamber where they work and transform raw cotton (data of meaning) into threads (words). But a large amount of raw material is already ready in the form of threads" (ibid., p. 40).

According to this author, words are the product of thinking, and thinking itself is realised only in words, in communication, which transforms chaos into cosmos: "Thinking in a conversation preserves and increases the territory of reality. By being realised, it realises itself" (ibid., p. 50). Thus, we can say that the intellect held captive by language. If the realisation of intelligence is conditioned by its embodiment in language, then we are forced to conclude that there are as many ways of realising intelligence as there are languages. These statements are followed by important reflections on translation and scientific knowledge. In this regard, several key aspects that relevant to the central issues of this article are noted below.

The first question that arises regarding the translation is: is it legitimate in principle? If we take as a starting point Flusser's position that every system of thought is the result of the language in which it was formulated, then, when translated into another language, words and concepts automatically acquire a meaning different from the original and from what the author intended. In this case, we would have to admit that the translation is not legitimate, and that there are as many sciences about the same thing as there are languages into which the original scientific ideas are translated. In other words, the world would become a huge Tower of Babel made up of small autochthonous worlds that do not communicate with one another. However, Flusser offers a solution to this problem.

By comparing Portuguese, German and English, that is, three languages with an inflectional structure and therefore "constituting the resulting discourse in Western civilization" (ibid., p. 128), Flusser demonstrated that, even with differences in words, concepts, norms and types, phrases in these languages are composed of words that are relatively fixed, inflected and hierarchically organised. In this way, words that differ between two languages can be compared, ensuring the possibility of translation and transition from one language to another. This led to the beginning of Western civilization.

At the same time, this possibility indicates the existence of another cosmos, corresponding to the individual structure of each language.

Each language is its own special world, different from any other language. Moreover, each language includes all other languages through translation. The intellect, realised in translation from one language to another, perceives, understands and articulates the specific reality of its language. Thus, translation makes existence in different realities possible (ibid.).

Speaking about the significance and value of the art of translation, we agree with the words of Bernardo in the preface to the already cited work of Flusser: "Translation, forcing the language to submit and accompany the bends of foreign thought, is probably the most refined method of spiritual communication between nations" (Bernardo, 2004, p. 15).

Thus, despite the fact that a language is an integral system, it is not a closed system. This allows different worlds to exchange information. Therefore, translation is an opportunity (Flusser, 2004). But is it legitimate? The examples analysed by Flusser suggest that translation is only approximately legitimate, and that this legitimacy is a function of the degree of relatedness between languages: the lower the degree of relatedness, the less legitimate the translation will be.

There are many positives that come from translation. During translation, the intellect is momentarily freed from the "captivity" of language and is quickly introduced into the "body" of another language, thus being born again. Translation is the constant death and resurrection of the intellect. We believe that languages are "open systems that intersect with great ease" (Flusser, 2004, p. 60).

On the psychological sciences and translation

If, as previously mentioned, when translated from one language into another, phrases acquire a meaning different from the original, since the translation is only a legitimate approximation, then there are as many sciences about the same subject matter as there are languages into which the original scientific wording can be translated. However, as Flusser points out, this does not happen, since the results obtained in scientific research are reliable in all languages. This happens because science itself is a language, albeit a fairly new one that has not yet been fully formed. Due to this incompleteness, there is a need for continuous translation from one scientific language into Portuguese, English, French and other languages. Despite the debatability of this approach, we accept Flusser's position as a premise, continuing our reflections in accordance with the purpose of this article.

The incompleteness Flusser speaks of is the incompleteness of the language of science as we have known it since the Renaissance. It is most evident in psychology, the blossoming of which as a field of scientific knowledge has only recently occurred. Psychology is the last discipline to separate from philosophy. Has this happened adequately? Or, rather, as with the Portuguese language in the words of this poet?

> Last flower of Latium, wild, uncultured, fair,
> You are, at once, both splendor and the grave:
> Pure gold, the gangue's impurities don't bare
> A mine that´s veiled 'mid rocks and graveled.
>
> I love you thus, unknown, obscure and hidden,
> A blaring trumpet, lyre of guilelessness,
> Whose fury's like the sea that's tempest ridden,
> Whose lullabies are love and tenderness!
>
> I love your lush green woods and perfume wrung,
> From virgin jungles and expansive sea!
> I love you, rude and sorrowful native tongue,
>
> In which my mother said: "dear son of mine!"
> In which Camões bemoaned, grieved exile he,
> His luckless genius and love's tarnished shine![2]

Any comparison has its limitations. Of course, it cannot be said that psychology "ruined" philosophy. Philosophy is not dead but is often ignored by its youngest daughter. In an important text written in 1927, L.S. Vygotsky drew attention to this neglect in the epigraph by quoting a phrase from the Gospel of Matthew: "The stone that the builders despised has become the cornerstone..." (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 291). In the very first paragraph, he highlights the curious fact that it was not philosophers or theorists who worried about the lack of foundations constituting the unity of psychological science, but rather practitioners involved in applied psychology. Vygotsky writes: "Further progress in a straight line, simple continuation of the same work, gradual accumulation of material turn out to be fruitless or even impossible. To go further, you need to outline the path" (ibid., p. 292). A little further he adds, based on K. Marx: "Having the

[2] Olavo Bilac, "The Portuguese Language", translated into English by William, Frederic G.

end of the path, one can most easily understand both the entire path as a whole and the meaning of the individual stages" (ibid., p. 295).

Defending the unity of psychological science, Vygotsky paid great attention to its foundations and methods, including the issues of creating a unified conceptual apparatus of psychology or, as Flusser would say, its language. Vygotsky understood that the system of concepts in psychology should be based on clear principles and specific empirical methods, as in biology, chemistry and physics. At the same time, this task should not be solved in a formal way; it is necessary to decide on the method, which for Vygotsky consisted in a cultural-historical approach to the study of psychological reality: "From here, as a politician derives from the analysis of events, a rule for action, for organising scientific research, a methodological research that makes use of the historical consideration of specific forms of science and the theoretical analysis of these forms in order to arrive at generalised, tested and suitable principles for guidance — such, in our opinion, is the grain of that general psychology, the concept of which we are trying to clarify in this chapter" (ibid., p. 296).

At the time of Vygotsky's writing, psychology as a science was just beginning to define itself among the abundance of different schools and directions, often incompatible with one another. Based on a historical study of the principles and methods of the main trends in psychology, developing critical and comparative analysis, Vygotsky established some important foundations and provisions that formed the basis of his theory. He strove for unity in psychology and looked for a way to unite various directions so that psychology would become an independent direction of scientific knowledge, and the term "psychology" itself could be used without the adjective "scientific". In this regard, using the term "scientific psychology" is as meaningless as calling biology Darwinian.

It is also incorrect, according to Vygotsky, to call psychology Marxist, for example. This is almost the same as if a historian refers to Russian history as the "Marxist history of Russia". As Vygotsky wrote: "Marxist psychology is not a school among schools, but the only true psychology as a science; there cannot be any psychology other than this. And vice versa: everything that has existed in truly scientific psychology is included in Marxist psychology: this concept is broader than the concept of a school or even an approach. It coincides with the concept of scientific psychology in general, no matter where and by whom it is being developed. <...> After all, "psychology" is the name of a science, and not of a theatrical play or a movie. It can only be scientific. No one would think of calling a description of the sky in a novel astronomy; the term "psychology" is just as ill-suited

to describe Raskolnikov's thoughts and Lady Macbeth's delirium. Everything that does not scientifically describe psyche is not psychology, but something else: advertising, reviews, chronicles, fiction, lyrics, philosophy, philistinism, gossip and a thousand other things" (ibid., p. 435).

L.S. Vygotsky wanted to contribute to the formation of scientific psychology and establish clear differences between science and non-science; psychology and non-psychology. He did not strive to create a new psychological school, believing that the creation of a real scientific psychology would be a task of many years. Therefore, he admitted that the psychology he was talking about did not yet exist and was only beginning to manifest itself on the verge of the new society, since its development was impossible in the old society. For Vygotsky, it is impossible to reveal truth about the individual and personality without revealing truth about society. Only in a new society can psychology take a central place: "The leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom will inevitably raise the question of mastering our own being, of subordinating it to ourselves. In this sense, Pavlov is right in calling our science the last science about man himself. It will indeed be the last science in the historical period of mankind or in the prehistory of mankind. A new society will create a new person" (ibid., p. 436).

Thus, by analogy with the last flower of Lazio, psychology will become the tomb not of philosophy, but of history. This was Vygotsky's prediction. Almost a hundred years later, this remains a desirable prediction. Psychology is still mentioned in the plural and in combination with many adjectives. The mere fact that Vygotsky's psychology itself is called cultural-historical is an illustration of this. Thus, to this day psychology exists only in the plural; its unification has not yet occurred. Strictly speaking, in Vygotsky's terminology, it has not yet turned into a science *stricto*.[3] Will this ever happen? One fact is certain: if Vygotsky's predictions are correct, this will only be possible in a new society. Interestingly, this perspective makes Vygotsky's theoretical proposals at least a century ahead of their time. This is a theory of the future. But will this future arrive? There is at least evidence of the desire for it. The powerful and broad spread of Vygotsky's theory is one of them; it is no coincidence that it has been widely distorted.

Since this theory became widespread in the western part of the world, it has undergone reconstructions and distortions that, at times, turn it into a pale memory of what it used to be in the works of its author. There are many ways to distort it, for example, through comparing its concepts with the

[3] Sensu stricto (lat.) — in the strict sense.

concepts of other theories, finding connections where there are impassable abysses. However, the most powerful, easiest and fastest way to weaken and make it equal in importance to other theories is through mistranslation.

When L. S. Vygotsky's core concepts are translated, they are often taken from different contexts with a new language being imposed on them. As a result, most often, the translated concept differs very significantly from the one formulated in the original language. This happens for various reasons, most of which are not realised by the translator, so it is not a case of deliberate distortion. Haste, poor understanding of the theory and of its philosophical and methodological foundations, and shallow study of the theory most commonly underlie poor translations.

As for the works of L.S. Vygotsky, additional difficulties are created by the specifics of the Russian language in which they are written. It is certainly more complex than other languages such as Spanish, English, French, Italian, etc. In addition, few translators speak Russian as a second language. An additional difficulty is created by the fact that foreign readers still do not have access to the complete works of L. S. Vygotsky, which could facilitate a more in-depth study, understanding and interpretation of his ideas. However, none of this can serve as an excuse for persistent translation errors. They must be corrected immediately upon discovery, since the longer and more repeatedly they occur, the more vulnerable the author's theory becomes. The likelihood of introducing strange ideas that are incompatible with the author's thoughts increases.

Translating means taking risks. However, running the risks should not hamper the initiative to translate scientific texts. The translator should be aware of the risks and be prepared to admit and correct mistakes. As Flusser puts it, translation implies the suppression of one's self at least at a short moment of transition from one language to another. Translation requires an ethical compromise between the translator and the author of the translated text (Prestes, 2021).

There are huge differences between translators who build bridges and translators who build walls. The first type of translator is always in search of the foundations to the construction of a scientific theory, trying to create conditions for possible and genuine spiritual communication between the author and the reader in the foreign language. The second type of translator neglects the basic concepts, ignores them and, as a result, builds walls that make it impossible or at least significantly difficult to achieve this much desired and saving communication.

Some examples of the "bridges" the authors of this article have been trying to build when translating important concepts of L.S. Vygotsky's

theory starting from the beginning of the first decade of this century are given below.

"Zona blijaichego razvitia": time and development

The theory developed by L.S. Vygotsky has already had several different names. In his scientific autobiography "Stages of the Path Traveled," A.R. Luria states: "L.S. Vygotsky liked to call his theory "instrumental," "cultural," or "historical" psychology. Each of these terms reflected different features of the new approach to psychology he proposed. Each of them emphasised different sources of the general mechanism by which society and its history create the structure of those forms of activity that distinguish man from animal" (Luria, 2001, p. 31).

In 2003, a version of the preface to A. N. Leontiev's book "The Development of Memory" written by Vygotsky became accessible. In it, Vygotsky gives the name of the theory that he began to develop: "The main idea of this book and at the same time the main idea of all research, in the series of which it acquires its true meaning and significance, is the recognition of the *historical* development of human personality and its *psychological* functions. In essence, the so-called theory of historical (or cultural-historical) development in psychology means the theory of *higher psychological functions* (logical memory, voluntary attention, verbal thinking, volitional processes, etc.) — *no more* and *no less*" (Vygotsky, 2003, p. 200, emphasis added).

Thus, both authors make it clear that history and culture are the basic and defining concepts of L.S. Vygotsky's theory. This has important implications for the discussion of the concept of the "zona blijaichego razvitia", a term that became widely known among teachers when translated into Portuguese as "zona de desenvolvimento proximal". Teachers understand this concept as doing something together with students, so that later they can do it independently.

Did Vygotsky really put so much effort in developing a theoretical concept that became so simple in this definition? During his short life, L.S. Vygotsky carried out extensive intellectual work on the understanding of the relationship between human activity and development. What did the author want to emphasize using the term "proximal"? Does the word "proximal" translated in Portuguese convey the meaning that was most important for the author with scientific accuracy?

Vygotsky was a man of his time and continues to challenge the scientific community with his ideas to this day. It is not surprising that in the turbulent years following the October Revolution, he devoted himself to

educational issues, conducting research in the field of human development, presenting original and unprecedented findings that contrasted with Western theoretical findings of the time. His main task was, on the basis of dialectical and historical materialism, to explore and understand the social nature of higher, purely human, mental functions and to reject, first of all, views based on biological determinism.

In this sense, the results of research conducted by Vygotsky in the field of child development in accordance with the theoretical and methodological principles necessary for science can contribute to the organisation of the social situation of development in the learning process. The concept of the "zona blijaichego razvitia" has enormous weight, especially because it emphasises the category of time.

In various works published over 10 years ago, the authors of the current article have attempted to analyse and discuss this concept, criticising the choice of terms made by some translators (Prestes, 2021). Since we are talking about scientific constructs, and, as already mentioned, accuracy in translating concepts is extremely important, our criticism is not based on personal preferences and certainly not on the desire to compete with the popularity of the options chosen by translators of Vygotsky's works into Portuguese. The defense of translating the concept of "zona blijaichego razvitia" into Portuguese as "zona de desenvolvimento iminente[4]" (not proximal or imediato, which means "immediate") is based on the understanding that development for Vygotsky is the possibility of the emergence of something new through cooperation and social connections established between people in the process of activity. In other words, it is not enough to do something together to do it autonomously later.

For the formation and individual development of higher mental functions that can transform human behavior, it is necessary to establish communication, a genuine dialogue with another, to understand his way of acting and thinking. After all, the transfer of behaviour patterns to the internal individual level does not occur mechanically or automatically. Rather, it is associated with changes in the structure and functioning of the entire developmental process, which is represented as a certain stage of higher forms of behaviour (Vygotsky, 1984). The "zona blijaichego razvitia" means the possibility of an extremely important psychological process: mastering cultural ways of one's own behaviour in collaboration with other people (in collective activities), which can give rise to a new, much more complex psychological system. These are new formations that

[4] iminente (port.) — imminent, impending.

become the "property" of a person, his personality and "turn into social means of behaviour applied to himself" (ibid., p. 71).

The words proximal or close, although they carry some sense of temporal proximity, easily lead to an understanding of spatial proximity (Lalande, 1999). In other words, they are more related to the category of space. The word iminente, on the other hand, refers to something that is about to happen, and therefore connects thought more strongly with the category of time. Therefore, it is more appropriate and more accurately denotes what Vygotsky conceptualizes.

"Obuchenie" and development

Many psychologists who studied the phenomenon of learning were contemporaries of Vygotsky and conducted important research during his lifetime. For example, E. L. Thorndike published his work in 1898 and, in 1928, the book "Adult learning" was published by Macmillan in New York. Another researcher, Edwin Ray Guthrie, known as the author of one of the theories of learning (Contiguous Conditioning Theory), published the article "Conditioning as a principle of learning" in 1930 in the authoritative journal Psychological Review. In 1920, Clark L. Hull, also known as one of the learning theorists, published an article in the journal Psychological Monographs entitled "Quantitative aspects of the evolution of concepts: an experimental study." Another learning theorist, Edward C. Tolman, also published a paper in Psychological Monographs in 1917 entitled "Retroactive inhibition as affected by conditions of learning" (a detailed review of learning theories is presented in Hilgard, 1966). It is interesting that some of the mentioned articles are cited in the works of L.S. Vygotsky.

In this regard, a question of particular urgency arises: is it really possible that such a prominent theorist as L.S. Vygotsky, who developed a complex theory of the cultural development of the child, who knew and cited various concepts of learning, who followed carefully and rigorously the fundamental approach to the concept of "development," would have used the concept of "obuchenie", connecting it with development, without presenting a single theoretical justification for this? How did the people who translated the Russian term "obuchenie" used by L.S. Vygotsky not feel the slightest need to understand what the author meant? Considering the lack of such thoroughness in the work of L.S. Vygotsky, who valued accuracy and a methodical approach, how did the translators not doubt that their version might be erroneous? Have not they read or at least looked at the English version of the book "Thinking and Speech" (Vygotsky, 1987)? It clearly states the following:

"The term that is translated here as "instruction" (obuchenie) has been translated in other texts as "learning". Neither of these English glosses are an entirely adequate translation of the Russian term. Obuchenie is the nominal form associated with the active verb uchit, ("to teach") and the reflexive verb uchit'cia ("to be taught", "to learn through instruction", "to study"). Thus, the term obuchenie seems to us to imply the teaching/learning process involved in instruction, not merely the action of the instructor or the learner. We use the term instruction here because, like the term obuchenie, it implies an intentional transmission of knowledge while the term "learning" does not seem to" (Rieber, Carton, 1987, p. 388).

For Vygotsky, instruction is, of course, intentional, but it is not the transfer of knowledge. This remark is necessary to illustrate his idea of the role of the teacher, who is not only a transmitter of knowledge, but an organiser of the social situation of development. According to L.S. Vygotsky, during this process of organising, the teacher must remember that it is not enough for the student to simply master the content of the material, he is to use the acquired knowledge as a "tool" for himself, as a means that allows him to master his own thinking (Vygotsky, 2003).

It is clear that this is not said of learning, but rather of self-development. For this reason, it would be incorrect to say that the teacher plays the role of a mediator who takes the content of the material and transfers it into the student's head. The role of the teacher is much more complex: it is to organise the student's social situation in such a way as to create conditions for self-development, that is, the emergence of forms of mastering one's own mental functions, be it thinking, attention, memory, imagination, etc. This is not the same as mediation. This is, first and foremost, action, influencing the environment, organising it in such a way that the student receives maximum benefit.

Thinking and speaking are actions

To conclude this brief examination of several concepts that seem to be important for understanding the foundations of cultural-historical theory, we turn to an analysis of the Russian word "speech" ("rech"). We do not want to repeat the arguments from our previous works (Prestes, 2021), but the aim is to dispel the doubts that seem to persist among Brazilian researchers who insist on using the word "language" to translate "speech".

In his work "Tool and Sign in the Development of the Child," Vygotsky says: "A person, subordinating the process of his own reaction to his power, thereby enters into a fundamentally new relationship with the external environment, comes to a new functional use of elements of the external

environment as stimulus-signs, with the help of which he, relying on external means, directs and regulates his own behaviour, and takes control of himself from the outside, forcing stimulus-signs to influence him and cause the reactions he desires. Internal regulation of purposeful activity arises initially from external regulation. A reactive action caused and organised by the person himself, ceases to be reactive and becomes rational.

In this sense, the phylogenetic history of practical intelligence is closely connected not only with the mastery of nature, but also with the mastery of oneself. The history of labour and the history of speech can hardly be understood one without the other. Man created not only the tools with which he subordinated the forces of nature to his power, but also incentives that prompted and regulated his own behaviour, subordinating his own forces to his power. This is noticeable at the earliest stages of human development" (Vygotsky, 1984, pp. 83–84).

From this passage it is clear that speech (the highest form of which is the word) arises simultaneously with the tools that help a person in his labour activity. In other words, if, according to Engels, "labour created man," for Vygotsky, labour gave rise to higher mental functions that distinguish man from animals (ibid., p. 85). Speech is one of the exclusively human functions, and, if it were independent and separated from action, it would not have the power to change human behaviour. Therefore, it should be recognised that speech has activity as its basis, that is, it is an action.

Finally, it is worth noting again that the Russian word "speech", used by Vygotsky in various works, especially in his last work, Thinking and Speech (1934), should not be translated as linguagem (language).

A number of studies by L.S. Vygotsky were aimed at revealing the genetic roots of thinking and speech. At the same time, he paid special attention to the fact that these phenomena have different roots both in phylogenesis and in ontogenesis. At the very beginning of a child's development, thinking is non-verbal, and speech is non-intellectual, while both processes occur independently. At a certain point, around the age of two years, according to Vygotsky (1934), these two lines of development intersect, giving rise to verbal thinking or intellectual speech. This is not just a change in the course of development, but a radical restructuring of the human psyche. In other words, the process of development of human consciousness begins here. That is, the connection between thought and word is a cultural and historical organisation that is not given at birth (Kravtsov, 2001). Vygotsky suggests reading the words of Goethe's Faust "In the beginning was action" (a reference to the Gospel saying "In the beginning was the Word") "with a different emphasis, if you look at it from the

point of view of the history of development: in the beginning was action" (Vygotsky, 1934, pp. 317–318, emphasis added). In other words, when we talk about a child, we mean the action of speech, not the language function (Lalande, 1999, p.627).

In the same way, thought is action. In the first chapter of the book "Thinking and Speech," when discussing the problem and method of research, Vygotsky makes an explanation that leaves no doubt: "(...) every word is a hidden generalisation, every word generalises, and from a psychological point of view, the meaning of the word is primarily a generalisation. However, a generalisation, as it is easy to see, is an extraordinary verbal act of thought, reflecting reality in a completely different way than it is reflected in immediate sensations and perceptions" (Vygotsky, 1934, p. 10).

Considering speech and thinking only as a function, and not as an action, inevitably implies a denial of the main foundation on which Vygotsky's theory is built, namely, the ideas of movement, development and history: in the beginning was action.

In Brazilian editions of translations by Russian authors, inconsistencies that arise due to the inaccuracies of the translators are often found. For example, in the title of M. M. Bakhtin's book "Marxism and the Philosophy of Language," the Russian word "language" is translated as linguagem, and the same word is used to translate the word "speech" in Vygotsky's book "Thinking and Speech." In defense of this choice, it can be said that language is one thing in literary theory and another in psychology. However, without going into a detailed analysis of the choice of translators, let us consider whether language and speech are really the same thing in Vygotsky's theory.

The purpose of this article is to draw the reader's attention to the fact that any translation, be it literary or scientific, is an unfinished process that needs to be constantly revised, improved and, above all, it must be faithful to the philosophical, ethical, and historical foundations of the ideas of the author whose works are translated, building bridges, not walls.

References

Bernardo, G. (2004). Preface. In: Flusser, Vilém. Language and reality. São Paulo: Annablume Publ.

Flusser, V. (2004). Language and reality. São Paulo: Annablume Publ.

Hilgard, E.R. (1966). Theories of learning. Translated by Nilce Pinheiro Mejias, Hilda de Almeida Guedes and Clea Abdon Rameh. São Paulo: Editora Herder/EDUSP.

Kravtsov, G.G. (2001). Psychological means of personality. In: Cultural-historical psychology of development. Moscow: Russian State University, Vygotsky Institute Publ. (In Russ.)

Lalande, A. (1999). Technical and critical vocabulary of philosophy. Translated by Fátima Sá Correia, Maria Emília V. Aguiar, José Eduardo Torres and Maria Gorete de Souza. São Paulo: Martins Fonte Publ.

Luria, A.R. (2001). Stapi passed way, scientific autobiography. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Oliveira, E.A.L. (2017). Technical images and their echo chambers: where does education resonate? Thesis (PhD) University of Brasília, Brasília, 2017. URL: https://repositorio.unb.br/bitstream/10482/23694/1/2017_EricAlbertoLimadeOliveira.pdf (accessed: 03.04.2024).

Prestes, Z. (2021). When it's not almost the same: translations of Lev Semionovich Vygotsky in Brazil. 2 ed. Campinas, SP: Autores Associados.

Rieber, R.W., Carton, A.S. (ed.) (1987). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky. V. 1. Problems of general psychology (including the volume Thinking and Speech). Translated by Norris Minick. New York: Plenum Press Publ.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1934). Thinking and speech. Moscow, Leningrad: State Socio-Economic Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982). Collected works in 6 vol. Vol.1. Issues in the theory and history of psychology. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). Collected works in 6 vol. Vol.6. Scientific heritage. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1987). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky. Vol.1. Problems of general psychology (including the volume Thinking and Speech). Tradução de Norris Minick. Robert W. Rieber e Aaron S. Carton (ed.). New York: Plenum Press Publ.

Vygotsky, L.S. (2003). Pedagogical psychology. Translated by Claudia Schilling. Porto Alegre: Artmed Publ.

Vygotsky, L.S. (2003). Preface to A.N. Leontiev's book "The Development of Memory". In: Leontiev, A.N. Becoming the psychology of activity. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Elizabeth Tunes, PhD in Psychology, Professor, University of Brasilia, Brasilia, Brazil, bethtunes@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6884-8521

Zoia Ribeiro Prestes, Doctor of Education, Professor, Federal University of Fluminense, Niteroi, Brazil, zoiaprestes@yahoo.com.br, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1347-3195

Received: 12.03.2024; revised: 01.03.2024; accepted: 10.05.2024.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-43
UDC 159.922, 392.3

Education that leads to development of students as subjects of their own learning

Galina A. Zuckerman, Olga L. Obukhova ✉

Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ olya.obu@gmail.com

Abstract

Background. L.S. Vygotsky's vision of teaching and learning, which enables child development, remains useful for problems face by the modern-day school. Today, one of the central duties of education is, from the beginning of schooling, to lay the foundations for obtaining the ability to learn. Ability to learn is demonstrated when a person is faced with meaningful task, understands what is needed to solve it and knows how to compensate for their own limitations. Ability to learn is one of the aspects of human agency i.e., the ability to have and the self-perception of the ownership over one's behaviour. This ability is manifested in children at a very early age and education can both strengthen and weaken, or even totally preclude its development. Agency in learning, which is the basis for future ability to learn, can enter the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as early as primary school age, but only in certain educational environments.

Objective. The current research is focused on the relationship between the teaching, learning, and development of the child as a subject of learning activity in the scientific school of D.B. El'konin and V.V. Davydov, who advanced the cultural-historical theory.

Methods. Clinical studies of setting and solving learning tasks in primary and secondary schools.

Results. This article describes the most significant characteristics of the educational environment, through which the ability to learn can be developed for the majority of students: the content and form of learning activity in the strict, original meaning of this concept, which does not correspond to its everyday use. We highlight the discrepancies between the scientific and everyday meanings of the concepts "learning activity" and "learning task" and clarify the relationship between the structure of the learning task and the structure of the ability to learn.

We also describe the characteristic actions of an adult at the stage of designing the learning task and then at the stage of interpsychological interaction with children when setting a learning task and searching for the means to solve it.
Conclusion. Children's initiative in constructing general methods of action and sensitivity to conceptual contradictions manifest themselves systematically, as an age-related tendency, only when students set and solve learning tasks aimed at discovering and mastering theoretical concepts. Education that provides ready-made answers to unasked questions minimizes the opportunity for students to become self-learning agents.
Practical application of the results. The identified discrepancies between the scientific and everyday meanings of the concepts "learning activity" and "learning task" can protect these fruitful concepts from profanation and save their creative potential.

Keywords: agency, primary schoolchildren, ability to learn, learning activity, learning task

For citation: Zuckerman, G.A., Obukhova, O.L. (2024). Education that leads to development of students as subjects of their own learning. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *47*(4), 96–110. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-43

"Person's samostoyan'ye (*standing on one's own* or *independence*) is the key to greatness"[1]

Samostoyan'ye (independence) is the name given in old times to that facet of human dignity that today is commonly termed subjectivity or agency. So as to not add to the multitude of definitions of subjectivity, only the key words that are present in most definitions are highlighted: initiative, one's choice, independence, one's own intention and design, autonomy, self-sufficiency and other words referring to "self". The most pathos-like among them are self-causality, self-development, self-realization, and self-regulation (Vachkov, 2007; Petrovsky, 2021; Klemencic, 2017; Williams, 2017). The *value* explanation of all approaches to subjectivity as the internal, psychological basis of human freedom was formulated by V.I. Slobodchikov: "Subjectivity as a person's ability for self-determined, self-governing, self-controlled behaviour and action, the ability to engage in a practical relationship with the world, to make one's activities and oneself the subject of analysis and change constitutes the **generic specificity of a human**" (Slobodchikov, Isaev, 2013, p. 7).

[1] It is noteworthy that these famous lines by A.S. Pushkin were preserved only in a draft autograph (Boldino, 1830) and were not included in the final author's text of the poem "Two feelings are wonderfully close to us" (Surat, 2015).

Expanding the sphere of children's subjectivity is the constant concern of parents and teachers, no matter how they interpret the mechanisms and age norms of growing up. Both in the traditions of Domostroy and in the free pedagogy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, adults took, are taking and will take responsibility for the continuous growth of children's independence and for maintaining it within the boundaries encouraged by the sociocultural circumstances into which a person is born. What exactly a growing person becomes the subject of — creative self-expression or the reproduction of traditional stereotypes — is a question of the *value* self-determination of each specific culture, its institutions of caring for younger generations, and its family customs. Common to any social situation of development: the formation of subjectivity largely depends on education (in the broadest sense of the word), which carries both developmental and inhibitory potential. Moreover, every *successful* adult's effort aimed to promote the emergence of new subjective achievements in the child's behavioral repertoire is both developmental and limiting. It is always built upon the principle of opposition: act *this* way and *not that* way, e.g., eat with a spoon, not with your hands (El'konin, 2022).

A significant event in the history of every person's samostoyan'ye (independence) is the appearance of the child's "myself!" — the emotional and semantic core of subjectivity, the *personal experience* of self-worth as a value. "[I can do it] myself" is the evidence of a child's subjectivity, which has reached the level of self-awareness. On one hand, it evokes pride in adults close to the child for the achievements of a growing person, and, on the other hand, a great deal of worry (for example, when a child says "me myself!" and refuses to take a mother's hand while crossing the street). Stable and repeated reactions of the social environment (parents, teachers, peers) to such manifestations of children's "willfulness" (readiness to act according to their own will) tend to close in a *circular relationship*, which "depends on the views, habits, personal characteristics and pedagogical attitudes of the adults raising the child" (Venger, Morozova, 2017, p. 43). This circular relationship between a child's action and the response of adults can strengthen or weaken the individual characteristics of the child's subjective behavior — so is both productive and destructive.

In 21st century preschool education, constructive means have been created for the development and diagnosis of preschool manifestations of agency in communication and cooperation in play and in various creative and cognitive activities (Veraksa et al. 2019; Smirnova, 2019; Korotkova, Nezhnov, 2014).

It would seem that the same trends towards strengthening children's agency through education (at least according to declarations) are observed in schools. However, in the school as a social institution, *obligatory* for every growing person, the confrontation between the tendency to develop children's subjectivity and the tendency to suppress it, limiting it to the sphere of "voluntary" submission to society, the power rights of which are embodied by the teacher, unfolds with particular drama. Michel Foucault expressed the latter tendency in the most extreme terms: "Prisons are similar to factories, schools, barracks and hospitals, and those, in turn, resemble prisons" (Foucault, 1999, p. 344). At the same time, the teacher can remain gentle and friendly, though considering it her professional responsibility to regulate the time and space of the school life for each student; to establish "rules of behavior for schoolchildren", including any kinds of human manifestations: physical, emotional, and intellectual; to select the content and form of educational activities, monitoring and evaluation of the results of work and behavior of the student at school and (partly) outside school. The sprouts of pedagogy aimed at nurturing initiative, independence and other attributes of self-reliance in new generations are associated in modern education primarily with the teacher's activity-based approach to organizing children's work and content of learning (Lvovsky, 2018–2022).

The activity-based approach to learning is opposed to anything built on the following formula: every day, for many years, the school provides students with **ready-made answers to unasked questions**. In what follows, this approach to learning will be called traditional. If traditional education is carried out and completed successfully, what kind of activity does a graduate of a traditional school become a subject of? The answer is that the students will develop *executive behavior* as the core activity. They are able and inclined to act according to instructions, according to a standard, according to rules, though experiencing difficulties in situations of uncertainty and/or novelty for which the rules are to be created. Unlike traditional learning, activity-based learning seeks to encourage and direct children's initiative; to pose cognitive questions and search for answers to these questions. The psychological roots of the activity-based approach to learning lie in the theories of constructivism in both of its famous variants: cognitive constructivism, dating back to the theory of genetic epistemology of Jean Piaget, and social constructivism, dating back to the theory of cultural-historical psychology of L.S. Vygotsky. What these theories have in common is the understanding that knowledge cannot be transferred to a student in a ready-made form; conditions can only be created for its independent *construction* (Efgivia et al., 2021).

Further, we will talk about only one of the most striking and well-known embodiments of the activity-based approach to education — the system of developmental education, the foundation of which was laid by D.B. El'konin (1989) and V.V. Davydov (1996), who consistently and creatively fleshed out the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky and A.N. Leontyev in the colorful mosaic of daily school life.

In the classic work of D.B. El'konin "On the structure of learning activity" the difference between the terms "learning activity", "learning", "ability to learn" has already been outlined: "Even with the appropriate prerequisites, educational activity does not arise in a child right away. A child who has just arrived at school, although beginning to learn under the guidance of a teacher, does not yet know how to study. Learning activity is formed in the process of education... Its development is the most important task of education — a task no less important than the acquisition of knowledge and skills" (D. El'konin, 1989, p. 214). We emphasize what was only conceived in the emerging theory of learning activity: the ability to learn as an individual ability requires the formation of cooperative learning activity. Today, this research intuition has been turned into a working hypothesis and experimentally proven: it is through the means of learning activity that *the ability to learn, the highest manifestation of educational agency*, is formed significantly more effectively than in traditional education at the border between primary and secondary school (Zuckerman, Chudinova, 2018). In other words, if teachers do not organize learning activity, giving the child ready-made answers to unasked questions, the younger student has significantly less chance of learning to learn independently, i.e. discover one's own deficiencies when solving a problem and find missing knowledge and skills.

The essence of the El'konin-Davydov system is most easily understood by the *ad absurdum* method. A cheat sheet on educational psychology (Bogachkina, 2007) offers students the following "excellent" answer on the exam: "The child becomes an agent of learning activity from the moment he enters school." There is no need to seriously discuss this absurdity and accuse the author of profaning the concepts of "agent" and "learning activity." Let us focus on the positive aspect. In the quoted curious recipe for an exam answer there are two valuable ideas. (1) The child, indeed, sometimes becomes an agent of learning activity (at the cost of considerable effort: her/his own and the teacher's); however, this difficult and rarely achieved quality is not given in a ready-made form, along with a certificate of admission to school or with a backpack, pencil case, notebooks, textbooks and other attributes of the role of a student. (2) At primary school age, the child's

agency may (not guaranteed) increase precisely in learning activities. If this happens, then at secondary school the teenager may (not guaranteed) discover a new ability: the ability to learn.

Next, we will talk about the mechanisms of acquiring learning agency and the connection between the structure of learning activity and the structure of the ability to learn — one of the central developmental outcomes of learning activity. First, however, learning activity is to be defined. To paraphrase I.A. Khodchenko[2] (2022), we have to admit that today the concept of "learning activity" has many "flat lands", which means it is necessary to turn to the earliest use of the term "learning activity" and its related psychological / cultural terms. At the end of the 1950s, D.B. El'konin began to use the concept of "learning activity" in order to identify, among the many existing and possible types of learning, the sought-after and practically-never-found-in-classrooms approach. This is the approach that P.Ya. Gal'perin (2002) called *the third type of teaching-learning*, and D.B. El'konin considered the central characteristic of educational activity: "Children's independent identification of the indicative basis of the upcoming action, i.e., his way" (D. El'konin, 1989, p. 217).

If the examiner wants to know whether a student is using the term "learning activity" meaningfully or in vain, it is enough to ask a simple question: can the active, thoughtful, clear, productive work of a class under the guidance of a teacher be called learning activity. Almost an excellent answer is that learning activity is not something that is present in every professional lesson, but something that a teacher can generate. Among the list of mandatory conditions for generating learning activity, and not any other type of teaching, is that the teacher not lose the key to the problem of developmental education.

The key to the problem of developmental education

"We have found the key to the problem of developmental education! This key is the content of education," wrote D. B. El'konin jubilantly (1989, p. 258). Thus, he summed up a decade of genetic modeling experiments in elementary schools, which proved that "through the gates of scientific concepts" (Vygotsky, 1982) the sphere of actual development of younger schoolchildren includes not only awareness, but also **reflection** as the ability to address the foundations of one's own thoughts and actions, as well as understand the reasons for the actions and thoughts of other people, and determine the boundaries of one's abilities (Davydov, 1996). In subsequent

[2] The author reflects on the category of "personality".

decades, experimental evidence of many other developmental effects of the system by D.B. El'konin and V.V. Davydov in the cognitive, social, and personal sphere was obtained (Rubtsov, Ulanovskaya, 2020; Zuckerman, Venger 2010). V.P. Zinchenko pointed out another, perhaps the most profound developmental effect of this system: unlike the traditional school, it "does not suppress, but develops children's **readiness for thought** and, on its basis, forms a readiness to think in concepts (and not live according to concepts)" (Zinchenko, 2005, p. 13). "Readiness for thought", according to V.P. Zinchenko, is equivalent to the *set*, i.e. a persistent tendency to act in a certain way under certain circumstances. In this case, when faced with uncertainty, the set to think and to refrain from any bias is triggered, not the one to take one's word for it or to act chaotically, at random, indulging in mental laziness. However, all these wonderful abilities at primary school age manifest themselves systematically, as an age-related tendency, only when children set and solve learning tasks aimed at discovering and mastering theoretical concepts in their lessons (Davydov, 1972).

Introduced by V.V. Davydov, the distinction between theoretical and empirical concepts often remains misunderstood and is replaced by the distinction between everyday and scientific concepts (Vygotsky, 1982). Continuing the thought of L.S. Vygotsky on the role of scientific concepts in the development of thinking of younger schoolchildren, V.V. Davydov showed that one should distinguish between empirical scientific concepts that ensure the work of the mind, allowing to organize the real world with the help of classifications, and theoretical scientific concepts that ensure the work of the mind, allowing to transform the real world into a possible one, detecting and resolving the contradictions of reality.

Thanks to the distinction between empirical and theoretical scientific concepts, it became possible to construct the content of learning, which is the key to developing the child's readiness for thought, reflection, and other novel formations of learning activity. To describe this content, V.V. Davydov used the means and language of dialectical logic, which never became the native language for many researchers and educational designers. Meanwhile, these terms that are common today remain empty without support for the Hegelian idea of the ascent from the abstract to the concrete, of the derivation of a system of concepts from a genetically original abstraction. "To have a concept about any object means to possess the general method of its construction, knowledge of its *origin*" (Davydov, 1972, p. 321).

Unexpected relief in understanding the specially organized content of training that develops reflection came from English-speaking colleagues mastering cultural-historical psychology. Instead of the difficult, not

commonly used term "genetically original abstraction", they began to use the concept-metaphor *germ cell* from which the future organism develops. This metaphor helps to imagine how the germ of a genetically original concept already contains the potential of the entire system of concepts describing the subject of study, and how this potential unfolds and is concretized into holistic knowledge about the subject. This unfolding of the genetically original abstraction (development of the germ cell) is called the method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete (Hedegaard, 2020; Gennen, 2023; Schmittau, Morris, 2004).

It would seem that the development of a schoolchild as an agent of learning activity is hardly connected to the unfolding of a genetically original abstraction into a system of concepts describing a particular educational subject. This connection lies in the context of ideas about mediation. "L.S. Vygotsky introduced the category of mediation precisely through an appeal to its subject, that is, as a way for a person to organize his own behavior overcoming its naturally formed and rigid forms, transforming a spontaneously impulsive reaction into a conscious and voluntary act. <…> In the context of Vygotsky's theory, overcoming, development, and subjectivity are ensured not by some energetic volitional effort, but by the signification of behavior, i.e., the "selection" of a certain sign (designating), setting the context in which behavior should become organized (ordered), conscious (reflexive, acting as the subject of a person's work) and voluntary (unfolding in accordance with the intentions, plans and programs of the actor)" (El'koninova, El'konin, 1993, p. 64).

It is clear that the quality of sign-symbolic mediation, relying on which a child can overcome the chaos of natural ideas about the subject of study and move on to constructing a scientific picture of the world, is extremely important for the completeness and independence of the subsequent action through means. As A.N. Sidneva rightly writes, "the means for performing an action can be presented in the form of an example ("watch and repeat after me"), a method, general or specific ("first do this, then that, etc."), or an explanation for the method ("why you need to do it this way and not another way"). In fact, these options for means of performing actions correspond to three types of orientation, according to P.Ya. Gal'perin" (Sidneva, 2017, p. 111).

Using the method of microanalysis of lessons in which new concepts were introduced, it was shown that in a traditional school, children are taught to act according to ready-made patterns, algorithms and rules, and experience difficulties in situations where the acquired knowledge is not enough (however, teachers try to prevent children from falling into such

situations). In the El'konin-Davydov system, children are taught to independently construct such means of conceptual action, which, in principle, lend themselves to restructuring and completion in relation to new tasks, and when mastering the original concept, other concepts that are systemically related to the original one are revealed and can be guessed through it (Zuckerman, 2010).

The primary task of designers of educational subjects is to carry out *logical-subject analysis*, which makes it possible to isolate the germ cell and determine the optimal ways of unfolding the original concept into a system (for conceptually organized scientific subjects) or to highlight the general method of action and the ways of concretizing it for subjects of the aesthetic cycle. Subsequent logical and psychological analysis makes it possible to construct age-appropriate learning tasks in which children, under the guidance of a teacher, will be able to carry out quasi-investigation[3] and discover a new concept. "Logical-psychological analysis balances the logic of development and the content of a scientific concept with possible ways of transforming everyday... concepts of students at a certain age in a learning situation" (Chudinova, 2022, p. 555). The results of the logical-psychological analysis are presented in detail in the methodological recommendations for teachers working according to the textbook manual.

Here we outline only the necessary (but not sufficient) methods for the colossal work of a designer of educational activities, carried out **before** the adult meets the children. It is clear that the main work of an adult — a mediator between natural and mediated children's action — begins only after the project of the entire educational course and even its minimal cell — a lesson — is tested in the real life of the child-adult community. It is also clear that for a teacher who has already completed his share of project work a real meeting with students is not limited to validating the project[4]. B.D. El'konin called the teacher's path from conception to implementation of an educational event project precisely and poetically redundantly: "**the search for a way to initiate a search**" (El'konin, 1994, p. 65).

[3] The term of V.V. Davydov, pointing to the exploratory nature of children's work in educational situations, but emphasizing that children's discoveries are novel only for the children themselves (hence the prefix quasi). However, the emotions accompanying children's quasi-following are genuine and full-fledged.

[4] Even in cases when the teacher does not make his own author's changes to the curriculum designer's plan, before meeting with the children, he/she invariably interprets this plan, trying it on to the nature of the class, to the expected reaction of these particular girls and boys to the proposed tasks, to hundreds of incidental circumstances that were obviously not taken into account in the project.

"Searching for a way to initiate a search"

The use of the word "search" is extremely responsible. Flexibility and constant monitoring of one's own actions distinguishes search activity from a chaotic selection of action options without monitoring the process of movement towards the goal, from stereotypical, inflexible behavior, from passivity, refusal to act (Rotenberg, 2009).

In relation to learning activities, in the capacious formula of mediation given by B.D. El'konin, two search actions, the child's and the adult's, are associated. The search action of an adult, aimed at initiating a child's search "here and now," within an educational event, is the topic of a separate conversation about the formation of a combined child-adult action (D. El'konin, 1989; B. El'konin, 2022). Here we will limit ourselves to outlining those points in the development of educational activities where the teacher's effort is concentrated to initiate children's search independence.

According to the designers of learning activities, **children's search** for solutions to educational problems consists of two parts. First, when faced with a new task or an underdetermined situation, children become convinced that they cannot cope with it in the ways they already know. They face the goal of finding the *missing condition for a new problem*, the solution of which will lead to the discovery of a new concept or a general method for solving the class of practical problems. This stage is called *setting a learning task*. Having formulated a question for a learning task, children begin to search for an answer to it, for which they have to construct a new method of action and write it down in the language of the model. This stage is called *solving a learning problem*.

We note here that the usual teacher cliches "Today you will learn how to add two-digit numbers" or "Write down the topic of the lesson: "E" at the end of the word" have nothing to do with setting the educational task. More precisely, the task is not set by the students, but by the teacher, who *weans* children to educational independence.

Let us recall that a learning task is not any task that is performed at a lesson, but only a **situation that encourages a person to look for general ways to solve a new class of concrete practical problems** (Davydov, 1996). Qualifying a task specifically as an educational one (and not practical, performing, training, diagnostic), it is necessary to show (a) why this task, in principle, cannot be solved by the methods of action known to students, (b) why a transition from a known to a new method is possible, (c) how this task (the task, not the teacher) can encourage and motivate children to start

the search, (d) how the solution of one problem can lead to the discovery of a whole class of similar problems.

Using the case study method, we answered these questions and showed what happens when setting (Obukhova et al., 2022) and solving (Zuckerman et al., 2019) the very first educational task in the school biography of first-graders. These and many other clinical studies of setting and solving educational tasks in primary and secondary schools (Zuckerman, Venger, 2010) experimentally proved that children's learning initiatives appear with amazing regularity as soon as a *model* that reflects the essence of a new concept starts to be built. It is the model that clearly represents the potential, not yet explicitly identified, connections of the concept being constructed with other concepts of the same system and helps to distinguish between classes of problems. The *educational initiatives* of schoolchildren take the form of guesses, questions, doubts, indications or contradictions. It is important to emphasize that in terms of content, the vast majority of children's initiatives belong to the class of problems for which students have begun to discover a general method to solve them.

Children's intellectual effort aimed at discovering new ways of acting are clearly visible, describable, and even measurable. It is more difficult to describe the emotional component of the search efforts of schoolchildren. However, anyone who observes lessons in setting and solving educational problems in the El'konin-Davydov system is struck by the emotional side of what is happening. There are the feelings of bewilderment, confusion, surprise, tension, guesswork, disappointment, the proximity of a solution, and the joy of discovery. Children generously share all these non-verbally expressed experiences with each other, involving those around them in the passionate work of the thoughts of pioneers.

Why is this important? Why is children's emotional openness, sometimes incontinence and ardor, valuable? We believe that in the range of feelings that accompany each child's quasi-investigation, the emotional and semantic core of educational subjectivity — the feeling of cognitive "self-power" — has a chance to develop and grow. The trusting childish "they will teach me" can be replaced by the mature "I will learn", i.e. the trust in oneself, in the active student. So far, we are able to assess the emotional component of educational activity only by the method of expert assessments, but we consider this necessary: "The one who initially separated thinking from affect has forever closed the way to explaining the causes of thinking itself" (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 21).

There is still a long way to go from solving the first educational problems to the developed ability to learn, but the *functional manifestations of*

this future ability are observed from the first year of schooling according to the El'konin-Davydov system. It is noteworthy that the structure of the learning task and the structure of the ability to learn are homologous and consist of two steps. Firstly, a reflexive question is formulated: what do I need to learn in order to cope with this matter, solve this problem, explain this fact? Secondly, the answer to this question is sought for.

The relationship between functional and age development, and, accordingly, between clinical and final diagnosis of the impact of training on development, is a subject matter of ongoing debate. We agree with the approach formulated by L.F. Obukhova: "Functional development is understood as a change in mental processes in children and adults during a formative experiment, when a qualitatively new level of solving intellectual, perceptual, mnemonic and other problems is achieved — a level that the subjects did not have before the experimental training. "The changes that occur during the formation of individual actions create the necessary prerequisites for those global restructuring of consciousness that characterize the course of age-related development" (Obukhova, 2013, pp. 411–412, 415).

The learning agency of schoolchildren is created not only in the classical for the El'konin-Davydov system ways through the special **content** of learning, which students master in the course of solving educational problems, the **form** of educational interaction in which this content acquires maximum expressiveness is also extremely significant. *Educational collaboration with peers* (Rubtsov, Ulanovskaya, 2021), *evaluative interaction* between teacher and students, aimed at developing the child's ability to independently evaluate the results of work (Vorontsov, 2018), a *polarized learning space* that opens up the opportunity for children to choose their own trajectory towards an educational goal (Ostroverkh, 2022) — these characteristics of the form of educational activity are as significant for educational independence as rhythms and rhymes for poetry.[5]

* * *

The ability to learn as the highest manifestation of learning agency can be cultivated either in separate trainings, as a private skill, or as an important part of the universal human capacity to be the master, the author of one's own actions, to which educational activities add new colors and flavors. We began our reflection on the child's educational subjectivity in the broad framework of the development of general ability with Pushkin's

[5] Only those characteristics of the form of educational activity whose developmental capabilities have been experimentally proven are mentioned here.

neologism "samostoyan'ye" (independence). I would like to finish with the words of A.S. Pushkin in his mature (1836) manifesto of the personal independence of a free person in the shackles of state unfreedom: "Do not bend neither conscience, nor thoughts, nor neck; <…> Here is happiness! That's right."[6] Those who relate to this formula on a personal level choose the difficult and complex path of developing learning agency through educational activities. They choose the type of learning that leads to the development of the self-reliance and independence of a person accepting the challenge of new tasks.

References

Bogachkina, N.A. (2007). Educational psychology cheat sheet. Moscow: Allel Publ. (In Russ.)

Chudinova, E.V. (2022). Developing students' concepts in the digital. Handbook of: Digital humanities and technologies in education (DHTE 2022): In: V.V. Rubtsov, M.G. Sorokova, N.P. Radchikova, (eds.), Collection of articles of the III All-Russian scientific and practical conference with international participation. (November 17–18, 2022) (pp. 555–569). Moscow: MSUPE Publ. (In Russ.)

Davydov, V.V. (1972) Types of generalization in education. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Davydov, V.V. (1996). Theory of developmental education. Moscow: Intor Publ. (In Russ.)

Efgivia, M.G., Rinanda, R.A., Hidayat, A., Maulana, I., Budiarjo, A. (2021). Analysis of constructivism learning theory. Handbook of: 1st UMGESHIC International Seminar on Health, Social Science and Humanities (UMGESHIC-ISHSSH 2020) (pp. 208–212). https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211020.032

El'konin, B.D. (1994). Introduction in developmental psychology (according to Vygotsky's cultural-historical tradition. Moscow: Trivola Publ. (In Russ.)

El'konin, B.D. (2022) Developmental psychology from the view of cultural-historical conception. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Authors Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

El'konin, D.B. (1989). Selected psychological works. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

El'koninova, L.I., El'konin, B.D. (1993). Sign Mediation, Fairytale and Subjectivity of Action. *Moscow University Psychology Bulletin*, (2), 62–70. (In Russ.)

Fuko, M. (1999). Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison. Moscow: Ad Marginem Press Publ. (In Russ.)

Gal'perin, P.Ya. (2002). Lectures on psychology. Moscow: Book house "University" Publ. (In Russ.)

Gennen, T. (2023). Conceptual Change and Education: The Neglected Potential of Developmental Teaching Approaches. *Human Development*, *67*(2), 88–107.

[6] A.S. Pushkin "From Pindemonti".

Hedegaard, M. (2020). Ascending from the Abstract to the Concrete in School Teaching-the Double Move Between Theoretical Concepts and Children's Concepts. *Psychological Science and Education*, *25*(5), 44–57.

Khodchenko, I.A. (2022). The nonsense of modern psychology. URL: https://fictionbook.ru/author/ivan_aleksandrovich_hodchenko/chush_v_sovremennoyi_psihologii/read_online.html (accessed: 10.01.2024). (In Russ.)

Klemencic, M. (2017). From Student Engagement to Student Agency: Conceptual Considerations of European Policies on Student-Centered Learning in Higher Education. *Higher Education Policy*, (30), 69–85.

Korotkova, N.A., Nezhnov, P.G. (2014). Monitoring the development of children in preschool groups. Moscow: Linka-Press Publ. (In Russ.)

L'vovskii, V.A. (2018). An active approach to education. Monograph: in 5 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Authors Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

L'vovskii, V.A. (2019). An active approach to education. Monograph: in 5 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Authors Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

L'vovskii, V.A. (2020). An active approach to education. Monograph: in 5 vol. Vol. 3. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Authors Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

L'vovskii, V.A. (2021). An active approach to education. Monograph: in 5 vol. Vol. 4. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Authors Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

L'vovskii, V.A. (2022). An active approach to education. Monograph: in 5 vol. Vol. 5. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Authors Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

Obukhova, L.F. (2013) Developmental psychology: textbook. Moscow: Yurait Publ. (In Russ.)

Obukhova, O.L., Zukerman, G.A., Shibanova, N.A. (2022). In Search of the Subject of Learning Activity. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 18*(4), 80–89. (In Russ.) https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2022180408

Ostroverkh, O.S. (2022). Learning Space as a Prerequisite of Agency in Learning Activity. *Psikhologicheskaya Nauka i Obrazovanie = Psychological Science and Education, 27*(3), 16–27. (In Russ.) https://doi.org/10.17759/pse.2022270302

Petrovskii, V.A. (2021). "I" in a Personological Perspective. *Mir Psikhologii = World of Psychology*, (1-2), 174–193. (In Russ.)

Rotenberg, V.S. (2009). Search Activity Concept: Relationship between Behavior, Health and Brain Functions. *Activitas Nervosa Superior*, (51), 12–44.

Rubtsov, V.V., Ulanovskaia, I.M. (2021). Joint learning activity and children's development. Moscow: MSUPE Publ. (In Russ.)

Rubtsov, V.V., Ulanovskaya, I.M. (2020). Learning Activity as an Effective Way to Develop Meta-Subject and Personal Competencies in Elementary School Students. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 16*(2), 51–60. (In Russ.)

Schmittau, J., Morris, A. (2004). The Development of Algebra in the Elementary Mathematics Curriculum of V.V. Davydov. *The Mathematics Educator*, *8*(1), 60–87.

Sidneva, A.N. (2017). Psychological Analysis of the Lesson from the Point of View of the Activity Approach. *Moscow University Psychology Bulletin, 40*(3), 100–119. (In Russ.)

Slobodchikov, V.I., Isaev, E.I. (2013). Psychology of education: the Formation of subjectivity in the educational process. Moscow: St. Tikhvin orthodox University for the humanities Publ. House. (In Russ.).

Smirnova, E.O. (2019). Developing Preschool Education: Promoting and Preventing Factors. *Psikhologo-pedagogicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological-Educational Studies*, *11*(4), 79–89. (In Russ.)

Vachkov, I.V. (2007) Polysubject Approach as a Possible Methodologicalbasis for Inclusive Education. *Voprosy Psikhologii,* (3), 16–29. (In Russ.)

Venger, A.L., Morozova, E.I. (2017). Clinical developmental psychology. Moscow: Yurait Publ. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E., Komarova, T.S., Dorofeeva, E.M. (2019). From birth to school. Innovative preschool education program. Moscow: Moscow-Sintez Publ. (In Russ.)

Vorontsov, A.B. (2018). Formative assessment: approaches, content, evolution; norms, tools, procedures. A short guide to activity pedagogy. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Author's Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotskii, L.S. (1982). Thinking and Speech. Collected Works: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Wiliams, P. (2017). Student Agency for Powerful Learning. *Knowledge Quest*, *45*(4), 8–15.

Zinchenko, V.P. (2005). Willingness to Think. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *1*(2), 4–16. (In Russ.)

Zuckerman, G.A., Bilibina, T.M., Vinogradova, O.M., Obukhova, O.L., Shibanova, N.A. (2019). On the Criteria of Activity-Based Education. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *15*(3), 105–116. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2019150311

Zukerman, G.A. (2010). Learning Leads Development. Where? *Voprosy Obrazovaniya = Issues of Education*, (1), 42–90. (In Russ.)

Zukerman, G.A., Chudinova, E.V. (2018). Diagnostics of the ability to learn. Moscow: Non-profit partnership "Author's Club" Publ. (In Russ.)

Zukerman, G.A., Venger, A.L. (2010). The development of academic independence. Moscow: OIDE Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Galina A. Zuckerman, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Leading Researcher at the Laboratory for the Psychology of a Primary School Student, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, galina.zuckerman@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7982-6424

Olga L. Obukhova, Junior Researcher at the Laboratory for the Psychology of a Primary School Student, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, olya.obu@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1451-2168

Received: 08.03.2024; revised: 29.04.2024; accepted: 17.05.2024.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-44
UDC 159.922.72; 159.922.6; 159.942.33; 159.922.736.3

The Relationship Between Vocabulary Size and Emotion Understanding in Children Aged 5–7 Years

Daria A. Bukhalenkova, Alexander N. Veraksa ✉, Uliana D. Guseva, Ekaterina S. Oshchepkova

Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ veraksa@yandex.ru

Abstract

Background. Vygotsky's idea of the affect and intellect unity continues to be developed empirically. Much attention is paid to the child's emotional development, which affects social and academic effectiveness. Knowledge regarding the relationship between language and emotional development within the social situation helps to better understand the developmental characteristics of preschool children in general and create the necessary corrective programs.

Objectives. The aim is to study the characteristics of the relationship between language and emotional development (based on the general and emotional vocabulary size) and the level of emotion understanding at preschool age.

Study Participants. The study involved 341 children aged 57 to 90 months (M = 75.42 months; SD = 7.65 months). 170 children were from the senior groups of the preschool educational institution (M = 69.09 months; SD = 4.4 months), and 171 children were from the preparatory groups of the preschool educational institution (M = 81.67 months; SD = 4.2 months).

Methods. To assess the general vocabulary size the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was used. To assess the volume of active and passive emotional vocabulary, the Roepstorff "Emotional Vocabulary" test was used. To assess ability to understand emotions in preschoolers, F. Pons's "Test for Emotions Comprehension" method was used.

Results. It was found that age is significantly associated with indicators of general and emotional vocabulary size, as well as with the understanding of emotions in all identified aspects. Different levels of emotion understanding have different relationships with vocabulary, both general and emotional. An important result is the identification of the significance of the contribution of active rather than passive emotional vocabulary to emotion understanding, suggesting a significant

role of verbalisation of the emotional state, helping preschoolers to better understand emotion.

Conclusions. The study showed that language development influenced the understanding of emotions in preschool age. At the same time, with age there is an increase in the size of children's general and emotional vocabulary, as well as their ability to understand emotions.

Keywords: preschool age, emotions understanding, general vocabulary, emotional vocabulary

For citation: Bukhalenkova, D.A., Veraksa, A.N. Guseva, U.D., Oshchepkova, E.S. (2024). The relationship between vocabulary size and emotion understanding in children aged 5–7 years. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 111–128. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-44

Introduction

L.S. Vygotsky showed that not only higher mental functions, but mental development as a whole is based on sign mediation, the role of which in the development of emotions has been far less studied (Veraksa, Dyachenko, 1996; Pervichko, 2016). From this point of view, the problem of the relationship between emotion understanding and speech development, vocabulary in particular, in preschoolers receives a new interpretation (Shablack, Lindquist, 2019; Sarmento-Henrique et al., 2020). Preschool age is a period of active emotional and personal development (Elkonin, 2006; Solovieva et al., 2021). Therefore, studying this relationship during this period is not accidental (Fomina et al., 2023; Joukova et al., 2023; Voltmer, von Salisch, 2022). Understanding emotional expressions and situations, as well as the ability to talk about the causes of emotions, helps children communicate their own feelings and predict the behaviour of others (Liew & Zhou, 2022). Understanding emotions is a significant tool in managing one's feelings and resolving interpersonal conflicts (Torres et al., 2015). The ability to understand emotions mediates emotional expressiveness, guilt, and prosocial behaviour in children (Strayer, 1980; Denham, 1986), promotes self-regulation skills (Morosanova et al., 2022; 2023), and is significantly associated with social competence and positive relationships with peers (Denham et al., 1990). Additionally, the development of emotion understanding has been shown to be positively correlated with later academic success in school (Cavadini et al., 2021; Voltmer, von Salisch, 2022).

The development of the emotional sphere is closely related to sign mediation (Zaporozhets, 1986; Leontyev, 1971; Rubinstein, 1946). Human thinking occurs in the form of concepts, and they, in turn, need support

from words. Based on the teachings of L.S. Vygotsky, the ability to realise one's emotions and feelings can be attributed to higher mental functions (HMF). Speech is the means of formation, while communication and play are the conditions (Vygotsky, 1983).

Thus, identifying predictors of emotional development, in particular the level of children's understanding of emotions, remains an important and urgent task for modern psychology. This article makes an attempt to determine the contribution of the child's general vocabulary and emotional vocabulary to the level of emotion understanding. It also seeks to monitor whether this contribution changes from the senior group of preschool educational institutions (aged 5 years) to the preparatory group (aged 6 years).

Development of emotion understanding, emotional vocabulary and speech at the preschool age

The development of the affective sphere follows the same logic as the development of other mental functions. The development of emotions occurs in the direction of awareness and differentiation. Emotion understanding develops as a result of children's assimilation of social experience, and emotions themselves regulate their activities (Vygotsky, 1984). All emotional experience is reflected in the process of verbal communication. As a result of the experience in interacting with the environment, a person develops an individual version of the language system and the unique picture of the world.

Research shows that at the age of 3–4 years, a child begins to understand his own and other people's emotions and their reasons. This is how the "model of mind" (Sergienko et al., 2009) or "theory of consciousness" (Pons et al., 2010; Almazova et al., 2018) is formed. However, for a child at this age, it is still difficult to separate himself and the "other", as well as to evaluate feelings outside the situation. Significant changes in the development of theory of consciousness occur at the age of 5–6 years, when children are able to compare their own view of the situation with that of the other. Thus, situational independence is formed (Sergienko et al., 2009).

A child's emotional vocabulary develops through activity. The very mastery and development of emotional vocabulary is associated with the understanding of emotions as the highest mental function (Zaporozhets, 1986; Veraksa, Dyachenko, 1996). Particularly significant are the motives and goals that form emotional ideas about reality (Zaporozhets, 1986).

Preschoolers' emotional vocabulary grows with age, with older children learning more emotion words than younger children (Roepstorff et al., 2022).

Within the framework of the cultural-historical concept of L.S. Vygotsky, it is important to mark the theory of the development of emotions perception in preschool children based on sign mediation, developed by A.M. Shchetinina (Shchetinina, 1984). Based on the collected empirical data and previous works of A.V. Zaporozhets (Zaporozhets, 1986) on the formation of an understanding of emotions in preschoolers (from 4 to 7 years old), the author identifies five levels, which indicate a gradual increase in the complexity of emotion perception. These levels are described as follows: inadequate, situationally specific, the level of verbal designation and description of expression, the level of comprehension in the form of description, the level of comprehension in the form of interpretation and the manifestation of empathy. It must be emphasised that, according to Shchetinina, the most important criterion for a child's transition to a new level of perception of emotions is the ability to verbalise emotions, which emphasises the role of speech and vocabulary development in the development of emotion understanding in preschoolers (Shchetinina, 1984).

Currently, the most common theory of the development of emotion understanding is the theory of F. Pons, P. Harris and M. de Rosnay (Pons et al., 2004; De Rosnay, Hughes, 2006). They identified three components in the ability to understand emotions: external, mental, and reflective components (Veraksa et al., 2021). "External" understanding of emotions involves recognising emotions, identifying emotions that are caused by external causes, and recognising that memories can recreate a previous emotional response. Pons and colleagues found that children begin to understand these aspects of emotion by the age of three and that most of them demonstrate mastery of these concepts by the age of five. The "mental" component of emotion understanding involves latent affect and the knowledge that desires and beliefs cause emotional responses. Children demonstrate a basic understanding of these components of emotion by the age of five, with most demonstrating mastery by the age of seven. Finally, the third component of "meta" underlies regulated, ambivalent and moral emotions. About one third of children express understanding by the age of seven, and at least half of children by the age of nine (Pons et al., 2004).

On the other hand, at the preschool age, the child activel develops speech and vocabulary increases significantly (Vygotsky, 1983; Stahl, 1999). In communication, values are acquired; social connections are formed; knowledge of the surrounding world occurs; and cultural and social norms are assimilated (Bezrukikh et al., 2021; Vygotsky, 1983; Zaporozhets, 1986; Leontyev, 1971). The development of speech is closely related to the development of consciousness and knowledge of the surrounding world

(Leontyev, 1971; Zaporozhets, 1986; Vygotsky, 1960, etc.). At the preschool age, a transition to non-situational-personal communication occurs. The child can talk about objects that are not in his field of vision (Vygotsky, 1983; Lisina, 2009).

At the senior preschool age, awareness of the relationship between an object and the word that denotes it develops. Denoting the function of the word, L.S. Vygotsky termed this "subject relatedness" (Vygotsky, 2021, p. 142). With its help, a person can evoke images of objects needed. Initially, a word stands out in a certain situation and is relevant only to it. Further, as a result of development, the word loses its connection with a specific situation and receives a stable subject reference (Vygotsky, 2021).

Thus, the emergence of emotions is most often associated with the child's assessment of an object and with the expression of the attitude towards this object in the process of interaction with an adult, which indicates the internal relationships of communicative activity and emotions (Lisina, 2009). In addition, emotional development is often associated with the development of empathy (Kornilova, 2022).

The relationship between vocabulary and emotion understanding at the preschool age

Language can not only translate feelings into words, but can also help define those feelings from the very beginning. The dictionary of emotions is a collection of verbal designations of emotional states that help to realise them. The formation of such a vocabulary occurs precisely in preschool childhood (Gordeeva, 1995).

Language as a general means of cognitive representation helps children mentally store and access knowledge about emotion concepts, including associated experiences, causes, and consequences. It plays a key role in the acquisition and development of emotion understanding (Pons et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2005; Cole et al., 2010; Holodynski et al., 2013).

The work of F. Pons and coworkers made a great contribution to the development of this concept. They conducted a study that found that age and language ability together explained 72% of the variance in emotion understanding, 20% of this variance was explained by age alone, and 27% by language ability alone (Pons et al., 2004). P. Harris and F. Pons (Harris et al., 2005) in the course of their study concluded the following regarding the connection between language abilities and understanding of emotions: the better the speech development, the better children understand emotional experiences. To date, a body of empirical evidence shows a strong relationship between preschoolers' individual differences in language skills

(especially vocabulary) and emotion understanding (Denham et al., 1994; Cutting, Dunn, 1999; Izard et al., 2001; Pons et al., 2003; Ruffman et al., 2003; Bohnert et al., 2003; Bosacki, Moore, 2004; Trentacosta, Izard, 2007; Downs et al., 2007; Beck et al., 2012).

Most research on the role of language in children's understanding of emotion has focused on the influence of general vocabulary (Denham et al., 1994; Cutting and Dunn, 1999; Izard et al., 2001). However, the role of emotional vocabulary in children's development of emotion understanding has not been taken into account. V. Ornaghi and I. Grazzani revealed a connection between children's vocabulary specific to emotions and the components of their understanding (Ornaghi, Grazzani, 2013). F. Pons and colleagues also confirmed that the vocabulary of emotions is related through an intermediate link to both the speech and emotional development of the child (Pons et al., 2003). The relationship between the development of emotional vocabulary and the level of emotional competence of preschool children has been confirmed (Strubel et al., 2020). The size of emotion-specific vocabulary has been shown to be a strong predictor of the level of development of emotion understanding. The contribution of emotional vocabulary was higher than the contribution of general vocabulary.

Purpose and hypotheses of the study

As noted above, scientific research shows the relationship between emotion understandin emotions and vocabulary size (including emotional) in preschoolers (Denham et al., 1994; Cutting, Dunn, 1999; Izard et al., 2001; Pons et al., 2003; Ornaghi, Grazzani, 2013; Streubel et al., 2020). However, the direction of this connection, the cause and the effect, have not yet been clarified. Based on the ideas of Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1983), we assumed that speech predetermines the understanding of emotions. At the same time, modern studies of the relationship between vocabulary and emotion understanding (Ornaghi, Grazzani, 2013; Streubel et al., 2020) demonstrate a greater contribution of emotional vocabulary as an intermediate link (Pons et al., 2003) rather than that of the general vocabulary. Thus, the main hypothesis of our study was the assumption that emotional vocabulary makes a greater contribution to preschoolers' understanding of emotions compared to general vocabulary. This is consistent with the idea of sign mediation in the development of emotions as HMF (Zaporozhets, 1986). It is the ability to name emotions and emotional states that allows one to move to a new level in the child's emotional development and improve performance in understanding emotions.

In addition, it is not well understood whether there is a relationship between vocabulary size and emotion understanding throughout the preschool period of childhood or whether this relationship differs depending on the age of children. It seems that this aspect is extremely important, since it is the preschool educators, along with the family, that constitute the social situation of the child's development and determine their emotional and cognitive development. Accordingly, early childhood education programmes vary based on age group rather than the actual age of the child (Veraksa et al., 2016).

Thus, this study attempts to trace how sign mediation in the understanding of emotions affects the development of their understanding in children from 5 to 7 years old, including the analysis of age-related changes.

Sample

Our study sample consisted of 341 children aged 57 to 90 months (M = 75.42 months; SD = 7.65 months). Of these, 172 (50.4%) were boys and 169 (49.6%) girls. 170 children (49.9%) aged 5–6 years, from older groups of preschool educational institutions in Moscow (M = 69.09 months; SD = 4.4 months), and 171 children (50.1%) in aged 6–7 years, from preparatory groups of a preschool educational institution in Moscow (M = 81.67 months; SD = 4.2 months).

Techniques

To assess the general vocabulary size of preschool children, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, 4th version (Dunn, Dunn, 2007), which was tested in Russia (Kartushina et al., 2022), was used. The Peabody Test is a 175-page booklet with each page containing 4 illustrations of common objects. The test is carried out as follows: the examiner names a stimulus word (for example, "candle") and asks the subject to point a finger at the correct picture corresponding to the named word. For each correct answer, the child receives 1 point; for an incorrect one — 0 points. The technique stops when the child chooses 8 or more incorrect answers in a block of 12 questions.

The Emotional Vocabulary Test (Roepstorff et al., 2022) was used to assess the size of active and passive emotional vocabulary. To diagnose passive emotional vocabulary, children were given a page with four photographs of children depicting different emotions. The child had to choose a photo that depicted a specific emotion. For a correctly selected photo, the child received 1 point. Children were presented with 3 series of tasks, 4 images each. Accordingly, the general level of the passive emotional vocabulary is expressed by a sum of points from 0 to 12. To diagnose the active emotional

vocabulary, children were given one photograph and four options for different emotions. For the correctly chosen name of the emotion, the child received 1 point. There were 4 pictures in one series; in total, the children were presented with 3 series of tasks. Accordingly, the overall level of active emotional vocabulary is expressed by a sum of points from 0 to 12.

To assess emotion understanding in preschoolers, the Test of Emotion Comprehension (Pons, Harris, 2000; Veraksa et al., 2021), intended for children aged 3 to 11 years, was used. Test stimulus material is an illustrated book with simple stories. In each task, the child is told a story and then asked to choose "the feeling that the character of the story experiences" from four drawings with different facial expressions of the character. Children's answers are non-verbal; they only need to indicate the selected option. The test contains questions to evaluate child's understanding of the stories. The technique has a three-component structure for understanding emotions, which includes external, mental and reflective components. For each of the three components, scores vary from 0 to 3. The final score according to the method is calculated as the sum of the points received by the child for the three components (from 0 to 9 points).

Procedure

The study was conducted individually in a quiet and bright room of the preschool educational institution, which the children were visiting at the time of testing. One meeting lasting 15–25 minutes was organised with each child. For participation, all children received a small gift (sticker). All methods were presented to children in the same established order. The assessment was carried out by trained specialists (students and graduate students of the Faculty of Psychology of Lomonosov Moscow State University).

All parents were informed of the purposes of the study and gave written consent for their children to participate in the study.

Research results

Checking the distribution using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the values in some cases did not correspond to the normal law, and therefore nonparametric tests were used in further analysis.

A comparative analysis of indicators of development of vocabulary size and understanding of emotions among children of two groups (5–6 and 6–7 years old) showed that children from these groups have significantly different indicators of vocabulary volume and understanding of emotions (Mann-Whitney test, $p < 0.001$). As can be seen from the results presented in Table 1, with age, preschoolers understand emotions better, and their emotional and general vocabulary increases.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for vocabulary and emotion understanding development in different age groups

	Group of children 5–6 years old		Group of children 6–7 years old		Mann-Whitney criterion
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
General vocabulary	109.5	19.6	119.8	19.6	10282*
Passive emotional vocabulary	9	1.9	10	1.7	10331*
Active emotional vocabulary	9.4	1.8	10	1.4	11902*
Emotions comprehension, External component	2.4	0.7	2.7	0.5	12487*
Emotions comprehension, Mental component	0.8	0.6	1.7	0.9	7846*
Emotions comprehension, Reflective component	1.1	0.8	1.4	0.9	13362*
Understanding emotions, Total score	4.4	1.3	5.8	1.5	7851*

* — $p < 0.001$

Analysis of the relationship between emotion understanding and vocabulary size in preschool children

Correlation analysis (using Spearman's correlation coefficient) of the relationships between the results on the techniques for general and emotional vocabulary showed that the volume of active emotional vocabulary was interrelated with the volume of general vocabulary in both age groups (at 5–6 years: $r = 0.253$ at $p < 0.01$; at 6–7 years: $r = 0.353$ at $p < 0.01$), while passive emotional vocabulary did not significantly correlate. Moreover, a significant relationship was found between active and passive emotional vocabulary in children 5–6 years old ($r = 0.375$ at $p < 0.01$) and 6–7 years old ($r = 0.424$ at $p < 0.01$).

In addition, a correlation analysis of the relationships between indicators of general and emotional vocabulary and the level of understanding of emotions was conducted separately in children 5–6 and 6–7 years old (Table 2).

It is interesting to note that the mental and reflective components of the Emotion Understanding Test correlated significantly with general vocabulary size in children aged 6–7 years only, and the total score on this test correlated with general vocabulary size for both age groups.

Table 2
Relationships between the results of techniques for general and emotional vocabulary and for emotion understanding in children aged 5–6 and 6–7 years

	Emotions comprehension. External Component		Emotions comprehension. Mental Component		Emotions comprehension. Reflective Component		Emotions comprehension. Total score	
	5–6 years	6–7 years	5–6 years	6–7 years	5–6 years	6–7 years	5–6 years	6–7 years
General vocabulary	0.121	0.131	0.139	0.223**	0.107	0.292**	0.200**	0.336**
Passive emotional vocabulary	0.024	0.127	–0.081	0.041	0.112	0.234**	0.066	0.190*
Active emotional vocabulary	0.172*	0.241**	0.086	0.201*	0.146	0.143	0.226**	0.279**

** — $p < 0.01$; * — $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)

Passive emotional vocabulary correlated with the reflective component and total emotion understanding scores only at ages 6–7 years. Active emotional vocabulary correlated with the total score and the external component of the Emotion Understanding Test in both age groups, as well as with the mental component at age 6–7 years.

Results of the analysis of the contribution of general and emotional vocabulary to emotion understanding in preschoolers

In order to test the hypothesis regarding the greater contribution of the emotional vocabulary to the understanding of emotions by preschoolers, a linear regression analysis was carried out on the contribution of the general and emotional vocabulary. Using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the normality of the distribution of the total sample of all children aged 5–7 years on which this analysis was carried out.

The dependent variable was the total score on the Emotional Understanding Test. The independent variables were the results on tests of general vocabulary and active and passive emotional vocabulary. To control for significant age effects when analyzing the contribution of children's vocabulary to understanding emotions, we introduced the factor of membership in a specific age group, corresponding to the preschool group the children attended: 5–6 years old (senior group) or 6–7 years old (preparatory group).

The resulting model predicted 37.9% (regression model parameters: $R = 0.616$, $F = 42.309$, $p < 0.001$) of the total score on the emotion understanding test. This regression model shows that general vocabulary size and active emotional vocabulary are predictors of emotion understanding in preschool students. At the same time, the volume of passive emotional vocabulary is not a predictor of the level of development of understanding of emotions in preschoolers (Table 3). The age group of the children is also significant, which once again shows that children 6–7 years old (preparatory group of the preschool) showed significantly higher results in the method for understanding emotions than children 5–6 years old (older groups of the preschool).

In addition, the value of the Durbin-Watson test ($DW = 1.923$) shows that the existing correlations between tests for general and emotional vocabulary do not distort the connections identified using regression analysis.

Table 3
Regression model of the dependence of understanding emotions on indicators of speech development

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	4.526	0.663		6.823	<0.001
Age group	–1.520	0.165	–0.460	–9.212	<0.001
General vocabulary	0.013	0.003	0.203	3.967	<0.001
Active emotional vocabulary	0.107	0.048	0.118	2.209	0.028
Passive emotional vocabulary	0.055	0.041	0.070	1.339	0.182

The discussion of the results

The purpose of this study was to empirically study how, at the ages of 5 to 7 years, the sign mediation of a child's emotional development occurs, particularly emotion understanding. This process was analysed based on the relationship between vocabulary size and understanding of emotions in different stages of preschool.

It has been shown that with age, preschoolers begin to understand emotions better, and their emotional and general vocabulary increases. The data are in good agreement with the results of previous studies (Sergienko et al., 2009; Pons et al., 2004) and, in particular, with data from a study of emotion word understanding in preschoolers conducted by I. Ropstorf and

colleagues, which similarly showed a general effect of age on emotional vocabulary size (Roepstorff et al., 2022).

In all age groups, general and emotional vocabulary techniques were significantly associated with emotion understanding (total technique score), which is consistent with a large number of previous studies (Denham et al., 1994; Cutting, Dunn, 1999; Harris et al., 2005; Bohnert et al., 2003; Izard et al., 2001; Trentacosta, Izard, 2007 and others). However, this relationship is expressed differently in different age groups.

As a result of correlation analysis, data showed that, in all age groups, there is a relationship between the general and emotional vocabulary of children, which is consistent with the results of L. Beck and colleagues who studied the relationships between several components of linguistic and emotional competence and showed a strong positive correlation between competencies, regardless of age (Beck et al., 2012).

The development of emotional vocabulary, passive and active in particular, according to our research, is closely related to the understanding of emotions. The work of B. Streubel and colleagues also revealed a relationship between the development of emotional vocabulary and the level of emotional competence in preschool children (Streubel et al., 2020). The size of emotional vocabulary was a strong predictor of the level of development of the ability to recognize emotions.

In order to test the hypothesis that emotional vocabulary makes a greater contribution to preschoolers' understanding of emotions compared to general vocabulary, a regression analysis was conducted. Results showed that age group, general vocabulary, and active emotion predicted children's performance on an emotion understanding test. This is consistent with the cultural-historical concept of L.S. Vygotsky that emotional development should also be mediated by a sign (Pervichko, 2016), which is most clearly manifested in the development of the child's emotional vocabulary and reflects the direct influence of speech on emotional development (Vygotsky, 2021), and with the data obtained by F. Pons and his colleagues who found that age and language ability together explain 72% of the variance in emotion understanding (Pons et al., 2004). In addition to previous studies, our results highlight the importance of emotional vocabulary for the successful development of understanding emotions at the preschool age, since it allows various emotions and emotional states to be recorded in a sign (word).

However, it is interesting to note that in both correlation and regression analyses, active emotional vocabulary had a stronger relationship with emotion understanding than passive emotional vocabulary. This result can be explained by the fact that it is the verbalisation of the emotional state that helps

to better understand and realise the emotion (Shchetinina, 1984). According to this approach, children first begin to understand the difference between their thoughts and the thoughts of another person, and only then can they verbally express their understanding (Vygotsky, 2021; Zaporozhets, 1986; Shchetinina, 1984). Our study, which showed differences in the role of active and passive emotional vocabulary, allows us to partially confirm the idea that children's correct use of emotionally specific words is more important for understanding their emotions than the volume of the emotional vocabulary.

At the same time, the contribution of general vocabulary can be explained by the fact that the success of children in performing a test for understanding emotions will depend on the general level of speech development of the child. Our assumption is consistent with the idea that the development of theory of mind and understanding of emotions is built on the basis of language as a sign system (Vygotsky, 2021; Zaporozhets, 1986; Harris et al., 2005).

Our results are consistent with data obtained by I. Grazzani and V. Ornaghi (Ornaghi and Grazzani, 2013), showing the contribution of emotional vocabulary, which was measured using the same methodology as in our study (Emotion Understanding Test), in ability to understand emotions.

However, it is necessary to highlight several limitations of the study, which can become directions for further study of the relationship between the speech and emotional spheres of preschool children. Firstly, it is necessary to expand the study sample, which should not be limited to Moscow preschoolers. Secondly, for developmental psychology it is important to study the age dynamics of the development of the speech and emotional spheres of preschool children. This requires not only the inclusion of children from other age groups, but also a longitudinal study that would allow us to track the development of vocabulary and understanding of emotions throughout the preschool period. Thirdly, it is necessary to study the influence of cultural factors (native language, national characteristics of the expression of emotions), socio-demographic factors (in particular, the level of education and financial situation of parents, the composition of the family of preschoolers), which were not taken into account in this study, but which are attracting attention in recent studies (Kyuchukov, 2022; Jabeen, Maqsood, 2023). The study did not take into account the influence of intelligence, which is noted in various studies.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to empirically examine the role of sign mediation in the development of emotion understanding through the re-

lationship between vocabulary size and emotion understanding at the preschool age. As a result of the analysis, we found a relationship between general vocabulary and emotional vocabulary, as well as emotion understanding at the preschool age. Moreover, depending on the age group, this relationship had its own characteristics: for both groups (children 5–6 years old and children 6–7 years old) a significant relationship was found between general vocabulary and emotion understanding, as well as between active emotional vocabulary and understanding of emotions; in the group of children 5–6 years old (senior preschool group) there is also a significant relationship between passive emotional vocabulary and emotion understanding.

Our study showed that sign mediation through vocabulary development influences the understanding of emotions at the preschool age. At the same time, with age, children's general and emotional vocabulary increases, as well as their ability to understand emotions.

There are many multidirectional connections between speech and emotional development, and therefore, as L.S. Vygotsky showed (Vygotsky, 1997), in the development and education of children it is necessary to pay attention to both aspects.

The results obtained can serve as the basis for the development of developmental programmes to improve the development of speech and emotional spheres at the preschool age.

Practical application

The results of the study can be used in educational work with parents, for whom knowledge of the relationship between speech and emotional development will help them to better understand the developmental characteristics of their children, and will be useful to educators and child psychologists in the form of an educational programme for the harmonious development of preschool children.

References

Almazova, O.V., Bukhalenkova, D.A., Veraksa, A.N., Yakupova, V.A. (2018). The Relationship between the Theory of Mind and Executive Functions in Senior Preschool Children. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta. Psikhologiya i Pedagogika = Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Psychology and Pedagogy*, *8*(3), 293–311. (In Russ.)

Beck, L., Kumschick, I.R., Eid, M., Klann-Delius, G. (2012). Relationship Between Language Competence and Emotional Competence in Middle Childhood. *Emotion*, *12*(3), 503–514.

Bezrukikh, M.M., Verba, A.S., Filippova, T.A., Ivanov, V.V. (2021). Developing Speech and Socio-communicative Skills in Older Preschool Children. *Rossiiskii Psik-*

hologicheskii Zhurnal = Russian Psychological Journal, *18*(4), 5–17. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.21702/rpj.2021.4.1

Bohnert, A.M., Crnic, K.A., Lim, K.G. (2003). Emotional Competence and Aggressive Behavior in School-Age Children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *31*(1), 79–91.

Bosacki, S.L., Moore, C. (2004). Preschoolers' Understanding of Simple and Complex Emotions: Links with Gender and Language. *Sex Roles*, *50*(9/10), 659–675.

Cavadini, T., Richard, S., Dalla-Libera, N., Gentaz, E. (2021). Emotion Knowledge, Social Behaviour and Locomotor Activity Predict the Mathematic Performance in 706 Preschool Children. *Scientific Reports*, *11*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-93706-7

Cole, P.M., Armstrong, L.M., Pemberton, C.K. (2010). The role of language in the development of emotion regulation. In: S.D. Calkins, M.A. Bell, (eds.), Child development at the intersection of emotion and cognition (pp. 59–77). Washington: American Psychological Association Publ.

Cutting, A.L., Dunn, J. (1999). Theory of Mind, Emotion Understanding, Language, and Family Background: Individual Differences and Interrelations. *Child Development*, *70*(4), 853–865.

De Rosnay, M., Hughes, C. (2006). Conversation and Theory of Mind: Do Children Talk Their Way to Socio-cognitive Understanding? *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 24*(1), 7–37. https://doi.org/10.1348/026151005X82901

Denham, S.A. (1986). Social Cognition, Prosocial Behavior, and Emotion in Preschoolers: Contextual Validation. *Child Development*, *57*(1), 194–201.

Denham, S.A., McKinley, M., Couchoud, E.A., Holt, R. (1990). Emotional and Behavioral Predictors of Preschool Peer Ratings. *Child Development*, *61*(4), 1145–1152.

Denham, S.A., Zoller, D., Couchoud, E.A. (1994). Socialization of Preschoolers' Emotion Understanding. *Developmental Psychology*, *30*(6), 928–936.

Downs, A., Strand, P., Cerna, S. (2007). Emotion Understanding in English- and Spanish-speaking Preschoolers Enrolled in Head Start. *Social Development*, *16*(3), 410–439.

Dunn, L.M., Dunn, D.M. (2007). PPVT-4: Peabody picture vocabulary test. Minneapolis: Pearson Assessments Publ.

Elkonin, D.B. (2006). Child's psychology. Moscow: Academia Publ. (In Russ.)

Fomina, T.G., Bondarenko, I.N., Morosanova, V.I. (2023). Conscious Self-Regulation, Schoolengagement and Academic Performance in Adolescents: Differential Psychological Aspect. *Vestnik Rossiiskogo Universiteta Druzhby Narodov. Seriya: Psikhologiya i Pedagogika = RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics*, *20*(3), 560–577. (In Russ.). http://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2023-20-3-560-577

Gordeeva, O.V. (1995). Development of the language of emotions in children. *Voprosy psihologii,* (2), 137–149. (In Russ.)

Harris, P.L., de Rosnay, M., Pons, F. (2005). Language and Children's Understanding of Mental States. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *14*(2), 69–73.

Holodynski, M., Hermann, S., Kromm, H. (2013). Developmental Basis of Emotion Regulation. *Psychologische Rundschau*, *64*(4), 196–207.

Izard, C., Fine, S., Schultz, D., Mostow, A., Ackerman, B., Youngstrom, E. (2001). Emotion Knowledge as a Predictor of Social Behavior and Academic Competence in Children at Risk. *Psychological Science*, *12*(1), 18–23.

Jabeen, T., Maqsood, A. (2023). Cross-Language Validation and the Factor Structure of the Social-Emotional Competence Questionnaire for Pakistani Adolescents. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, *16*(3), 189–205. https://doi.org/10.11621/pir.2023.0313

Joukova, E.S., Bogoyavlenskaya, D.B., Artemenkov, S.L. (2023). The Main Characteristics of the Intellectual and Personal Development of Today's Primary Schoolchildren. *New Ideas in Child and Educational Psychology*, *1–2*(4), 48–67. https://doi.org/10.11621/nicep.2023.0403

Kartushina, N.A., Oshchepkova, E.S., Almazova, O.V., Bukhalenkova, D.A. (2022). The Use of Peabody Tool in the Assessment of Passive Vocabulary in. *Klinicheskaia i spetsial'naia psikhologiia = Clinical Psychology and Special Education, 11*(4), 205–232. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/cpse.2022110409

Kornilova, T.V. (2022). The Unity of Intellect and Affect in Multidimensional Regulation of Empathy. *National Psychological Journal*, *17*(1), 94–103. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/.11621/npj.2022.0108

Kyuchukov, H.S. (2022). Bilingual Children's Understanding of the Mental State of the Other Person in the Context of the Theory of Mind. *Moscow University Psychology Bulletin, 45*(4), 60–91. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.11621/vsp.2022.04.03

Leontiev, A.N. (1971). Needs, motives, and emotions. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Liew, J., Zhou, Q. (2022). Parenting, emotional self-regulation, and psychosocial adjustment across early childhood and adolescence in Chinese and Chinese-immigrant sociocultural contexts. In: D. Dukes, A. C. Samson, E.A. Walle, (eds.). The Oxford handbook of Emotional Development. (pp. 420–436). Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Lissina, M.I. (2009). Formation of a child's personality in communication. St. Petersburg: Piter Publ. (In Russ.)

Morosanova, V.I., Bondarenko, I.N., Fomina, T.G. (2022). Conscious Self-regulation, Motivational Factors, and Personality Traits as Predictors of Students' Academic Performance: A Linear Empirical Model. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, *15*(4), 170–187. https://doi.org/10.11621/pir.2022.0411

Morosanova, V.I., Fomina, T.G., Bondarenko, I.N. (2023). Conscious Self-Regulation as a Meta-Resource of Academic Achievement and Psychological Well-Being of Young Adolescents. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art*, *16*(3), 168–188. https://doi.org/10.11621/pir.2023.0312

Ornaghi, V., Grazzani, I. (2013). The Relationship Between Emotional-state Language and Emotion Understanding: A Study with School-age Children. *Cognition and Emotion*, (27), 356–366.

Pervichko, E.I. (2016). Cultural active approach to the issue of emotion regulation: theoretical explanation and empirical verification of a conceptual model. *National Psychological Journal*, *11*(2), 3–17. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.11621/npj.2016.0201

Pons, F., de Rosnay, M., Andersen, B.G., Cuisinier, F. (2010). Emotional competence: Development and intervention. In: F. Pons, M. de Rosnay, P. Doudin, (eds.), Emotions in research and practice, Aalborg (pp. 205—239). Denmark: Aalborg Univ. Press Publ.

Pons, F., Harris, P. (2000). Test of Emotion Comprehension—TEC. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Pons, F., Harris, P.L., de Rosnay, M. (2004). Emotion Comprehension Between 3 And 11 Years: Developmental Periods and Hierarchical Organization. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *1*(2), 127–152.

Pons, F., Lawson, J., Harris, P.L., de Rosnay, M. (2003). Individual Differences in Children's Emotion Understanding: Effects of Age and Language. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *44*(4), 347–353.

Roepstorff, I.T., Mayor, J., Havighurst, S., Kartushina, N. (2022). Parents are Poor Informers of Their Young Children's Emotion Word Comprehension https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/zq6v8

Ruffman, T., Slade, L., Rowlandson, K., Rumsey, C., Garnham, A. (2003). How Language Relates to Belief, Desire, and Emotion Understanding. *Cognitive Development*, *18*(2), 139–158.

Sarmento-Henrique, R., Quintanilla, L., Lucas-Molina, B., Recio, P., Giménez-Dasí, M. (2020). The Longitudinal Interplay of Emotion Understanding, Theory of Mind, and Language in The Preschool Years. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *44*(3), 236–245. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025419866907

Sergeyenko, E.A., Lebedeva, E.I., Prusakova, O.A. (2009). Model of mental development in human ontogenesis. Moscow: Institute of Psychology RAS Publ. (In Russ.)

Shablack, H., Lindquist, K.A. (2019). The role of language in emotional development. In: V. LoBue, K. Perez-Edgar, K.A. Buss, (eds.), Handbook of emotional development (pp. 451–478). Cham: Springer Publ.

Shchetinina, A.M. (1984). Perception and understanding of emotional states by preschool children. *Voprosy psihologii,* (3), 60–66. (In Russ.)

Solovieva, Yu., Baltazar Ramos, A.M., Quintanar Rojas, L. (2021). Experience in Pre-school Education in Mexico: Following L.S. Vygotsky. *New Ideas in Child and Educational Psychology*, *1*(1), 77–95. https://doi.org/10.11621/nicep.2021.0104

Stahl, S.A. (1999). Why Innovations Come and Go (and Mostly Go): The Case of Whole Language. *Educational Researcher*, *28*(8), 13–22.

Strayer, J. (1980). A Naturalistic Study of Empathic Behaviors and Their Relation to Affective States and Perspective-taking Skills in Preschool Children. *Child Development*, *51*(3), 815–822.

Streubel, B., Gunzenhauser, C., Grosse, G., Saalbach, H. (2020). Emotion-specific Vocabulary and Its Contribution to Emotion Understanding in 4- to 9-year-old Children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, (193), 104790.

Torres, M.M., Domitrovich, C.E., Bierman, K.L. (2015). Preschool Interpersonal Relationships Predict Kindergarten Achievement: Mediated by Gains in Emotion Knowledge. *Journal of applied developmental psychology*, (39), 44–52. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2015.04.008

Trentacosta, C.J., Izard, C.E. (2007). Kindergarten Children's Emotion Competence as a Predictor of Their Academic Competence in First Grade. *Emotion*, *7*(1), 77–88.

Veraksa, N.E. Komarova, T.S., Vasiljeva, M.A. (eds.). (2016). From birth to school. Basic educational program of preschool education. Moscow: MOZAIKA-SINTEZ Publ. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E., Djachenko, O.M. (1996). Ways to Regulate Behavior in Preschool Children. *Voprosy Psikhologii*, (3), 14–27. (In Russ.)

Veraksa, N.E., Veraksa, A.N., Gavrilova, M.N., Bukhalenkova, D.A., Tarasova, K.S. (2021). The Russian Version of the Test of Emotion Comprehension: Adaptation and Validation for Use in Preschool Children. *Psikhologiya. Zhurnal VShE = Psychology. Journal of HSE*, *18*(1), 56–70. (In Russ.)

Voltmer, K., von Salisch, M. (2022). The Adaptive Test of Emotion Knowledge for 3- to 9-year-olds: Psychometric Properties and Validity. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, (13), 901304. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.901304

Vygotsky, L.S. (1960). Development of higher mental functions. Moscow: APN Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983). Foundations of defectology. Collected works: 5th ed. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). Child psychology. Collected works: 4th ed. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1997). Questions of child psychology. St. Petersburg: Soyuz Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (2021). Thought and language. Moscow: AST Publ. (In Russ.)

Zaporozhets, A.V. (1986). Development of emotional regulation of actions in a child. Selected psychological works. In: V.V. Davydova, V.P. Zinchenko, (eds.), (pp. 258–259). Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daria A. Bukhalenkova, Cand. Sci. (Psychology), Junior Researcher at the Laboratory of Childhood Psychology and Digital Socialization, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research; Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, d.bukhalenkova@inbox.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002 -4523-1051

Alexander N. Veraksa, Full member of the Russian Academy of Education, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Deputy Director for Scientific and Organizational Development, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research; Head of the Department of Psychology of Education and Pedagogy, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation, veraksa@yandex.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7187-6080

Ulyana D. Guseva, Researcher, Laboratory of Consultative Psychology and Psychotherapy, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, u.d.guseva@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4156-7048

Ekaterina S. Oshchepkova, Cand. Sci. (Philology), Leading Researcher at the Laboratory of Childhood Psychology and Digital Socialization, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, maposte06@yandex.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6199 -4649

Received: 12.02.2024; revised: 04.03.2024; accepted: 11.05.2024.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-45
UDC 159.99

"Family Pain" in the Context of the Cultural-Historical Approach of L.S. Vygotsky

Anna M. Lutsenko [1] ✉, Alla S. Spivakovskaya [1, 2]

[1] Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis, Moscow, Russian Federation
[2] Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ lutscenko.anna@mail.ru

Abstract

Background. The term "family pain" is used in family system psychotherapy to refer to the emotional state of members in a dysfunctional family. Despite the widespread use of this term in practical psychology, the structure of the phenomenon of "family pain" has not yet been described and introduced into clinical and family psychology. This study provides a scientific substantiation of the psychological construct "family pain" in the etiology and functioning of codependent behaviour based on the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vygotsky.

Objectives. The aim is to characterize the concept of experiencing "family pain" based on a cultural-historical approach, and also to analyse the characteristics of experiencing "family pain" among people whose parents were alcoholics.

Study Participants. The sample included adults who were conditionally mentally healthy (N=52; 11 men and 41 women; M_{age}=24.5 years, SD=4.4), who grew up in alcoholic families and regularly attended the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics".

Methods. A phenomenological analysis of the motives for people applying to the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult children of alcoholics".

Results. Individuals who grew up in alcoholic families describe "family pain" as a constant experience that accompanies them throughout their lives, due to traumatic childhood experiences in the past. Six motives for applying to the self-help rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" for people who grew up in alcoholic families and experienced "family pain" were identified. They included: to overcome difficulties in communication, to cope with the death of parents, to find support and approval, to find people with similar experiences, to justify one's own failures through the illness of a parent, to cope with current negative states connected to childhood experiences. It has been shown that attending rehabilitation programmes can both help a person to cope with the experience of "family pain" and strengthen fixation on the negative experiences of childhood.

Conclusions. The process of experiencing a common family problem by people whose parents were alcoholics can be presented and described as a special systemic psychological construct "family pain".

Keywords: ACA 12-step rehabilitation programme, "Adult children of alcoholics," cultural-historical approach, dysfunctional family, experience, "family pain", guilt

For citation: Lutsenko, A.M., Spivakovskaya, A.S. (2024). "Family pain" in the context of the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vygotsky. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 129–141. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-45

Introduction

Experience, according to the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vygotsky, is a person's internal attitude to a particular moment of reality, including the assessment of a person's ideas, set of emotions, and the analysis of one's own behaviour regarding the situation (Vygotsky, 1983b). From the perspective of this approach, experience is considered as an internal activity of a person aimed at establishing a correspondence between external reality and consciousness. A.G. Asmolov, based on the works of L.S. Vygotsky, emphasizes the following meanings of the term "experience": 1) experience is any emotionally charged phenomenon presented in a person's mind, perceived as an event in one's life; 2) experience is an internal activity that unfolds when a person cannot achieve the key motives and is aimed at changing their attitude to reality (Asmolov, 1990).

V.I. Slobodchikov, analyzing the phenomenon of "experience" in the context of a cultural-historical approach, proposed to consider this phenomenon as a higher mental function that develops from involuntary forms to internal activity. He suggested that as a person grows up, experience ceases to be an exclusively reflexive emotional reaction to events in the external environment. It acquires cognitive and behavioral components, consisting in the intellectualization of emotional reactions and the formation of behaviour based on the knowledge of cultural and social norms (Vygotsky, 1983a; Slobodchikov, 2008).

Defining the phenomenon of "experience" from the perspective of a cultural-historical approach opens up new opportunities for studying a number of phenomena described in systemic family psychology, in particular, the phenomenon of "family pain". The concept of "family pain" is widely used as a metaphor in practical family psychology (mentioned in the work of systemic family psychologists V. Satir, M.S. Palazzoli, and

M. Bowen in the 1950s), but the structure of this phenomenon was not described and the term itself has not been introduced into scientific clinical psychology (Palazzoli et al., 2010; Potter-Ephron, 2014; Satir, 1992). The use of the term "family pain" without a clear definition and description of the structure created confusion among practitioners, since it included very different concepts (physical limitations of family members, experiences of conflicts in the family, negative emotions about the family situation, etc.). This confusion emphasizes the need to introduce the term "family pain" into scientific psychology.

The concept of "family pain", based on the cultural-historical approach, can be defined as a special psychological construct, which is the process of experiencing a common family problem by members of a dysfunctional family. This experience includes emotional (a set of experiences of negative emotions), cognitive (a set of ideas about a family problem) and behavioral (behaviour aimed at coping with a problem) components (Lutsenko, 2020).

As studies by A.S. Spivakovskaya and her students (Spivakovskaya, 2009) have shown, effective exploration into the psychological laws of formation and functioning of addictions and codependencies in dysfunctional families, negative habits, and behavioral stereotypes is possible in the process of overcoming dependent and codependent forms of one's own behaviour. For this reason, the current study examined individuals who sought self-help from 12-step rehabilitation programmes. These people spend their entire lives overcoming the consequences of family alcoholism and, in some cases, help their parents overcome alcohol addiction. They independently entered a programme that required time and emotional resources from them in order to overcome codependent behaviour. Despite the widespread use of 12-step self-help programmes, there has been no focused study of the Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) community.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the characteristics of the experience of "family pain" in people who grew up in an alcoholic family and enter 12-step rehabilitation programmes.

Research hypothesis:

1) People who grew up in alcoholic families experience "family pain", not only while living with drinking parents, but also after separation from them and even after the death of their parents.

2) Attending the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" can both help people cope with the experience of "family pain" and strengthen fixation on the negative experiences of childhood and become a new type of addiction.

Research methods

The study was conducted from March 2017 to October 2019; study participants were recruited from the open self-help group "Adult Children of Alcoholics," organized at the Church of St. Cosmas and Damian in Moscow. All participants signed informed voluntary consent to participate in the study and received detailed feedback from a psychologist about the characteristics of their experience of "family pain" and ways of coping with it. The study was carried out in three stages. During the first stage, which lasted a year and a half, participant observation was conducted during the open 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics". Based on the results of this observation, 34 lesson protocols were compiled, which were analyzed with the method of phenomenological data analysis. During the second stage, individual face-to-face meetings were held with the participants, and a semi-structured interview and complete pathopsychological diagnosis were carried out in order to include conditionally mentally healthy participants in the study. The third stage of the study included individual psychological counseling of study participants in a systemic family approach; an important part of this stage was the identification of resource factors for the study participants that contributed to overcoming their experience of "family pain".

In order to study the characteristics of the experience of "family pain" in people who grew up in alcoholic families and seek help through 12-step rehabilitation programmes, open meetings of the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" were analysed, dedicated to the topic of motivation for participation in the programme. Each meeting lasted for 1.5 hours. At the beginning of the meeting, participants chose the topic of the meeting through open discussion and voting; programme participants spoke at will. The speaking time was limited to three minutes in order to have time to listen to each meeting participant who wanted to speak. During ACA meetings, it is not usual to interrupt others, calm them down, or engage in dialogue and discussion; meetings are held in the form of a monologue. During the meeting, participants' statements were recorded in the minutes, and participants were warned about this in advance. Based on the minutes of the meetings, a phenomenological analysis of the motives for attending meetings was carried out. Phenomenological data analysis included collecting information (participant statements on their motivation for attending ACA meetings), isolating and transforming semantic units of participants' statements, grouping semantic units into themes, and interpreting the resulting themes. After processing the pro-

tocol, general semantic categories were identified and synthesised based on the statements of the study participants.

Sample

The study involved adults who were conditionally mentally healthy (N=52; 11 men and 41 women; M_{age}=24.5 years, SD=4.4), who grew up in alcoholic families and regularly attended the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics". Criteria for inclusion in the main group were participant age of 18 to 35 years; absence of diagnosed mental illnesses at the time of examination and absence of complaints about the mental state; the presence of at least one parent who abuses alcohol with a diagnosis of "chronic alcoholism" and has undergone treatment for this disease throughout life; parental alcoholism arose during the period when the study participants were from six months to five years old; the study participants and their parents had experience living together. The group was divided into two subgroups: 27 people lived with their parents at the time of the study, 25 people had parents who had died.

Research results

During the study, 6 motives for applying to the self-help rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" by people who grew up in alcoholic families and who experience "family pain" were identified.

1. Difficulties in building communication with close relatives

This motive was one of the most popular to enrol in a rehabilitation programme for people who grew up in alcoholic families (38 participants mentioned it as the reason for joining the programme). The following subgroups can be distinguished within this motive:

- Difficulty communicating with parents. Conflicts with parents arose when the younger generation tried to prohibit their parents from drinking alcohol and increased their desire to control their lives. Often people who grew up in an alcoholic family felt guilty that they could not help their loved ones overcome the addiction.

"I hate New Year's holidays, they always remind me of my father's alcoholism, I remember him lying at home drunk, smelling bad. My mother and I were hiding from him at my grandmother's. I came here to forget all this, to live it through somehow."

- Difficulties in relationships with children. Participants in the Adult Children of Alcoholics programme observed dysfunctional parental behaviour

and lacked childhood role models. As they grew up, they were faced with a lack of knowledge about how to be good parents for their children due to the lack of opportunity to consult and take an example from their parents on parenting issues.

"My mother drank regularly and left me with my grandmother or my sister. I don't want to be a mother like her, but I know that I'm not a good mother either, I lash out at my children, sometimes I yell at them for no reason, and then I feel guilty. But I don't know how to be a good mother, and there's no one to teach me."

- Difficulties in communicating with the opposite sex, including fear of entering into a relationship with a patient suffering from alcoholism. Members of the ACA community often entered into relationships with addicts and came to the rehabilitation programme with the goal of helping the addicted partner overcome the disease.

"My first boyfriend abused alcohol and drugs. Perhaps I chose him because during periods of sobriety he was very similar to my father, he also laughed, joked, was affectionate with me, he had similar humour. I understand that I am attracted to alcoholic men, I am in the programme because I am tired of these relationships, tired of dragging them out of sobering-up stations, looking for rehabilitation programmes, wasting money on doctors."

- Boundaries in relationships, difficulties with saying no. In alcoholic families, there is often a violation of family boundaries: external boundaries become very rigid, while internal boundaries become blurred. Children growing up in an alcoholic family are forced to take increased responsibility for younger siblings and parents who abuse alcohol. In the rehabilitation programme, people who grew up in alcoholic families learn to form flexible boundaries in family relationships and try to refuse excessive responsibility for other people.

"Since childhood, I got used to taking care of my younger brother, since my mother often drank a lot and could not take care of us. I was used to having a lot of responsibilities around the house; at the age of 5 I could prepare a salad, since there was no one to cook. I thought that was the way it should be. And now it's hard for me to refuse someone, I fulfil some of the responsibilities of my colleagues because I can't say "no" in time, many times I stayed late at work because I took on someone else's work."

- Search for a partner and friends in the community. Participants mention that an important purpose of visiting the community for them is to find friends and partners, they attend meetings and see people with similar problems who understand them and are willing to listen to them.

During the longitudinal study, participants in the ACA community formed three married couples.

"In the programme, for the first time I saw that I was not alone, I had support. After the first lesson, a girl came up to me and hugged me. I felt so light and warm. Here I was finally able to find friends who have the same problem with their parents, who will understand and will not judge."

2. Experience of loss

- Experiencing the loss of loved ones. 14 study participants indicated that experiencing the actual or expected death of their parents led them to the ACA rehabilitation programme. The parents of the study participants suffered from chronic alcoholism, therefore, they often encountered chronic somatic diseases and died at a young age.

"My mother has recently started drinking a lot. She steals things from the house and buys alcohol, every day I see empty bottles in the kitchen. I feel guilty that I can't stop it. I'm afraid that she will die soon and my brother will be sent to an orphanage, but there is nothing I can do about it. I come to the group and hear that others also have this fear, the fear of losing a loved one because of their drunkenness."

3. Overcoming emotional difficulties

People who grew up in alcoholic families turned to the "Adult Children of Alcoholics" community in order to overcome negative emotions about their parental family. 42 study participants said they came to ACA with the goal of learning to recognize and control their emotions.

- Learning the ability to recognize emotions.

"It was only in groups that I realized that I have the right to talk about feelings; this was not accepted in our family. I can feel and have the right to feel. It doesn't matter whether it's joy or negative feelings, I can talk about them."

"I felt emotional closeness for the first time at an ACA small group when we talked about feelings. I couldn't admit to myself that I was experiencing negative feelings. We did not encourage open expression of feelings in the family; my mother hid for a long time that her father's behaviour caused her a lot of pain. The first time we were able to talk about feelings with her was only three weeks ago."

- Experiencing feelings of guilt and shame.

"I considered myself defective, I tried to correct it, although maybe this was not worth doing."

"I came to the ACA with a huge feeling of guilt and anger towards my deceased mother. You know, when I wrote down all these feelings and allowed myself to say everything I thought about it, forgiveness suddenly came."

- Experience of anger.

"I also started talking about feelings, I started to feel my anger. The first step, when you start, is very difficult, I started to get very angry. I started writing it down, wrote about everything I wanted to say, and felt that a lot of bad things were coming out of me. I remembered that you can hit a pillow when you're angry. I wrote and beat the pillow and screamed. After that I felt a little better."

- Overcoming the fear of communicating with people.

"I understand that anything can happen, but I'm not so scared anymore, because I understand that I have a way to go today."

4. Finding a safe space

18 participants reported that they came to the rehabilitation programme with the goal of finding people with similar life experiences and being able to talk openly about family problems. The problem of parental alcoholism was often taboo in the extended family and society; the ACA community became the only place where one could honestly admit to oneself that there was a problem and get information about rehabilitation centres for parents, and discuss the characteristics of one's own behaviour in the family in order to help the parent and protect oneself from their aggression. It was important that the people around had similar experiences, were sympathetic to the community member's problem, and did not criticize or devalue the presence of a family problem.

- Meeting people with similar experiences.

"I was very glad that I was not the only one, and that means everything is fine, I can cope with difficulties."

- The ability to talk openly about alcoholism. Due to the fact that an alcoholic family tries to hide a relative's illness from the extended family and the external environment, a large number of secrets appear in the family; communication using "clean" messages is encouraged, but through manipulative communication, or communication using "noisy" messages at the verbal and body language level, family members often convey conflicting information. Communication using "noisy" messages does not allow family members to share feelings and experiences of emotions with each other, which often leads to an increase in family conflicts and aggression in the family. In the ACA programme, individuals who grew up in an alcoholic

family learn to talk openly about the problem in the family, which allows them to begin working on the problem of alcoholism.

"I'm so used to it, and even now I'm scared to say that I have a family secret. And even when speaking in a group, I try not to finish saying something, although I'm already starting to talk about my father."

- Discussion of methods of physical and emotional protection from aggressive parental behaviour.

"My father, when he gets drunk, completely loses control of himself and can hit in the face. Once he began to molest me, and this was in front of my mother. There are people here for whom this also happens or happened before, the group taught me how to defend myself from my father. Now I have put a latch on the door to my room, my father cannot get in there, my friend from the community allows me to sleep at her place when my father gets drunk, and he drinks heavily."

5. Seeking support and approval

48 people reported that they came to ACA to receive support for working on the problem of family alcoholism. In the community, participants could receive help in the form of contacts of rehabilitation centres for parents, information about the features of effective behaviour with them, and emotional support from other participants.

"Participating in the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" helps me understand that I am not alone, my problem is not unique, and I can overcome the consequences of family alcoholism. I usually go to open and closed programme meetings and feel safe."

6. Community as addiction

8 people indicated that visiting the "Adult Children of Alcoholics" community is becoming as necessary for them as alcohol is for their parents i.e., visiting groups becomes a new type of addiction. They gave examples saying that they need to visit the community at least once a week, otherwise their mood worsens and they begin to enter into conflicts with others. For this group of people, community became a place where they could express self-pity, endlessly blame their parents for their current failures, delve into the analysis of the past and feel increasing self-pity.

- Maintaining self-pity.

"I go to ACA. I have this tender, tearful recovery with self-pity."

"I constantly live in a feeling of guilt and sadness, I'm built this way, my parents instilled this in me. I love having a place where I can talk for hours about how miserable I am."

- Possibility of blaming parents and childhood for current failures.

"They didn't hire me. I think it's all because I'm an ACA, I grew up in a dysfunctional family, and now I can't work full time."

"I came here again to speak out. I got a retake at an exam yesterday. I think I can't prepare for the exams because my mom drinks alcohol and can't teach me to be responsible for myself. She never kept her promises, she forgot if she was going to do something, she got drunk, why should I do something well now?"

- The need to go into the community and speak out.

"In the ACA, my codependent relationships with parents and men were replaced by the need to come here. Sometimes I feel like I'm not doing some important things in my life, I'm not communicating with my loved ones, since I need to be here at least twice a week, I'm developing some new dependence on the group, on the sponsor, I definitely need to see them, speak out."

"I am convinced that 12-step programmes are like an addiction that we all get into, just like our parents. This addiction is not from vodka, but from people with whom we need to endlessly discuss our problems. At a certain point you can no longer live without it, it becomes a necessity."

Results and discussion

An analysis of the motivation for the research participants' applications to the programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" showed that these adults, individuals with good indicators of social and work adaptation, are largely loaded with experiences connected to their parental family. They are looking for help in processing these experiences and establishing optimal intergenerational boundaries. Their experience of "family pain" does not disappear after separation from their parents and, even after the death of their parents, many participants continue to overcome the consequences of growing up in a dysfunctional family (difficulties in communication, a huge range of negative emotions about the parental family), as reported during participation in group meetings. The experience of "family pain" begins to form in early childhood during the process of interaction with drinking parents, and then becomes an active internal activity that prevents a person from entering into healthy relationships and experiencing joy. "Family pain" is internalized and affects a person not only in the presence of a parent, but even after their death, which correlates with the concept of L.S. Vygotsky about the internalization of mental functions and confirms the possibility of considering the phenomenon of experience as a higher mental function (Vygotsky, 1983a). An analysis of the statements of study participants during meetings with

"Adult Children of Alcoholics" indicates that "family pain" in people who grew up in alcoholic families is prolonged and does not stop with the death of the drinking parent (Tuchina et al., 2019).

In a longitudinal study, it was shown that attending the 12-step rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics" can both help people cope with the experience of "family pain" and also strengthen their fixation on the negative experiences of childhood, becoming a new type of addiction. According to the systemic family approach, the family is a dynamic, constantly changing system, which consists of a complex of interconnected elements (family members and their interactions) and at the same time obeys the law of homeostasis and development (Bolotova, 2016; Byng-Hall, Renos, 2018). According to the law of development, the family will strive for change, and according to the law of homeostasis, it will strive to fixate on the current moment, even if this will prevent family members from realizing their needs (Vasyagina, Mazarchuk, 2018). It is the tendency towards homeostasis that will prevent members of a dysfunctional family from coping with the experience of "family pain" and increase their fixation on negative experiences (Voititz, 2015; Moskalenko, 2009; Smith, 1991; Kholmogorova et al., 2016).

As many participants in the longitudinal study reported, overcoming "family pain", which includes overcoming communication difficulties in the family and learning to control one's emotions, is made possible through active self-monitoring of one's own emotions through participation in a 12-step rehabilitation programme and individual psychotherapy. "Self-observation is an observation, the object of which is the mental states and actions of the observing subject itself" (Spivakovskaya, 2009, p. 33). According to the cultural-historical approach of L.S. Vygotsky, self-observation is formed in the course of the child's mental development and goes from non-semantic and wordless form to the objective and semantic and becomes regulated. Through participation in rehabilitation programmes, individuals who grew up in alcoholic families learn self-monitoring skills, which allows them to better regulate their emotions and behaviour.

Conclusions

1. The process of experiencing a common family problem by people who grew up in alcoholic families can be presented and described as a special systemic psychological construct known as "family pain".

2. People who grew up in alcoholic families describe "family pain" as a constant experience that accompanies them throughout their lives, due to traumatic childhood experiences.

3. Attending rehabilitation programmes can both help them to cope with the experience of "family pain" and strengthen their fixation on the negative feelings of childhood experience.

4. The "Adult Children of Alcoholics" community helps study participants learn to recognize their emotions and process them, analyse their current relationships with parents, partners and children, overcome difficulties in communicating with their loved ones, experience the loss of loved ones, find help in the form of contacts of rehabilitation centres for parents, and find emotional support and new friends and partners. At the same time, the community "Adult Children of Alcoholics" can itself become a new type of addiction for people who grew up in alcoholic families if community members come to the group with the goal of encouraging self-pity and endlessly blaming their parents' past behaviour for their current problems.

Practical application

During a longitudinal observation of participants in the rehabilitation programme "Adult Children of Alcoholics", it was shown that they experience "family pain", which forms in early childhood and accompanies them throughout their lives, since this experience is internalized and becomes an integral part of life, even in the absence of real interaction with a parent. However, to overcome this experience, active self-observation of one's own codependency on your parents can be used. This becomes possible through the participation of people who grew up in alcoholic families in rehabilitation group programmes and individual psychotherapy. The results of this study can be used when constructing clinical recommendations for working with people who grew up in alcoholic families, as well as when planning their group and individual psychological counselling.

References

Asmolov, A.G. (1990). Psychology of Personality. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Bolotova, N.P. (2016). Prerequisites and prospects for working with families in a systemic approach: systemic family psychotherapy. Moscow: MPSU Publ. (In Russ.)

Byng-Hall, J., Renos, K. (2018). Papadopoulos. Multiple Voices Narrative in Systemic Family Psychotherapy. New York: Routledge Publ.

Kholmogorova, A.B., Volikova, S.V., Sorokova, M.G. (2016). Standardization of the "Family Emotional Communications" Questionnaire. *Konsul'tativnaya Psikhologiya i Psikhoterapiya = Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy*, *24*(4), 97–125. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/cpp.2016240405

Lutsenko, A.M. (2020). Coping Strategies and Personality Profile Characteristics of People Whose Parents Were Alcohol Addicts. *Behavioral Science*, *32*(10), 212–221. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs10010032

Moskalenko, V.D. (2009). Addiction: a family disease. Moscow: PERSE Publ. (In Russ.)

Palatstsoli, M.S., Boskolo, L., Chekkin, D., Prata, D. (2010). Paradox and counter-paradox. A new model of therapy for families involved in schizophrenic interactions. Moscow: Kogito-Tsentr Publ. (In Russ.)

Potter-Efron, R.T. (2014). Shame, guilt and alcoholism: clinical practice. Moscow: IOI Publ. (In Russ.)

Satir, V. (1992). Family psychotherapy. Moscow: Institute of General Humanitarian Research Publ. (In Russ.)

Slobodchikov, I.M. (2008). The Experience of Loneliness from the Standpoint of L.S. Vygotsky's Cultural and Historical Psychology. *Vestnik RGGU. Seriya «Psikhologiya. Pedagogika. Obrazovanie» = RSUH/RGGU Bulletin. "Psychology. Pedagogics. Education" Series,* (3), 32–42. (In Russ.)

Smit, E.U. (1991). Grandchildren of alcoholics. Problems of interdependence in the family. Moscow: Enlightenment Publ. (In Russ.)

Spivakovskaya, A.S. (2009). Fragments of beatotherapy. Moscow: Beato-press Publ. (In Russ.)

Tuchina, O.D., Shustov, D.I., Agibalova, T.V., Shustova, S.A. (2019). Impaired Prospective Ability as a Possible Pathogenetic Mechanism of Alcohol Dependence. *Konsul'tativnaya Psikhologiya i Psikhoterapiya = Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy, 27*(1), 79–101. (In Russ.)

Vasyagina, N.N., Mazarchuk, E.O. (2018). The formation of the concept of "family" in domestic and foreign science. Psychological problems of the modern family: collection of materials from the VIII International Scientific and Practical Conference. In: O.A. Karabanova, N.N. Vasyagina, (eds.). Ekaterinburg: Ural State Pedagogical University Publ. (In Russ.)

Voitits, J.J. (2015). Adult children of alcoholics. A complete reference book for the ACA. Moscow: Independent company "Class". (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983a). Defectology and the doctrine of the development and upbringing of an abnormal child. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 5. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983b). Teaching about emotions. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 6. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anna M. Lutsenko, Cand. Sci. (Psychology), Lecturer at the Department of Psychotherapy and Psychological Counselling, Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis, Moscow, Russian Federation, lutscenko.anna@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7950-0117

Alla S. Spivakovskaya, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor at the Department of Neuro- and Pathopsychology, Faculty of Psychology, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Dean of the Faculty of Psychotherapy and Psychological Counselling, Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis, Moscow, Russian Federation, beatum@bk.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8821-7858

Received: 17.02.2024; revised: 05.03.2024; accepted: 30.05.2024.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-46
UDC 159.9, 159.9.07

"On the Question of the Psychology of the Actor's Creativity" by L.S. Vygotsky: the Correlation of the Originality of Personal Characteristics and Professional Activity

Vladimir S. Sobkin, Tatyana A. Lykova ✉

Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ feo.tatiana@gmail.com

Abstract

Background. There are very few modern studies on the psychology of the actor and they are mainly based on the study of individual personality traits of actors. The current article discusses L.S. Vygotsky's approach to the psychology of the actor and presents the results of a comprehensive study of the personal characteristics of student actors. Peculiarities of professional activity and the modern socio-cultural situation was taken into account in the interpretation.

Objectives. The research is a complex analysis of personal characteristics of actors during the early stage of mastering their professional activity.

Study Participants. The study involved second and third year students of the acting faculty of the Institute of Contemporary Art (Moscow); a total of 76 people (39 girls, 37 boys), with an average age of 20.2 years

Methods. R.B. Cattell 16 PF personality questionnaire, Eysenck EPI personality questionnaire adapted by A.G. Shmelev, short Big Five portrait questionnaire "B5–10" (authors M.S. Egorova and O.V. Parshikova), short Dark Triad questionnaire (adapted by M.S. Egorova, M.A. Sitnikova, O.V. Parshikova), A.A. Megrabyan empathy questionnaire, and the integral indicator "expert assessment of abilities" were used in the study.

Results. As a result of a factor analysis of the respondents' indicators for all the methods used, the following 10 factors describing 69.9% of the total cumulative dispersion were identified: F1 "emotional excitability, plasticity", F2 "sensitivity to moral constraints", F3 "empathy", F4 "openness to experience, trying oneself out", F5 "publicity", F6 "frankness, sincerity", F7 "emotional joining the group", F8

"insightfulness", F9 "individualism", F10 "free-thinking". The identified factors are interpreted as specific personal formations involved in the realisation of acting.
Conclusions. The personal characteristics discovered in the study are considered from the point of view of the content and organisation of the actors' training process. They can act as an alternative to the traditional approach aimed at the development of actors' individual mental functions. Consideration of specific psychological vectors of personal development of student-actors as a basis for the proposed in training etudes and exercises shifts the focus of training on the image of character as a semantic unit of psychotechnical training.

Keywords: acting giftedness, Big Five, personality traits, Cattell 16 PF questionnaire, ability assessment, actor psychology, acting students, Dark Triad, factor analysis, empathy

For citation: Sobkin, V.S. Lykova, T.A. (2024). "On the question of the psychology of the actor's creativity" by L.S. Vygotsky: the correlation of the originality of personal characteristics and professional activity. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 141–161. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-46

Introduction

A short article by L.S. Vygotsky "On the question of the psychology of the actor's creativity" is one of the very first works on the psychology of acting in Russian science. At the same time, it is still modern and relevant. This work, written in 1932 (Lifanova, 1996), was first published as an appendix in a book by P.M. Jacobson titled "Psychology of an actor's stage feelings".[1] The article is a continuation of L.S. Vygotsky's observations and thoughts about the psychology of the actor, which were reflected, among other things, in his early "Etude about Hamlet" and theatre reviews (Sobkin, 2015).

Unlike the more famous "Psychology of Art", where the author primarily examines issues of art and the aesthetic reaction of the reader (viewer), the article on the psychology of the actor is an attempt to offer a new approach to the study and understanding of the personality of the creator (actor). L.S. Vygotsky discusses two possible approaches to the psychology of the actor: theatrical, in which the actor's personality is viewed primarily through the prism of a certain theatrical system, and psychotechnical, where research on acting creativity is included in the general range of works on the "psychology of professions". Criticizing both of these directions for

[1] Then it was included in volume 6 of the Complete Works of L.S. Vygotsky with comments by M.G. Yaroshevsky.

the "radical empiricism" to which they are subject, L.S. Vygotsky writes of a new approach to the psychology of the actor: "The new approach to the psychology of acting creativity is characterised primarily by an attempt... to comprehend the psychology of the actor in all the qualitative uniqueness of its nature, but in the light of more general psychological laws. [...] If previously the testimony of this or that actor of this or that era was always considered from the point of view of the eternal, unchanging nature of the theatre, now researchers treat this fact as historical, which must be understood first of all in all the complexity of its historical conditioning" (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 321).

Such an approach involves considering the "psychology of the actor" in the context of the current sociocultural situation, which includes not only the specifics of the theatrical system, the aesthetic norms of which the actor follows, but also the characteristics of social, economic, and political processes in society. At the same time, it is also necessary to take into account the demand for certain forms and areas of art, the features of the social implementation of professional activity, etc. Thus, a psychodiagnostic approach to the study of an actor's personality involves going beyond the traditional analysis of the results of using specific psychological techniques in order to advance in understanding the psychology of the actor "in all the qualitative originality of its nature".

Today, the field of "actor psychology," as it was at the beginning of the 20th century, is poorly studied. Thus, a search in the elibrary.ru database using the keywords "actor psychology" revealed very few *studies*: over a twenty-year period (2004–2024) only 42 works (articles and monographs) were found. Most of them were carried out in line with the "psychotechnical" approach: the authors explored the features of the self-concept of actors (Borisov, 2004; Popova, 2004), professionally important qualities (Shaimuratova, 2011), the development of communicative culture (Zhuk, 2011), the effectiveness of professional activities (Rubtsova, Sergienko, 2019), personality traits (Lykova, 2017; Sobkin, Lykova, 2014a; 2014b; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2017; 2018a; 2018b; 2019; Sobkin et al., 2023; Sobkin, Feofanova, 2019; Lykova, 2015), coping with stress (Lykova, Petrakova, 2023), the specifics of actor training (Sobkin et al., 2022) and direct acting abilities from the point of view of psychology (Groysman, 2003; Rozhdestvenskaya, 2005). We also note here the study of *higher mental functions* of actors in virtual reality (Mashkov et al., 2023). In general, the listed works, which include some of our own, make it possible to identify the specific personal characteristics of an actor (Sobkin, 1984). Their results can be useful in practical work of teachers and directors. However, as a rule, it is

quite difficult to interpret the results obtained "in all the complexity of their historical conditionality", which requires taking into account the current cultural, historical, and social situations precisely as applied to changes in theatrical art and existing systems of professional actor training.

Moreover, a search in the database ResearchGate using the keywords "actor psychology" revealed a very large array of works in various fields (art history, education, cultural studies, sociology, psychology), among which a special place is occupied by the works of authors considering the approach of L.S. Vygotsky to theatrical art in line with research both on the history of psychology (Nascimento Marques, Moschkovich, 2023; Reinecke, 2023; Pelfrey et al., 2023; Zittoun, Stenner, 2021) and the acting art of impersonation (Tonezzi, 2023; Nascimento Marques, 2022; Ribeiro, Zanella, 2023).

The main topic of this article is the consideration of the personal characteristics of an actor at an early stage of mastering their professional activity. In this regard, we attempted to survey student actors regarding a wide range of personal characteristics that are noted by both theatre practitioners and psychological researchers: emotional plasticity, sociability, empathy, imagination, desire for leadership, narcissism, etc. For this purpose, a battery of psycho-diagnostic techniques was formed.

Research methods

To study the personality traits of future actors, the following five methods were used.

1. Personality questionnaire of R.B. Cattell 16 PF. It gives an idea of a wide profile of characteristics (emotional, communicative, regulatory, intellectual, etc.) (Kapustina, 2006). It was repeatedly used to study a sample of actors in the works of A.L. Groysman, N.V. Rozhdestvenskaya, as well as in our previous studies, as it is a convenient tool for conducting not only complex, but also longitudinal studies (Groysman, 2003; Rozhdestvenskaya, 2005; Sobkin, 1984; Sobkin et al., 2021).

2. Eysenck's personality questionnaire EPI adapted by A.G. Shmeleva includes the scales "extroversion — introversion", "neuroticism", "lie scale". It was used in our works and describes the main indicators of temperament, based on the combination of which four traditional types can be distinguished: choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic, melancholic (Sobkin et al., 2021).

3. The short Big Five personality questionnaire "B5–10" (Egorova, Parshikova, 2016) describes five general personality factors: neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. This technique has not previously been used on a Russian sample of actors, but based on foreign studies using English-language methods of the

five-factor personality model, conclusions can be drawn about increased extraversion, openness to experience and friendliness of actors as compared to representatives of other professions. Foreign data on neuroticism in actors vary, including interpretation in connection with the phenomenon of stage fright (Nettle, 2006; Dumas et al., 2020; Goodman, Kaufman, 2014).

4. The Short Dark Triad Questionnaire (Egorova et al., 2015) combines three psychological traits— Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. According to international data on narcissism, student actors show a tendency to narcissistically elevate themselves, but do not show a narcissistic tendency to put others down (Leckelt et al., 2017). Based on this, it is concluded that actors' abilities to adequately evaluate others are much better developed (Dufner et al., 2014).

5. A.A. Mehrabyan's Empathy Questionnaire as adaptated by E.F. Zeer and O.N. Shakhmatova includes two scales: a) the "empathic tendency" scale, which characterises a person's emotional response to the states of other people; b) the "attachment tendencies" scale, which describes the subjective importance of connections with other people, communication, and the desire to maintain relationships. The inclusion of this technique is important because empathy is noted by theatre practitioners (actors, directors) as one of the key features of an actor's personality (Kotova et al., 2007).

In general, the proposed battery of methods is based on the experience of researching the actor's personality in Russian and international works.

In addition to the listed five methods, the study also used data on the level of development of professional abilities among student actors. For this purpose, four teachers working on the courses under study were asked to rate the students' acting abilities on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is "not very capable", 10 is "very capable"). Next, the teachers' assessments were converted into an averaged integral indicator of "expert assessment of abilities."

Sample

The study involved second- and third-year students of the acting department of the Institute of Contemporary Art (Moscow), a total of 76 people (39 girls, 37 boys) with an average age of 20.2 years.

Goals and objectives

When conducting the study, we focused on the following three tasks:

(1) to find out to what extent various characteristics that capture emotional, intellectual, communicative, regulatory and other personality

qualities can be interconnected. In our opinion, such connections of personal characteristics can be considered as structural features that determine the uniqueness of the actor's personality as a subject of stage activity. This suggests, in accordance with the views of L.S. Vygotsky, interpretation of the identified relationships from the perspectives of different types of acting transformation;

(2) to clarify the content of personal tendencies characteristic of the professional activity of an actor, based on the analysis of correlations;

(3) to characterise various personality traits of an actor using an integrated approach. In this regard, the selected methods can identify the various personal resources that are used in the implementation of the acting professional activity.

Data processing

To fulfill the set tasks, the obtained data and the "expert assessment of abilities" indicator were processed with factor analysis using the method of the principal component. For this purpose, an initial data matrix was generated, including student indicators for all the techniques used. The columns of the matrix determined the scales of the techniques (30 columns in total), and the rows determined the individual indicators of respondents on the scales (76 lines in total). The matrix cell (the intersection of a column and a row) recorded the value on the corresponding scale for a particular student. The matrix was factorised using principal components analysis with Kaiser Varimax rotation. Calculations were carried out using SPSS 23.0 software.

Research results

As a result of factor analysis, 10 factors were identified that describe 69.9% of the total variance. The choice of this number of factors was determined by the highest possible percentage of the explained variance. Table shows the structure of all identified factors.

As can be seen from Table, all identified factors can be divided into two groups. The first includes the conventionally designated "homogeneous" factors, the structure of which combines the scales of any single technique. These are factors F1, F2, F4, F5, F8, F9, and F10. Such a combination of scales from one questionnaire suggests that the relationships identified using factor analysis describe certain unique constructs characteristic of the actor's personality. The second group includes three factors, which we designated as "heterogeneous", where connections between the scales of different techniques appeared (factors F3, F6, and F7). However, we

Table
The structure of the identified factors according to the scales of the personality questionnaires used.

Factors	Factor loadings		Factors	Factor loadings	
F1 11.5%	Q4	0.8	F6 6.4%	Agreeableness	0.8
	L	0.8		Lie Scale (EPI)	0.7
	O	0.7		Ability score	–0.5
	C	–0.7			
	Q3	–0.7			
F2 8.1%	Psychopathy	0.8	F7 5.9%	Extraversion (EPI)	0.7
	Machiavellianism	0.7		Joining trend	0.7
	Narcissism	0.5		M	–0.6
F3 7.7%	Neuroticism (EPI)	0.9	F8 5.8%	N	0.7
	Neuroticism (B5)	0.8		F	–0.7
	Empathic trend	0.7			
F4 7.6%	Openness to experience	0.8	F9 4.9%	G	0.8
	Consciousness	0.8		Q2	–0.6
	Extraversion	0.6			
F5 7.1%	H	0.8	F10 4.8%	Q1	0.8
	E	0.6			
	A	0.6			

Note: 1) the table shows the percentage of variance explained by the factor and the weight loadings on the scales; 2) designation of the scales of the Cattell questionnaire (positive poles[2]): A — "sociability", B — "high intelligence", C — "emotional stability", E — "dominance", F — "expressiveness", G — "high normative behaviour" , H — "courage", I — "sensitivity", L — "suspiciousness", M — "dreamy", N — "diplomacy", O — "anxiety", Q1 — "radicalism", Q2 — "nonconformism", Q3 — "high self-control", Q4 — "tension"

note that the results obtained do not confirm our assumptions about the possible verification, using such relationships, of the content validity of scales with similar names used in different methods. On the contrary, the empathy scales of the Mehrabian questionnaire turned out to be completely unrelated to Scale I (sensitivity) of the Cattell questionnaire, which, according to its description, characterises the ability for emotional empathy ("projective emotional sensitivity"). Neither L scale ("suspiciousness") nor

[2] The scales of the Cattell 16 PF questionnaire are bipolar; the table shows the names of the positive poles only.

N scale ("diplomacy") correlate with the "Machiavellianism" scale of the Dark Triad technique.

Thus, the results obtained require special discussion.

The discussion of the results

Let us first consider the "homogeneous" factors, which combine the scales of the Cattell questionnaire (F1, F5, F8, F9, F10), the Big Five scale questionnaire (B5–10) and the Dark Triad. Then we will discuss the content specificity of "heterogeneous" factors, which included scales of different techniques.

Factor F1 *"emotional excitability, plasticity."* As shown in Table, this factor is bipolar. The scales of the Cattell questionnaire Q4 (tension), L (suspiciousness), and O (anxiety) were combined at its positive pole. The negative pole is represented by C (emotional stability) and Q3 (self-control). In its structure, this factor almost completely coincides with the secondary factor identified in the Cattell questionnaire, which records the presence of *anxiety* in general, both personal and situational. Moreover, high values of this secondary factor indicate expressed dissatisfaction with oneself and difficulties in achieving what is desired, while low values determine satisfaction with what is available (Cattell et al., 1970; Kapustina, 2006).

Note that this factor was also highlighted in our previous studies of student actors (Sobkin et al., 2018; 2021; 2023; Sobkin et al., 2016). Such "stability" of the relationship between these scales in different samples of actors indicates its special significance for professional acting. In this regard, let us characterise at least three substantive points. Firstly, if we turn to the negative pole of the factor, the combination of low values of "emotional stability" (scale C) and low "self-control" (scale Q3) indicate *emotional excitability* and plasticity. A meaningful description of the scales characterising the positive pole of the factor (scales Q4, L, O) indicates both dissatisfaction with oneself and irritability, unrestrained reactions towards the "other". In general, we can conclude that this factor captures a special type of emotional behaviour of an individual in a *situation of conflict interaction*: either it is an open, emotionally unrestrained personal manifestation, or, on the contrary, confident self-control.

Secondly, given that emotional *sensitivity to a dramatic conflict* and its "emotional resolution" is an important subject matter of acting activity — behaviour in the *proposed circumstances* — we can conclude that it is precisely this personal complex of characteristics recorded by factor F1 that corresponds to this fundamental feature of the subject of acting activity.

And finally, if we turn to Diderot's "paradox of the actor", we can interpret this factor as differentiating two types of actors: one who *infects* the viewer with his emotional state and the other one who *controls* his emotional state on stage.

Factor F5 *"publicity"*. This factor combined the Cattell questionnaire scales H (courage), E (dominance), and A (sociability), which are included in the group of communicative personality traits and record the desire and readiness to communicate, lack of tension in front of a large audience, courage, self-confidence, and readiness to defend your position when communicating with authoritative people. In this case, communication serves as the main way to solve problems. Developed emotional sociability and courage in this factor are combined with independence and a tendency toward authoritarian behaviour, which allows us to speak of a desire for communicative leadership.

It is worth noting that the correlation between the E (dominance) and H (courage) scales is quite stable and was found in our previous study of student actors. Also, the indicators of the desire for dominance (E) and courage (H) clearly expressed high values on the average profile of student actors (Sobkin et al., 2018; 2021).

In general, the recorded set of personal characteristics (H, E, and A) can be interpreted as a kind of personal readiness for *public emotional communication*. It should be emphasised that such a personal attitude is a fundamental point that characterises the uniqueness of acting. At the same time, the ability to emotionally influence the audience ("subordinate it to oneself") is an important aspect of the actor's communication with the theatre audience.

Factor F8 *"insight"*. The positive pole of this factor is represented by the N scale (diplomacy) of the Cattell questionnaire. High values here capture the following qualities: sophistication, cunning, a penchant for analysis, and an intellectual approach to assessing the situation. The N scale is included in the group of intellectual properties of the Cattell questionnaire. The positive pole of this scale is figuratively called the "Machiavelli pole". In this regard, we note that we previously expected to find a correlation between this scale and the "Machiavellianism" scale of the Dark Triad questionnaire. However, in the actor sample there is no such relationship. However, another relationship emerged, which is characteristic. Table shows that the negative pole of this factor is represented by the F (expressiveness) scale of the Cattell questionnaire, which is included in the group of emotional personality traits. Thus, the sample of student actors reveals a peculiar combination of intellectual and emotional personality characteristics. In a

sense, we can refer to this as a special kind of *emotional intelligence*. Indeed, this factor shows that, at the level of personal characteristics, on the one hand, *insight*, reflection regarding the tactics of the possible behaviour of a communication partner (forecasting rank: "I think that he thinks that I think..." (Lefebvre, 1967)) is associated with emotional restraint, and on the other hand, *naivety* and straightforwardness (low values on the N scale) are associated with enthusiasm, emotional extravagance (high values on the F scale).

In the acting environment, *naivety*, spontaneity of emotional response as "faith in the proposed circumstances" is considered as an extremely important and rare manifestation of acting ability.

Nevertheless, there is another side of the profession (this is the opposite trend recorded by this factor), which is associated with a special type of modern actor — an actor who is able to work on the image of a character through an attempt to understand his thinking style. As G.A. Tovstonogov wrote, "in modern theatre the main property of the character being created should be a special, individual style of thinking, the hero's relationship to the world, expressed through a certain way of thinking. [...] Without the ability to think hard on stage, the art of an artist cannot be modern..." (Tovstonogov, 1984, p. 230).

Factor F9 *"individualism"*. This factor is interesting in its structure, since it records the relationship between individual regulation of behaviour by the "superego" (scale G "moral normativity" of the Cattell questionnaire) and the tendency to conformity in a situation of group interaction (low values on the Q2 scale of the Cattell questionnaire).

In this factor, high normativity (strong superego) turns out to be associated with conformism, following the group norms. And, on the contrary, a weak superego, lack of agreement with generally accepted moral rules and standards, and susceptibility to the influence of feelings are associated with individualism (independence, focus on one's own decisions). Such a connection is quite logical and captures the influence of the peculiarities of internalisation (acceptance) of moral and ethical standards on the behaviour of an individual in a group.

In this regard, it is important to note two points that, in our opinion, characterise the uniqueness of acting and allow us to talk about two personal *styles*. On the one hand, by its nature, acting activity presupposes the individual's ability for group interaction, a *sense of ensemble*, which is associated with the adoption of group values — "a team of like-minded people." On the other hand, this is the actor's desire for individual manifestation of himself as an artist, which presupposes creative independence,

the identification of *self*. This duality of the actor's creative activity has repeatedly revealed itself in the biographies and personal tragedies of major actors as well as less renowned ones.

Factor F10 *"free-thinking"*. This factor is determined by only one Q1 scale ("radicalism") of the Cattell questionnaire. The identification of this scale as a separate factor indicates its special role in the personal structure of student actors. Perhaps this is due to the specific qualities that the scale characterizes — free-thinking, experimentation, receptivity to change and new ideas, distrust of authorities. Radicalism is also a significant characteristic of adolescence, to which our interviewed student actors belong.

It is also necessary to emphasise the importance of this personal characteristic precisely in connection with acting. In a certain sense, this set of qualities testifies to an important feature of the actor's activity: the desire to express a certain *social position* in his work as a kind of manifesto.

We examined the homogeneous factors that were discovered based on combining the scales of the Cattell 16PF Personality Inventory. As can be seen from Table, two more factors are homogeneous. One of them, F2, combines the scales of the Dark Triad questionnaire, the other, F4, combines the scales of the Big Five questionnaire (B5–10).

Factor F2 "*sensitivity to moral restrictions"*. This factor combines all the scales of the Dark Triad questionnaire: "psychopathy", "Machiavellianism", and "narcissism". In general, they characterise a single complex of personality traits such as callousness and indifference to people, and a lack of empathy and guilt. High scores on these scales indicate a tendency to manipulate others to achieve one's own goals.

Including the Dark Triad Questionnaire into our research programme, we made two assumptions. Firstly, as we have already noted, it was expected that the "Machiavellianism" scale would correlate with the Cattell questionnaire N scale (diplomacy), high values on which are described precisely by the term "Machiavellianism" (Kapustina, 2006; Cattell et al., 1970). Secondly, both the analysis of the substantive features of acting activity and the results of previous studies on the uniqueness of personal tendencies among actors (Sobkin et al., 2021; Emelin, 2023; Dufner et al., 2014; Lebuda et al., 2021; Manley et al., 2020) indicate the importance of narcissistic personality manifestations here. In this regard, the "narcissism" scale of the Dark Triad questionnaire is of particular interest, since one can expect its connection with other personality characteristics, in particular, a negative connection with the empathy scales of the Mehrabian questionnaire and scale I (sensitivity) of the Cattell questionnaire.

However, both assumptions were not confirmed. To explain the lack of expected relationships, we turned to an analysis of the *content of the questions*. Thus, in particular, a comparison of the wording of questions on the N scale of the Cattell questionnaire and the "Machiavellianism" scale of the Dark Triad showed that they capture fundamentally different characteristics. While the items of the N scale of the Cattell questionnaire reveal a measure of sophistication, delicacy and diplomacy ("I talk about my feelings only when necessary", "I would prefer to communicate with people who are polite and delicate than with rude and straightforward ones"); the items of the Dark Triad questionnaire aimed at identifying "Machiavellianism" are distinguished by straightforwardness and rigidity of formulation ("You need to do everything so that influential people are on your side," "It is useful to know something that can be used against others", "Almost all people can be manipulated"). In this regard, we can conclude that the "Machiavellianism" scale captures the individual's sensitivity to the acceptability of violating ethical boundaries in relation to another person. Here the other acts as the direct object of manipulation.

It is this feature of the wording of questions that is characteristic of two other scales: "psychopathy" ("Disputes must be settled quickly and mercilessly", "I will say anything to get what I want", "Honestly, I can be dishonest towards others", etc.) and "narcissism" ("I know that I am special because they constantly tell me this", "I demand to be treated with the respect that I undoubtedly deserve", etc.).

Thus, we can conclude that the Dark Triad questionnaire captures the *sensitivity of the individual to the acceptability of violating moral norms*. It is noteworthy that this aspect is extremely important for acting. When working on a character's image, it is the identification of the situations which relate to the moral aspects of behaviour (violations of moral boundaries) that is a special subject of the actor's creativity. This is where the facets of a stage character's personality are determined.

Factor F4 *"openness to experience, trying oneself."* This factor included three scales of the Big Five questionnaire (B5–10): "openness to experience," "conscientiousness," and "extraversion." The combination of high values on these scales characterises a person as sociable, ready to be the center of attention, reliable, concentrated, disciplined, and receptive to new things.

The authors of the questionnaire also indicate the presence of correlations between the "openness to experience" and "extraversion" scales, explaining them by the substantive similarity of the questionnaire items. In addition, they note that these two scales also correlate highly with the

"agreeableness" scale. This allows them to evaluate this complex as a socially expected image of a typical extrovert (Egorova, Parshikova, 2016).

However, in our case, the "openness to experience" and "extroversion" scales were combined with another scale, "conscientiousness" (see Table). Since such a connection was not noted by the authors of the questionnaire, it can be considered as specific for the actor's personality.

It can be assumed that the inclusion of the "conscientiousness" scale in factor F4, which captures composure, organisation, and responsibility, indirectly indicates the *instrumental* nature of "extraversion" and "openness to experience" in the actor's personality. In this regard, personal qualities recorded by the scales "extroversion" and "openness to experience" (the desire for novelty and originality, sociability, willingness to be the center of attention) become a kind of *means of professional activity* for an actor — "tools" that are used during work on a role. In other words, this is a kind of actor's *observation*, interest and willingness to *try out* certain personal manifestations.

Let us move on to consider the heterogeneous factors F3, F6 and F7 (see Table).

Factor F3 *"empathy"*. This factor combines the "neuroticism" scale of the Eysenck questionnaire, the "neuroticism" scale of the B5–10 questionnaire and the "empathic tendency" indicator of the Mehrabian empathy questionnaire. When discussing this factor, two points attract the most attention.

Firstly, as we see, the scales are similar in content — "neuroticism". They record a tendency towards anxiety, emotional mobility, and emotional instability in situations of stress. Such a connection is expected. In this regard, we can discuss the content validity of the "neuroticism" scale of the B5–10 questionnaire, since the Eysenck questionnaire scale is generally accepted for recording neuroticism and has confirmed its validity and reliability in numerous studies.

Secondly, the combination of the "empathic tendency" scale of the empathy questionnaire with the "neuroticism" scales in the structure of this factor is of particular interest. This indicates that a person's ability for emotional empathy and impressionability are highly correlated with emotional mobility and emotional instability. Moreover, when talking about the personality of an actor, it is important to keep in mind not only the characteristics of the nervous system, but also a special personal orientation towards *sympathy and empathy*. This, we emphasise, is an extremely important acting ability for personal acceptance and meaningful understanding of the character's position, the transformation of the actor into the character.

***Factor F7** "emotional attachment to the group".* At its positive pole, this bipolar factor combines the "extraversion" scale of the Eysenck questionnaire and the "attachment tendency" scale of the Mehrabian empathy questionnaire. The negative pole of the factor is represented by the M scale ("daydreaming") of the Cattell questionnaire. To clarify the content of this factor, let us turn to the characteristics of the scales included in its structure.

Thus, according to Eysenck, extraversion presupposes sociability, an outward-looking person, the need for social contacts, communication, general activity. The "attachment tendency" scale (empathy questionnaire) characterises such qualities as the ability to show warmth, attention, and willingness to help in a difficult situation. Based on the content of these two scales, we can conclude that this pole of the factor determines precisely the positive emotional readiness of the individual to participate in group work. Moreover, the M scale ("daydreaming"), which specifies the content of the negative pole of this factor, on the contrary, defines such qualities as a rich imagination, absorption in one's ideas and internal images, immersion in the inner world, and daydreaming. In general, this characterises an orientation towards individual work and introversion. Thus, this factor captures the emotional ability for the collective creative process of creating a performance.

The contrast of the characteristics recorded by the "extroversion" scale of the Eysenck questionnaire, effective empathy (willingness to help) and the M scale (imagination) of the Cattell questionnaire substantially confirms the results of our previous studies, where the specific role of the M scale in acting activity was identified. Thus, in a long-term study of student actors at a theatre college under the direction of O.P. Tabakov, we showed that high values on the M scale of the Cattell questionnaire are more characteristic of unsuccessful student actors, which we associated with a reduced readiness for communication and interaction with a partner during rehearsal work: the more an actor is immersed in his inner world and images, the less he feels the realities of the process of *joint creative activity* (Sobkin et al., 2021).

In general, taking into account the noted opposition of the scales, factor F7 can be characterised precisely as readiness for emotional involvement in group work. At the same time, we emphasise the significant difference between this factor and factor F9 ("individualism") described above, where group orientation was associated with normative regulation and acceptance of group norms. Here, in factor F7, it is the *emotional readiness to join the group* that is recorded.

Factor F6 *"frankness, sincerity"*. On the positive side, it combined the "agreeableness" scale of the Big Five questionnaire and the "lie scale" (social desirability) of the Eysenck questionnaire. The negative pole is represented by the scale "expert assessment of abilities". This factor is of particular interest to us, since it allows us to clarify the features of differentiation between capable and incapable students as seen by teachers. Essentially, this is a question about the "personal barrier" that makes productive teacher-student interaction difficult.

The key point is unexpected, and yet obvious at the same time. This key point is *frankness* in relationships.

Indeed, factor F6 captures a kind of *feigned* "goodwill", the student's desire to "be good" and not break the rules (remember that in the Eysenck questionnaire, the lie scale determines precisely the degree of social desirability). It can be assumed that such manifestations are perceived by teachers as false, and in relation to them a reaction arises, expressed by the famous statement of K.S. Stanislavsky: "I do not believe it". Thus, *falsehood* on the part of the student does not allow the teacher to get involved in the individual interpersonal communication, which is the key moment of the creative process, the process of searching and expressing personal meanings.

Conclusions

As a result of a survey on student actors using a battery of personality questionnaires recording 30 characteristics (emotional, cognitive, communicative, behavioral, etc.), the following generalised factors taking into account correlations between the scales of various questionnaires were identified: F1 "emotional excitability, plasticity ", F2 "sensitivity to moral restrictions", F3 "empathy", F4 "openness to experience, testing oneself", F5 "publicity", F6 "openness, sincerity", F7 "emotional joining the group", F8 "insight", F9 "individualism", and F10 "free-thinking".

The combination of certain scales allows us to consider them as special personal formations necessary for acting activity. This point was emphasized when discussing the results obtained by interpreting them while considering the characteristics of the acting profession. Here, the idea outlined by L.S. Vygotsky was followed, the "applied" line of research into the psychology of the actor, which involves the consideration of acting transformation taking into account the specific substantive features of professional activity. This, in turn, means that one or another combination of personal characteristics (factors) that we have identified can be dominant

when working on a role, taking into account both the nature of the stage character and the genre features of the theatre performance.

Summary

The factors described in this study may be of practical importance for the meaningful organisation of the educational process of actor training. In most cases, educational practice is focused on K.S. Stanislavsky's system as its basis. Some professional teachers in theatre universities rely on the extensive experience of other Russian and foreign theatre workers (M.A. Chekhov, V.E. Meyerhold, A.Ya. Tairov, E.B. Vakhtangov, E. Grotovsky, P. Brook, etc.), introducing their own innovations into the educational process.

The basis of Stanislavsky's system is the idea of mental processes and their development in an actor: acting imagination, acting will, thinking, attention, memory, etc. Such a "processual approach" was criticized by L.S. Vygotsky as "outdated" — the psychological basis of Stanislavsky's system is inadequate to the rich practice of actor training. In this regard, the factors we have identified can be considered as special *vectors* of personal development for student actors.

For example, using traditional psychotechnical exercises, at a certain stage of training, allows one to focus on the development of a particular set of *personal characteristics*. Usually, during the pedagogical process, much attention is paid to the development of emotional plasticity, switchability, etc. But if we turn to the outlined factor F1, which characterises "emotional excitability, plasticity" as a personal characteristic, we can develop the pedagogical process by combining in exercises manifestations of emotional instability, low self-control, anxiety, suspicion, tension. The same can be said of the other identified factors. In other words, in the preparation of an actor, the center of attention becomes the personal characteristic (character image), which is the semantic unit of psychotechnical training that determines the originality of transformation in professional activity.

References

Borisov, M.B. (2004). Acmeological conditions and factors of becoming a positive self-concept of the actor in the system of professional mastery. Moscow: B.V. Shchukin Theater Institute Publ. (In Russ.)

Cattell, R.B., Eber, H.W., Tatsuoka, M.M. (1970). Handbook for the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF). Champaign IL: Institute for Personality and Ability Testing Publ.

Dufner, M., Egloff, B., Hausmann, C.M., Wendland, L.M., Neyer, F.J., Back, M.D. (2014). Narcissistic Tendencies Among Actors. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 6*(4), 447–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550614564224

Dumas, D., Doherty, M., Organisciak, P. (2020). The Psychology of Professional and Student Actors: Creativity, Personality, and Motivation. *PLoS One, 15*(10). URL: https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?type=printable&id=10.1371/journal.pone.0240728

Egorova, M.S., Parshikova, O.V. (2016). Psychometric Characteristics of the Big Five Short Portrait Questionnaire (B5–10). *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological Research, 9*(45), 9. URL: http://psystudy.ru/index.php/num/2016v9n45/1239-egorova45.html (In Russ.)

Egorova, M.S., Sitnikova, M.A., Parshikova, O.V. (2015). An Adaptation of the Dark Triad Short Questionnaire. *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological Research, 8*(43), 1. URL: http://psystudy.ru/index.php/num/2015v8n43/1181-egorova43.html (In Russ.)

Emelin, G.D. (2023). "Love art in yourself, not yourself in art": to the question of the connection of the dark triad traits with the assessment of acting skills (on the sample of 2nd year students of the theatrical university). In: Problems of psychology of art: materials of the All-Russian scientific-practical conference. Moscow: Federal State Center of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Investigations, Lomonosov Moscow State University. (In Russ.)

Goodman, G., Kaufman, J. (2014). Gremlins in My Head: Predicting Stage Fright in Elite Actors. *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, *32*(2), 133–148.

Groisman, A.L. (2003). Fundamentals of the psychology of artistic creativity. Moscow: Cogito-Center Publ. (In Russ.)

Kapustina, A.N. (2006). R. Cattell's multifactor personality methodology. St. Petersburg: Rech Publ. (In Russ.)

Kotova, S.S., Linyova, E.L., Shakhmatova, O.N. (2007). Practicum on the discipline "Introduction to psychological and pedagogical activity". Ekaterinburg: State Educational Institution of Higher Professional Education "Russian State Professional and Pedagogical University" Publ. (In Russ.)

Lebuda, I., Figura, B., Karwowski, M. (2021). Creativity and the Dark Triad: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality, 92*(3), 104088.

Leckelt, M., Wetzel, E. Gerlach, T., Ackerman, R. Miller, J. Chopik, W., Penke, L., Utesch, K., Küfner, A., Hutteman, R., Richter, D., Renner, K-H., Allroggen, M., Brecheen, C., Campbell, W.K., Grossmann, I., Back, M. (2017). Validation of the Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry Questionnaire Short Scale (NARQ-S) in Convenience and Representative Samples. *Psychological Assessment, 30*(1). https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000433

Lefebvre, V.A. (1967). Conflict structures. Moscow: Higher School Publ. (In Russ.)

Lifanova, T.M. (1996). A complete bibliography of the works of Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. *Voprosy psychologii,* (5), 137–157. (In Russ.)

Lykova, T.A. (2017). The Relationship Between Sociometric Status and Pedagogical Assessment in Theater College Students. *Pedagogika = Pedagogy,* (1), 119–123. (In Russ.)

Lykova, T.A., Petrakova, A.V. (2023). The Relationship Between Personality Characteristics and Coping Strategies in Actors. *National Psychological Journal, 18*(3), 87–97. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.11621/npj.2023.0309

Manley, H., Paisarnsrisomsuk, N., Roberts, R. (2020). The Effect of Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry on Speaking Performance. *Personality and Individual Differences,* (154), 109624.

Mashkov, V.L., Nefeld, E.E., Kovalev, A.I., Dolgikh, A.G., Smirnova, E.A., Samuseva, M.V., Strelnikov, S.V., Rogacheva, D.A., Vakhantseva, O.V. (2023). Features of Manifestations of Higher Mental Functions in Actors in Virtual Reality. *National Psychological Journal, 18*(4), 38–52. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.11621/npj.2023.0404

Nascimento Marques, P. (2022). L.S. Vygotsky on Theater: from Theatrical Critique to the Psychology of the Actor. *Mind, Culture, and Activity,* (29), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2022.2049310

Nascimento Marques, P., Moschkovich, D. (2023). The Question of Emotions and Aesthetic Experience: the Dialogue Between Vygotsky and Stanislavski Around Actor's Psychology. *Pro-Posições, 34*(3). https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-6248-2021-0084en

Nettle, D. (2006). Psychological Profiles of Professional Actors. *Personality and Individual Differences, 40*(2), 375–383.

Pelfrey, G., Glassman, M., Kuznetcova, I., Tilak, Sh. (2023). From the Proscenium: The Influence of Konstantin Stanislavski and the Psychology of Acting in Vygotsky's Work. *Theory and Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09593543231200680

Popova, Y.I. (2004). Reincarnation as a regulator of self-concept (on the material of actors' profession): dissertation. Cand. Sci. (Psychology): Krasnodar. (In Russ.)

Reinecke, W. (2023). Concrete Psychology of the Actor's dvoistvennost': Emotions and Art as Vygotsky's Means for Rethinking Methods of Psychology. *Pro-Posiçõe*s, *34*(3). https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-6248-2021-0092en

Ribeiro, A., Zanella, A. (2023). The Madalenas Laboratory — Theater of the Oppressed and the Contributions of Lev Vygotsky and Augusto Boal: Intertwining Art and Life. *Pro-Posições,* (34). https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-6248-2022-0061EN

Rozhdestvenskaya, N.V. (2005). Diagnostics of acting abilities. St. Petersburg: Rech Publ. (In Russ.)

Rubtsova, N.E., Sergienko, E.L. (2019). Psychology of successful professional activity of the actor. Moscow: Boris Shchukin Theatrical Institute Publ. (In Russ.)

Shaimuratova, A.F. (2011). Formation of professionally important qualities in students of acting specialties as a condition of their successful self-actualization: dissertation: Diss. kand. psikhol. nauk. Cand. Sci. (Psychology): Sterlitamak. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (1984). Experience in the study of personality characteristics of student-actors. In: Psychological and pedagogical aspects of training students of creative universities, A.L. Groisman, (ed.). Moscow: Russian Institute of Theatre Arts Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2015). Comments on theater reviews by Lev Vygotsky: Vygotsky L.S. Theater reviews. Moscow: Federal State Scientific Institution "Institute of Sociology of Education" of the Russian Academy of Education Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Feofanova, T.A. (2012). Personal Characteristics of Student-Actors of Different Generations: Invariance and Variability. *Voprosy Psykhologii,* (4), 32–47. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2014a). Interrelation of Ways of Behavior in Situations of Frustration and Personality Traits (on The Material of The Survey of Students of the Theater College). *Sotsial'naya Psikhologiya I Obshchestvo = Social Psychology and Society, 5*(4), 62–74. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2014b). Personality Characteristics in the Professional Selection of Student Actors: Gender Aspect. *National Psychological Journal, 9*(3), 74–83. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2015). Sociometric Status of Theatre College Students and its Relation to Their Personal Characteristics and Educational Activities. *Psychology in Russia: State of the Art, 8*(4), 130–141.

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2015a). The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Personality Traits (on the Materials of The Survey of Theater College Students). *National Psychological Journal, 10*(2), 56–65. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2015b). Experience of Psychological Examination of Student-Actors. *Voprosy Psikhicheskogo Zdorov'ya Detei I Podrostkov = Issues of Mental Health of Children and Adolescents, 15*(1), 74–84. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2015c). Psychotechniques of Giftedness Development in Theater Pedagogy. *Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = Psychological Research, 8*(40), 7. URL: http://www.psystudy.com/index.php/num/2015v8n40/1115-sobkin40.html (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2017). Features of Personality Changes in Student-Actors at Different Stages of Training at the Theater College. *Voprosy Psikhicheskogo Zdorov'ya Detei i Podrostkov = Issues of Mental Health of Children and Adolescents, 3*(17), 34–41. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2018a). Personality Characteristics and Reactions to Frustration (Based on The Results of a Study of Student Actors). *Konsul'tativnaya Psikhologiya I Psikhoterapiya = Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy, 1*(99), 7–28. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/cpp.2018260102

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2018b). The Relationship of Sociometric Preferences with Personality Traits at Different Stages of Training in Student-Actors. *Voprosy Psikhicheskogo Zdorov'ya Detei i Podrostkov = Issues of Mental Health of Children and Adolescents, 18*(3), 42–52. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A. (2019). To the Question of Psychological Peculiarities of the Actor's Personality Development: Experience of Typological Analysis. *Konsul'tativnaya Psikhologiya i Psikhoterapiya = Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy, 27*(2), 129–146. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/cpp.2019270209

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A., Kolomiets, Y.O. (2016). Dynamics of Drama Students' Personality Features at Theatre College. *Procedia — Social and Behavioral Sciences*, (233), 42–45.

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A., Petrakova, A.V. (2023). Student Actors of Different Generations: Invariance and Variability of Personality Characteristics. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 19*(4), 90–99. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2023190409

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A., Siyan, M.V. (2022). Actor Training: Competencies or Abilities. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology), 18*(4), 90–101. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2022180409

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A., Sobkina, A.V. (2018). Diagnostics of Structural Features of Personality Changes in Theater College Students at Different Stages of Training. *Konsul'tativnaya Psikhologiya i Psikhoterapiya = Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy, 26*(4), 83–100. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/cpp.2018260406

Sobkin, V.S., Lykova, T.A., Sobkina, A.V. (2021). Psychology of the actor: the beginning of the professional path. Moscow: IUO RAO Publ.

Tonezzi, J. (2023). Vygotsky and the actor's art: for a psychology of the actor-performer. *Pro-Posições,* (34). https://doi.org/10.1590/1980-6248-2021-0083en

Tovstonogov, G.A. (1984). Mirror of the stage. On the profession of a director. Moscow: Art Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). On the psychology of the actor's creativity. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 6. Scientific inheritance. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Zhuk, I.V. (2011). Development of Communicative Culture of Students of Directing Specialties in Extracurricular Socio-Cultural Activities. *Sovremennye Nauchnye Issledovaniya i Innovatsii = Modern Scientific Research and Innovations*, (6). URL: https://web.snauka.ru/issues/2011/10/3205 (In Russ.)

Zittoun, T., Stenner, P. (2021). Vygotsky's Tragedy: Hamlet and the Psychology of Art. *Review of General Psychology,* (25), 108926802110132. https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680211013293

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Vladimir S. Sobkin, Academician of RAE, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Head of the Center for Socio-Cultural Problems of Modern Education, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, sobkin@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2339-9080.

Tatyana A. Lykova, Cand. Sci. (Psychology), Leading Researcher at the Center of Socio-Cultural Problems of Modern Education, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, feo.tatiana@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6494-978X

Received: 18.02.2024; revised: 12.03.2024; accepted: 02.06.2024.

HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-47
UDC 159.9; 159.9.019

The history of development of the cultural-historical theory and its contemporary perceptions: answering questions and questioning answers

Nikolai N. Veresov ✉

Monash University, Melburn, Australia

✉ nveresov@hotmail.com

Abstract

Background. The identification of key periods of development in cultural-historical theory is not just a task of historical interest. It may help to reconstruct the logics and the moving forces in the development of Vygotsky's theoretical approaches at different periods and may thereby help to improve understanding of key concepts and principles. The area of dialogue to which this article contributes is contemporary perception of cultural-historical theory.

Objective. The aim is to analyse and reconstruct the evolution of theoretical thought of L.S. Vygotsky.

Methods. The research involved analysis of texts by L.S. Vygotsky, relating to different stages of his scientific path, biographical materials, analytical publications of authors studying the works of L.S. Vygotsky.

Results. As literature shows, there is a tendency to highlight some periods of Vygotsky's theoretical path while underestimating others. In some cases, this limits the development of a holistic evolutionary approach to cultural-historical theory. The article begins with a description of the key stages of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution with an emphasis on continuity and discontinuity. Then it presents and critically discusses two examples of perception of Vygotsky's legacy, which are Gonzales Rey's (2011) identification of "defining moments in Vygotsky's work", and Engeström's (1987, 1990) account of "three generations of CHAT".

Conclusions. Cultural-historical theory is a powerful living and developing theory which provides rich and strong theoretical and experimental tools for contemporary generations of researchers. New dialogues are required: however, a holistic evolutionary approach to the history of cultural-historical theory should remain on the agenda.

Keywords: cultural-historical theory, creative evolution of L.S. Vygotsky, triangle of activity, CHAT

For citation: Veresov, N.N. (2024). The history of development of the cultural-historical theory and its contemporary perceptions: answering questions and questioning answers. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *47*(4), 162–187. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-47

Answering Questions

Setting the Scene

Long ago, in 1982, three Vygotskian scholars raised some serious concerns about the perception of Vygotsky's theory. Alexander Luria, for one, set out a strong position: "Vygotsky managed to create a psychological system that has not yet been fully studied" (Luria, 1982, p. 44).

Yaroshevsky and Gurgenidze in their Epilogue to Volume 1 of the Russian edition of the Collected Works (1982) claimed:

In the literature on Vygotsky, one often encounters an inadequate assessment of his theoretical positions. The source of this inadequacy is hidden, particularly, in the fact that the evolution in Vygotsky's position … is ignored and that ideas of different periods in his creative career are heaped together…. We cannot understand Vygotsky's psychological concept disregarding its evolution (Yaroshevsky and Gurgenidze, 1997, p. 368).

Publication of the Collected Works in Russian (1982–1984) and in English (1987–1999) followed by a big number of separate collections of articles (Concrete Human Psychology, 1989), The Vygotsky Reader (Van der Veer and Valsiner, 1994), The Essential Vygotsky (2004) among others) has helped to clarify the key periods in the evolution and changes in the course of Vygotsky's thinking at different periods. However, it remains an issue whether we now have sufficient grounds to say that the situation, which Yaroshevsky and Gurgenidze described as an inadequate assessment of his theoretical positions, has fundamentally altered. Or can we say that Luria's claim should remain on record as we continue to study and understand Vygotsky's theory?

These questions might look irrelevant or even provocative given the huge quantity of published research exploring key theoretical concepts and principles (see, among many others, Chaiklin, 2003; Cole, 1997; Daniels, 2008; Hedegaard, 2002; Kozulin, 1990; Leontiev, 2010; Mescheryakov, 1998, 2007; Packer, 2008; Rogoff, 2003; Roth and Lee, 2007; Stetsenko,

2016; Valsiner, 2007; Van der Veer and Valsiner, 1991). Nevertheless, the scholarly literature demonstrates persisting concerns about the perception of Vygotsky's theory. Thus, Veresov (2010) described Vygotsky's methodology as 'forgotten', a casualty of the simplification and fragmentation which still dominates in Western academia. Elhammoumi (2001) showed that some foundational Vygotskian ideas have been totally lost while others were uncritically "domesticated". Miller (2011) raised a number of issues about the tendency to simplify cultural-historical theory by reducing it to a series of isolated concepts with no theoretical connections to each other. Dafermos (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of Vygotsky studies showing that fragmented readings and interpretation of particular ideas from Vygotsky, without enough understanding of the theoretical programme in which these ideas were included, predominates in North-Atlantic research. In addition to this, there is a tendency to highlight some periods of Vygotsky's theoretical path while underestimating others. In some cases, this may prevent from developing a holistic approach to the understanding of cultural-historical theory not only as a set of some important concepts and principles. Unfortunately, some periods of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution are lost while others are inappropriately developed within quite different theoretical frameworks.

We still need to work to identify which ideas were generated during earlier stages and were then rejected by Vygotsky at later stages; which theoretical concepts from earlier stages were re-conceptualized within new theoretical approaches at later stages; and which concepts and principles appeared at later stages but remained undeveloped. In other words, we still need to discover the internal logic in Vygotsky's theoretical evolution to identify the key moments and contradictions which moved his thinking from one theoretical approach to another. This task is not only of historical interest: it offers a way to improve the understanding of cultural-historical theory as a whole.

I begin this article with brief outlines of key stages in Vygotsky's theoretical evolution. I do this with a special emphasis on theoretical concepts and principles which were introduced and developed at early stages and disappeared at later ones, and on those which were reconceptualised at later stages. Then, I will critically discuss two examples of perception of Vygotsky's legacy, which are Gonzalez Rey's (2011) identification of "defining moments of Vygotsky's work" and Engeström's (1987, 1990) account of "three generations of CHAT". The purpose, however, is not to criticize them, but rather to clarify and identify a new field for a critical dialogue and new avenues for further advances in cultural-historical research.

Stages of Theoretical Evolution: Continuity and Discontinuity

Despite the significant amount of research already done in defining key periods of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution, there is still no consensus between researchers. What complicates the task is the fact that Vygotsky's theoretical evolution was extremely rapid, and, therefore, some theoretical lines of Vygotsky's research programmes (the old ones and the new emerging ones) often co-existed. One more complication is the terminology: in some cases, new ideas were presented dressed in old terminological clothes. Another problem is the attribution of Vygotsky's works: very often the dates of publications do not reflect Vygotsky's position at that period as they were written during earlier stages. However, what is still to be done is what Dafermos explains:

The textological and philological work is very important, but it is not sufficient for understanding the dynamics of Vygotsky's creative development. Additional work should be done to reveal the hidden logic of continuity and discontinuity in Vygotsky's creative development (Dafermos, 2018, p. 60).

During the last few years serious work has been done in the study of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution (Dafermos, 2015; 2018; Gonzalez Rey, 2011; Zavershneva, 2009; 2012; Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2018). Recent archival publications of Vygotsky's working diaries and notebooks (Zavershneva, 2009; 2010; Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2017; 2018) contain unique materials which might significantly improve the state of the art.

All these provide new opportunities to continue discovering the development of Vygotsky's theory as "a dialectical unity of theoretical continuity and discontinuity" (Dafermos, 2018, p. 61). This might lead to better understanding of key concepts and principles of cultural-historical theory where they are understood in terms of their dialectical relations and development.

My task is not to argue different visions and approaches to the periodisation of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution; it is rather to make an attempt to clarify some moments of continuity and discontinuity in different periods and open them up for further discussions.

I would agree with Dafermos (2018, p. 63–64) that the theoretical evolution of Vygotsky's thought might be divided into three fundamentally important stages: pre-history of cultural-historical theory (1918–1925), primary appearance of cultural-historical theory (1927–1930) and the formation and systematization of cultural-historical theory (1930–1934).

I will take this as a starting point and try to describe Vygotsky's theoretical development as a dialectical unity of continuity and discontinuity.

Key stages of Vygotsky's Theoretical Evolution; Continuity and Discontinuity

From Pre-History to the History Through Crisis

As Dafermos (2018) argues in agreement with other researchers (Veresov, 1999; Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2018 and others), Vygotsky's theoretical evolution can be divided into three main stages. Textual analysis shows that Stage one (before 1925) was focused on the search for an objective theory and method of studying the subjective phenomena of human consciousness. The reflexological method was seen as an opportunity to build psychology in opposition to subjective introspective psychology. Stage 2 (from 1927) signifies a radical change of theoretical approach: thus, *the problem of the cultural development* of consciousness appeared and became the leading theoretical idea on which the theory was built (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 14). The continuity of the theoretical development is evident in that the task of searching for an objective science of subjective phenomena remained at Stage 2. At the same time, the earlier reflexological and behaviouristic approaches were completely rejected; there are many places in Vygotsky's writings which contain sharp and strong criticism of reflexology (see, for example, Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 234–236 and 239 among others). In other words, Stage 2 signifies a theoretical breakup and at the same time a theoretical breakthrough to new horizons, a fundamental and radical change in the scientific paradigm. Vygotsky's criticism of reflexology and social behaviourism was not a rejection as such, but rather a criticism of theoretical approaches which were unable to solve the problem of the cultural development of the higher psychological functions of the human being.

The publication of archival materials of Vygotsky's scientific diaries of 1926 in Russian (Zavershneva, 2009; Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2017) and in English (Zavershneva, 2012; Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2018) clearly shows that the transition from the pre-history to a history of cultural-historical theory went through a crisis. We can identify the exact time of this crisis: October 1925 — June 1926.

Given this, it seems the crisis of 1926 might be the key to find the hidden link that explains the dramatic transition from pre-history to the history of cultural-historical theory. It could allow identification of the moments of continuity and discontinuity in order to better understand:

1) which ideas and theoretical concepts from the previous stage were discarded *and why* they were discarded;

2) which of previous concepts were radically reconceptualised within a new theoretical framework and incorporated into the cultural-historical theory; and

3) what new ideas began to emerge.

In the following section I undertake an analysis of the theoretical content of the crisis in order to identify key moments of continuity and discontinuity between Stage 1 and Stage 2. I believe this will help to better understand not only the objective logic of Vygotsky's path to cultural-historical theory, but also the theoretical content of cultural-historical theory itself, which is even more important in relation to the topic of this article.

Theoretical Crisis of 1926: The Hidden Link

Let us begin with a short account of the characteristics of Vygotsky's theoretical models before the crisis of 1926. I will give a short description with an emphasis on the moments of continuity and discontinuity.

The task of building psychology as an objective science (and method) for studying subjective phenomena was widely discussed in Russian and Western psychology at that time. Thus, Georgy Chelpanov, the most influential Russian psychologist, published a book titled "Objective psychology in Russia and America" (Chelpanov, 1925) where Russian reflexology and American behaviourism were considered as objective sciences which might constitute objective psychology. Vladimir Bekhterev (1925), on the other hand, considered the combination of psychology and the objective method of reflexology as a way to build an objective psychology. The famous physiologist Ivan Pavlov, a Nobel prize winner of 1904, simply defined mental (psychological) activity as an equivalent of higher nervous activity (vischaya nervnaya deyatelnost) (Pavlov, 1927).

An analysis of Vygotsky's key works written at that stage[1], clearly shows that his approach was in line with the mainstream trend: consciousness was seen as a reflex to reflexes, as a very complex structure of behaviour (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 79) including a reflex of social contact (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 42). The reflexological method, therefore, was considered the objective method of investigating consciousness as a system of reactions, including aesthetical reactions and in *The Psychology of Art* Vygotsky claimed that

[1] I mean several key works: *Pedagogical psychology* (written before 1924*), Psychology of Arts* (written before 1925*), Methods of psychological and reflexological investigation* (1924)*, Consciousness as a problem of the psychology of behaviour* (1925).

psychologists should be more committed to reflexology than Pavlov (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 43).

What has generated the crisis then? Vygotsky's recently published notebooks of 1926 from Zakharino Hospital (Zavershneva, 2009; 2012) along with some other materials (Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2018) provide rich material for analysis. This work, started by Zavershneva's brilliant comments on Vygotsky's notebooks, needs to be continued and requires a special investigation; I will only highlight some aspects related to the topic of this article here.

Vygotsky's notebooks show that he came to the conclusion that neither the reflexological method nor behaviourist approaches were relevant to the study of human consciousness. The notebook contains some unsuccessful attempts to develop ideas from the *Psychology of Art* with the conclusion that any type of theorisation based on empirical (observable) phenomena, which he tried to apply in the *Psychology of Art*, is nothing more than a voluntary subjective mosaic, but not the kind of theoretical generalisation which is required to constitute a theory. What is important is that Vygotsky understood the crisis not as a crisis in his research programme, but globally as a concrete example of the overall crisis of psychology as a science. That forced him to undertake a deep analysis of the crisis of psychology and its historical and methodological roots, and to write *The Historical Sense of Psychological Crisis* in 1926–1927. But, as Zavershneva correctly put it, Zakharino's notebook of 1926 already contains "the first preliminary outline of "The Historical Meaning of the Crisis in Psychology"[2] (Zavershneva, 2012, p. 16). Vygotsky's criticism of empiricism in psychology was later developed and improved:

There is one fact that prevents all investigators from seeing the genuine state of affairs in psychology. This is the empirical character of its constructions. It must be torn off from psychology's constructions like a pellicle, like the skin of a fruit, in order to see them as they really are…In reality, empirical psychology as a science of general principle-even one general principle-does not exist, and the attempts to create it have led to the defeat and bankruptcy of the very idea of creating an empirical psychology (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 298).

Even more:

…the rejection of ontological speculations, empirism, when it is consistent, leads to the rejection of methodologically constructive principles

[2] I prefer to translate this title as The Historical Sense of Psychological Crisis as in my opinion it better corresponds with the Russian title.

in the creation of a system, to eclecticism; insofar as it is inconsistent, it leads to a hidden, uncritical, vague methodology. (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 300).

These theoretical conclusions indicate the radical change in Vygotsky's theoretical evolution that was a transition from a phenomenological (empirical) descriptive approach to a genetic cultural-historical understanding of the nature of higher psychological functions. In the *History of development of higher mental functions* Vygotsky argues that:

The one-sidedness and erroneousness of the traditional view … on higher mental functions consist primarily and mainly in an inability to look at these facts as facts of historical development, in the one-sided consideration of them as natural processes and formations, in merging and not distinguishing the natural and the cultural, the essential and the historical, the biological and the social in the mental development…; in short — in an incorrect basic understanding of the nature of the phenomena being studied[3] (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 2).

The crisis did not change the task of reinventing psychology as an objective science. What was rejected was an empirical (phenomenological) approach: to build an objective psychology means to move from empirical psychology to genetic theory focused on theoretical and experimental study of the very process of cultural-historical development of higher psychological functions, to discover objective laws of their development, and to create theoretical concepts as instruments which might refocus the researcher's lens from empirical observations of superficial phenomena to the hidden processes of development (for more on this, see Veresov, 2014).

This makes Zakharino's notebooks a valuable source to identify the content of the crisis of 1926 as a transition from the pre-history to the history of cultural-historical theory. However, it does not explain the causes of the crisis, or its driving forces and contradictions which generated the rejection of the reflexological and behaviouristic models for studying human consciousness. The dialectic of continuity and discontinuity requires an identification of the ideas which were rejected as well as the newly emerging approaches and understandings. We have to find the contradiction which led to the crisis. I believe this contradiction was between old theoretical models and new experimental research data and findings, particularly

[3] The term "higher psychological functions" which Vygotsky used (vyschie psihilogicheskie funktsii) was translated as "higher mental functions" in the Collected works. In this article I will keep the original Vygotsky's terminology

in the field of defectology[4], in which Vygotsky was actively involved in 1924–1925 and which at that time, was his main area of research.

Comparison of Zakharino's notebook and the defectological works Vygotsky published in 1924–1925[5] gives an interesting picture of moments of continuity and discontinuity in relation to the contradiction which drove Vygotsky's approach to the formulation of the key concepts of cultural-historical theory. Three key findings from the research and clinical practice in the field of defectology are of interest in relation to the topic I discuss here.

Secondary disability, and social environment as a source of development: Putting the question "is the underdevelopment of higher functions in a mildly retarded child caused directly by the primary cause or is this a secondary complication?" Vygotsky referred to defectological research saying that "experimental data and clinical investigation helped to find the answer"[6] (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 129). And the answer is: since a physical handicap in a human being never affects the child directly as "the eye and ear of a human being are not only physical organs but also social organs" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 77), the underdevelopment of higher functions in a mentally retarded child is connected with cultural underdevelopment, as she is excluded from the cultural environment. The problem of a child's disability must be "posed and comprehended as a social problem, because the social aspect, diagnosed as secondary and derivative, in fact turns out to be primary and major" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 112–113). The fate of personality is decided not by the existence of a primary disability in itself, but by its social consequences (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 55). In addition, Vygotsky makes one important generalization: "the mind, particularly reason, is the function of social life" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 84). In fact, what we can see here is an emergence of one of the key ideas of cultural-historical theory which was further improved and reconceptualised at Stage 2 and that is the

[4] Defectology was a scientific term of that time widely used in Russia. Nowadays it does not sound politically correct. As the Foreword to Vygotsky's Volume 2 (Vygotsky, 1993) editors say: "Defectology is a term not, at present, readily found in English dictionaries and it does not designate a discipline at universities or a specialty at clinics in the English-speaking world. Yet defektologia in the tradition of the Soviet Union is concerned with abnormal psychology, learning disabilities, and what has been called special education in North America" (p. V).

[5] I mean in particular *Defect and compensation, Principles of education of physically handicapped children, Defectology and the Study of the Development and Education of Abnormal Children, and Principles of Social Education for the Deaf-Mute Child.* They are published as separate Chapters in Volume 2 of the *Collected works* (Vygotsky, 1993).

[6] Sadly, in the English translation it reads "Experimental data and clinical research could not give the answer" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 133).

concept of the social environment as a source of the cultural development of higher psychological functions in human beings (see also Vygotsky, 1993, p. 129 and p. 201).

Roundabout ways of overcoming disability and two lines of development: discussing roundabout ways of overcoming a disability, Vygotsky begins with reference to research evidence: "We have observed the fact that, when coping with difficulties, the child is forced to proceed along a roundabout path in order to overcome them" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 126). As a result, compensation, the individual's reaction to a disability, initiates new roundabout developmental processes — it replaces, rebuilds a new structure, and stabilizes psychological functions (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 34). What is interesting is that this obvious fact was conceptualized with a perspective which was unusual for those times:

The structure of the child's complex forms of behaviour is the structure of roundabout paths; it supersedes when a psychological operation proves to be impossible on a direct path. However, inasmuch as these roundabout paths have been acquired by mankind in the course of his cultural and historical development, and inasmuch as the social environment offers the child a series of roundabout paths from the very beginning, quite frequently we do not recognize that development occurs in this way (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 164).

Here again we can see an "embryonic bud" which was further developed at Stage 2 as the concept of cultural-historical theory, and which therefore theoretically and conceptually goes well beyond the defectological studies. By this I mean the concept of two (natural and cultural) lines of development. However, these embryonic buds appeared in Vygotsky's defectological works of 1924–1925:

As soon as we have before us a child deviating from the norm — a child afflicted by some psychophysiological deficit — then even a naïve observer will see that convergence immediately gives way to a strong divergence, to discrepancy and disparity between the natural and the cultural lines of child development. Left to himself and to his own natural development, a deaf-mute child will never learn speech, and a blind person will never master writing (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 168).

Later, in the *History of development of higher mental functions,* this experimental finding of two lines of development (natural and cultural) was conceptualized and included into the wider context of cultural-historical theory (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 107).

Incongruence and the sign as a psychological tool: Elaborating the idea of roundabout ways of cultural development, Vygotsky made an important

conclusion: the fundamental fact in the process of cultural development of the child with a disability is cultural inadequacy, the incongruence between his psychological structure and the structure of cultural forms.

What remains is the necessity of creating special cultural tools suitable to the psychological structure of such a child, or of mastering common cultural forms with the help of special pedagogical methods, *because the most important and decisive condition of cultural development — precisely the ability to use psychological tools — is preserved in such children.* Their cultural development might go by different way, it is in principle, entirely possible (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 28–29)[7].

Here we can see an obvious indication of a continuity with several key ideas which developed into theoretical concepts and principles at Stage 2, particularly in the *History of Development of Higher Mental Functions* that are: 1) the concept of sign as a psychological tool where the sign was no longer seen as an external stimulus *(signalisation)*, but as related to the activity which distinguishes humans from animals, "an activity of *signification* that is creation and use of signs" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 55). The moment of discontinuity here is important; in Vygotsky's words, "behind the play of stimuli-responses what really occurs is active intervention of man in the situation, his active role, his behaviour which consists in introducing new stimuli" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 56)[8].

From this the next step follows: 2) speech was not seen as the "second signal system" or a social reflex, but rather as a cultural higher psychological function which is different from language, related to cultural meanings and senses, and which develops in unity with thinking (*Thinking and Speech*).

I undertake this lengthy analysis to show that taken together with Zakharino's notebooks it might throw new light on the theoretical content of the crisis of 1926. I try to highlight moments of continuity and discontinuity to show how far Vygotsky moved from the previous reflexological stage and how close he came to the formulation of the key principles of cultural-historical theory.

From my point of view, the contradiction of the old theoretical approaches and new experimental findings was what generated the crisis of 1926 and, as a result, the rejection of the idea of the reflexological pro-

[7] I give this quotation from the original Russian source as the English translation (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 47) missed some key words, for example "the cultural development might go by different way" was omitted.

[8] What complicates the picture is Vygotsky's definition of cultural signs as "artificial stimuli…for controlling one's own reactions" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 54). For more on this see Jones 2015.

gramme of studying consciousness as a reflex to reflexes. On the other hand, some key ideas of cultural-historical theory appeared in an embryonic form (mostly as experimental and clinical findings) only in 1924–1925, but not before. From this point of view, Zakharino's notebook shows attempts to revise old ideas and to find new ways. The main change which happened was an introduction of a new developmental (genetic) dimension, where development was seen not as a change of reflexes (as it was approached in the *Pedagogical Psychology*) and not as changes in the structure of reaction (as in *The Psychology of Art*), but as the process of sociocultural genesis of higher psychological functions of a human being. The clearest evidence of this is the fact that some pieces of text from Zakharino's diaries were literally incorporated and improved in *The Historical Sense of Psychological Crisis, The History of Development of Higher Psychological Functions* and other key writings of 1928–1934 as Zavershneva (2012) brilliantly shows.

After the Crisis: Developing the Cultural-Historical Theory (1927–1931)

Dafermos defines the period of 1927–1931 as the stage of "establishing a new psychological theory focused on cultural development in terms of drama and the method of double stimulation for the investigation of development of higher mental functions" (Dafermos, 2018, p. 64). I should add that the old reflexological model was rejected (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 56) and the behaviourist model was incorporated into the cultural-historical theory and reconceptualised. However, the general task of reinventing psychology as an objective science remained. What was new was the introduction of the dialectical understanding of the development of higher psychological functions. In Vygotsky's words,

…a positive description is possible only if we radically change our representation of child development and take into account that it is a complex dialectical process that is characterized by a complex periodicity, disproportion in the development of separate functions, metamorphoses or qualitative transformation of certain forms into others, a complex merging of the processes of evolution and involution, a complex crossing of external and internal factors, a complex process of overcoming difficulties and adapting (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 98–99).

What psychology needed was "an introduction of the dialectical method" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 3) where "historical study of behaviour is not supplementary or auxiliary to theoretical study, but is a basis of the latter" (p. 43). The new theory, therefore, should be a theory which took the very process of sociocultural genesis of human higher psychological functions as

subject matter. In other words, a new theory should provide the theoretical tools and experimental method to look at higher psychological functions as facts of historical development, in order to distinguish the natural from the cultural, the essential from the historical, and the biological from the social, so as to overcome "the one-sidedness and erroneousness of the traditional view" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 2). As "the very concept of development of higher mental functions remains vague and obscure, … diffuse, and inadequately defined" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 1), the key theoretical task was to build this concept as the central concept of a new theory on a new, cultural-historical and dialectical basis.

How then was the concept of development of higher mental functions defined?

The concept "development of higher mental functions" and the subject of our research encompass two groups of phenomena that seem, at first glance, to be completely unrelated, but in fact represent two basic branches, two streams of the development of higher forms of behaviour inseparably connected, but never merging into one. These are, first, the processes of mastering external materials of cultural development and thinking: language, writing, arithmetic, drawing; second, the processes of development of special higher mental functions not delimited and not determined with any degree of precision and in traditional psychology termed voluntary attention, logical memory, formation of concepts, etc. Both of these taken together also form that which we conditionally call the process of development of higher forms of the child's behaviour (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 14).

This general approach predetermined two main directions of the research programme; (1) studying the process of mastering external cultural tools and 2) studying the process of development of special (separate) higher psychological functions. These two research directions constitute the content of the research Vygotsky was doing in 1927–1931. The first direction led to the formulation of the concept of cultural sign as a psychological tool (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 6, 16 and 19; Vygotsky, 1999), the principle of signification, and the concept of mediating activity (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 60–63). The second direction — studying the process of development of higher psychological functions — made it possible to introduce key theoretical concepts: the social environment as a source of development (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 249), internalisation (vraschivanie) (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 10–53), drama (Vygotsky, 1989) and the general genetic law of cultural development (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 106).

My second question is about the method of double stimulation. It is true that a new research method was being developed simultaneously with a new theory. However, what was that method of double stimulation? Let us take a look at how Vygotsky himself defined the method: "…the method we use may be called an experimental-genetic method in the sense that it artificially elicits and creates a genetic process of mental development…" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 68). One could say, however, that that was just a different name for the "double stimulation". I would disagree, as in Vygotsky's words "this kind of experiment attempts to dissolve every congealed and petrified psychological form and to convert it into a moving, flowing flood of separate instances that replace one another" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 68), "the experimental unfolding of a higher process…into a small drama" (Vygotsky, 1989, p. 58). Double stimulation was not the method, but one of several concrete research techniques within the general experimental-genetic method — "functional technique of dual stimulation". If we look at how the experimental method was developed in 1927–1931 we can see the evolution: from double stimulation (1927–1929) (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 60) to instrumental method (1930) (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 108) and then to experimental genetic method (1931) (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 65–82).

Changing the Focus, Not the Theory

The last period of Vygotsky's theoretical development (1931–1934) is very well studied (see, for example, Dafermos, 2018; Gonzalez Rey, 2011; Zavershneva, 2009; 2010; Zavershneva and Van der Veer, 2018 among others). All of the researchers agree that this period signifies a shift from studying the process of development as the socio-genesis of separate higher psychological functions, to a new research programme focused *on the analysis of* systemic reorganization of inter-functional relations in human consciousness (Vygotsky, 1994; 1998). Zavershneva characterises this as a period of "the emergence of a new theory of consciousness as a dynamic, semantic system" (Zavershneva, 2010, p. 35) from around 1932. Higher psychological functions (logical memory, abstract thinking, voluntary attention) were no longer viewed as particular and separate functions, but instead, as components of psychological systems, the higher order unities of lower and higher functions (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 43). In my analysis I will again focus on the moments of continuity and discontinuity.

First, the theoretical shift to Stage 3 looks significant and substantial and, therefore, the question might arise — are there any grounds for assertion that there was a crisis between Stage 2 (1928–1931) and Stage 3 (1932–1934) similar to the crisis of 1926? To answer we need to look at

the context and the content of Vygotsky's research programme and at the experimental work he was involved in at that time and to identify whether any of his previous ideas were rejected and new concepts introduced.

Let us begin with new concepts that Vygotsky elaborated in Stage 3. I think the list might look as follows:

- psychological neoformation,
- social situation of development,
- zone of proximal development (ZPD),
- experiencing (perezhivanie)[9].

These new concepts were introduced in different works by Vygotsky at that time: *Thinking and Speech* (1931–1932)[10], *Lectures on Pedology* (1932–1933), *Pedology of the Adolescent* (1932–1933), *Intellectual Development of Children in a Process of Instruction* (1933–1934), *The Problem of Age* (1932–1934), *On Psychological Systems* (1931) and others.

However, this addresses the theoretical content, but what about the context in which this new content appeared? That period was related to the appearance of a new discipline — paedology — a science of integral systemic approach to child development (Schneuwly, 1994). In addition to this, two key experimental programmes should be mentioned: the study of dialectical relations between teaching/learning (obuchenie) and intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1935), and the series of research studies on concept formation and the development of thinking and speech in children (Vygotsky, 1987).

Looking from the perspective of continuity/discontinuity it seems that what was changed was the research programme, not the theoretical approach. By this I mean a shift from studying the *processes* of transitions from inter-psychological to intra-psychological planes (including internalisation, mastering of signs, sign operations, and transitions from non-mediated to mediated actions) to the study of the internal reorganisation of the structures of consciousness through inter-functional psychological systems.

Dialectically speaking, the task was the same, that is to discover the socio-genesis of higher psychological functions; yet the shift was from studying the process of transformation of separate functions, from external to internal, to the study of what kind of internal reorganisation happens

[9] I would agree this list is not complete and might include more (for example, the concepts of word meaning and sense (smysl), private speech and some others); however, what are listed signify the fundamental character of the changes in Stage 3.

[10] These are dates of when these works were written which do not always coincide with the dates of publication.

within consciousness during this process, and how new psychological systems appear. The development is characterized not only by the transformation, but also by "qualitative neoformations" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 189). In other words, the focus was moved to discover the "metamorphoses or qualitative transformation of certain forms into others" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 99). "Old" concepts from the previous stage did not disappear; on the contrary, new emerging concepts were somehow built on the "old" ones and can be understood in relation to them.

Thus, the concept of psychological neoformation relates to the qualitative reorganization of the whole system of functions when a new higher psychological function appears and creates a "unity of a higher order" (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 43). This unity of a higher order is not a new function as such, but a new psychological system of elementary and higher functions in the human mind. Thus, the new concept of neoformation is not replacing the concept of higher psychological functions, but rather clarifies relations between higher and elementary functions within a new system. The concepts of the social situation of development and experiencing (perezhivanie) are obviously related to the concept of the social environment as a source of development of higher psychological functions. It is worthy to mention that in his analysis of the case of three children Vygotsky (2019) uses these concepts together, explaining how the same social situation was refracted through the children's experiencing (perezhivanie) differently and therefore created three different social situations of development.

Explaining the ZPD, Vygotsky claims that it "awakens and sets in motion in the child a number of internal development processes that are now still possible for the child only in the sphere of relationships with others and in cooperation with his peer" (Vygotsky, 1935, p. 16). Obviously, the ZPD is fundamentally related to the general genetic law of cultural development which says that every mental function first appears as a social relation (interaction) *between* people (inter-psychological plane).

Summarising the point, we might conclude that the system of concepts which appeared at Stage 3 did not reject or contradict the concepts of Stage 2. These systems of concepts can be completely understood only when taken together, and separation of these two groups of concepts might lead to misinterpretation.

Questioning Answers

In this section I present critical reflection on two examples of contemporary accounts of Vygotsky's theory. I see these examples as answers to the question of the relevance of Vygotsky's theory for contemporary research.

Re-examining Key Moments of Vygotsky's Theoretical Evolution: Critical Considerations

I begin with the example of González Rey's approach to re-examination of key moments in the evolution of Vygotsky's thinking and their contemporary implications (González Rey, 2011; 2017). I begin with several points I would agree with followed by several points of disagreement with questions, for further critical discussion.

I think it is absolutely correct that "the overemphasis of selected aspects of Vygotsky's work resulted in an overshadowing of other ideas that have remained relatively "unknown" (González Rey, 2011, p. 257). I agree that "it is difficult to temporally segment the diverse qualitative moments of Vygotsky's ideas because his ideas overlap in works written in similar periods" (González Rey, 2011, p. 257). And finally, I completely agree with the statement that "It is necessary to go beyond the dominant and fashionable interpretations of Vygotsky's legacy to discover and elaborate new paths of his legacy" (Gonzalez Rey, 2011, p. 273).

However, there are some points that require further elaboration and discussion. Thus, relations between different periods in Vygotsky's evolution appear in the following way:

In the first period of his work, …his theoretical emphasis focused on topics of clear subjective character, such as personality, fantasy, imagination, unconsciousness, emotions, and so on (González Rey, 2011, p. 273).

This first moment was characterized by several publications, among which Psychology of Art, Pedagogical Psychology, "Consciousness as a Problem in the Psychology of Behavior", and his first works concerning defectology are especially relevant…. Unlike other authors, I consider Psychology of Art to be the most significant work of this moment" (González Rey, 2011, p. 258).

This agenda was abandoned in the second period of his work [which] aimed at the study of the social character of the higher psychological functions, which in turn was a study restricted to analyzing the use of signs, tools, and operations (González Rey, 2011, p. 273).

In the last period, from 1932 and 1934, Vygotsky reconsidered many of his ideas from his first moment, in particular his interest in the cognitive–emotional unity of the psyche and the functioning of the psyche as a whole. (González Rey, 2011, p. 269).

Here are several points which, I believe, need clarification. First of all, the major part of the *Psychology of Art* was written in Gomel, before 1924 when Vygotsky started his work in Moscow. Together with the

Pedagogical Psychology it belongs to the reflexological stage. Comparative analysis of these two books shows more theoretical similarities, than differences (Veresov, 1999). Psychological functions as reflexes (*Pedagogical Psychology*) and emotions as aesthetic reactions (*Psychology of Arts*) were key concepts on which the theoretical framework was based. These were ideas he presented in his famous speech at the Second All-Russian Conference on psycho-neurology in January 1924 and published as an article "The methods of reflexological and psychological investigation" (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 35–50).

On the other hand, as I tried to show in the previous section, the defectological works of Vygotsky signify the transition from an old reflexological model to a new approach to understanding the development of higher psychological functions as a process of socio-cultural genesis. The contradiction between the old reflexological explanatory model and new findings in the field of clinical work in defectology generated the crisis of 1926.

I would agree that the agenda of the first stage was abandoned in the second period. However, it seems that the reason cannot be explained only by external reasons (by the fact that, as González Rey and Mitjáns Martinez (2017) explain, Vygotsky joined Kornilov's group (p. 198)). The crisis of 1926 was the reason Vygotsky consciously abandoned his reflexological programme. Yes, the second stage was aimed at the study of the social character of the higher psychological functions, but from this it does not follow that the study was "restricted to analyzing the use of signs, tools, and operations" (González Rey, 2011, p. 273). The study of sign mediation was only one of several research programmes and theoretical discoveries of Stage 2, as I tried to show in the previous section.

The research programme of Stage 3 can hardly be reduced to cognitive-emotional unity of the psyche. Yes, the concepts of sense and experiencing (perezhivanie) do relate to cognitive-emotional unity, but they were developed together with other concepts (psychological neoformation, ZPD, social situation of development) strongly related to the concepts of Stage 2 and therefore can hardly be understood without this theoretical connection. I would agree that during the last period of 1932–1934 Vygotsky reconsidered many ideas from the first stage; however, I think they were reconsidered on the basis and within the theoretical framework developed at Stage 2 and in relation to the change in the research programme, not a change of theory.

Three Generations of CHAT: Does It Need Rethinking?

My second example is the model of three generations of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) developed in the works of Y. Engeström and others (Cole and Engeström, 1993; 2007; Engeström, 1990; 1999).

Table
Three generations of CHAT (Engeström, 1987; 1990; 1999)

Generations	Time	Names	Unit of analysis
1st generation	1920s–1930s	Vygotsky	Mediated action
2nd generation	1930s–1970s	Leontiev	Triangle of activity
3rd generation	1990s-now	Engeström and others	Activity system

It is not my intention to contribute to the increasing criticism of this model (see, for example, Dafermos, 2015, Miller, 2011). However, I do have some questions to ask. My first question is about the generational approach as such. Biologically, generations of a family replace each other, they co-exist for some time, then old generations die, new generations appear and replace the old ones, and this is how the family continues to exist. Does this mean that the replacement of generations adequately reflects the history of cultural-historical theory? It remains unclear whether CHAT existed in the 1920s in the form of the cultural-historical theory developed by Vygotsky, or that the generation of Vygotsky's theory has now died out, now existing only (and exclusively) in the form of its CHAT descendants?

My second question is about the historical relevance of the model of three generations. This model simply does not correspond to historical facts. While the fact which should not be ignored is that at the beginning of the 1930s a group of Vygotsky's close collaborators, led by Leontiev, began to develop their own original theory of activity. Another fact is that in parallel to this, there was a group of researchers who did not join Leontiev's group and did not use activity theory in their research. They did not belong, historically, to the generation of activity theory. These researchers are the second generation of cultural-historical theory. Let us take several names as examples from the wider field. L. Bozhovich (2004a; 2004b) and her scientific school contributed brilliant cultural-historical studies on the development of the child's personality. M. Lisina[11] (1986)

[11] See Obukhova L.F., Pavlova M.K. (2009). M.I. Lisina's psychological theory and contemporary psychology: An interplay of ideas. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya psikhologiya [Cultural-Historical Psychology], 2*, 119–125 (In Russian).

and her collaborators have developed the cultural-historical theory of communication and its role in mental development. N. Morozova (1969) has developed a series of unique research programmes in the field of special education. As for the 1970s and 1980s I should say that I believe this was the time of the third generation of cultural-historical theory– I might mention E. Kravtsova[12] and G. Kravtsov, B. Elkonin, V. Zaretsky, among others. Sadly, all these fantastic researchers and their contribution are totally excluded from the "three generations of CHAT" model. These researchers now represent a third generation of cultural-historical theory and none of them belong to any of the CHAT generations.

One could say, however, that the model of three generations should not be taken literally; what distinguishes generations are the different units of analysis that the research was focused on. Thus, "mediated action" is considered the unit of analysis of the first generation (Fig. 1).

As shown in the previous section of this article, the principle of cultural mediation and the concept of cultural tools and their role in the process of development appear in "embryonic form" in defectological works of 1924–1925. They were further developed in the study of the process of cultural mediation in the process of development in Vygotsky's experimental research at Stage 2. Yet, these studies were a part of a wider research programme on the investigation of mediating activity and on the process of transition from non-mediated to mediated actions.

However, does this mean that mediated action can be considered as a unit of analysis in the process of development? To answer this question let us take a closer look at how Vygotsky defines mediated action and the unit of analysis.

The unit of analysis (in contrast to the analysis by elements) is "a product of analysis which, unlike elements, retains all the basic properties of the whole and which cannot be further divided without losing them" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 46–47). However, mediated action, "...can always be divided completely and without any remainder into the natural elementary …processes that make it up…" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 80). These two statements contradict each other. But there is no contradiction if we take into consideration that these concepts belong to different periods of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution. Mediated action (or, more correctly, mediating activity) was one of the directions of Vygotsky's Stage 2 research, whereas the analysis by units appeared later at Stage 3 in relation to the

[12] Sadly, Elena Kravtsova, despite being a third generation of Vygotsky's family as his granddaughter, is excluded from the three generations of CHAT model.

method of studying consciousness as a complex psychological system and analysing its qualitative re-organisations. One could say, however, that Vygotsky himself defined mediated action (instrumental act) as a unit. Thus, the instrumental act "is the simplest piece of behaviour with which research is dealing: an elementary unit of behaviour" (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 87). Yet, what does "elementary unit" mean here? In the original Russian publication (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 106) "the simplest piece" is a span (otrezok) which is "section" or "segment" which "can, without remainder, be decomposed into a system of natural forces and processes" (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 86). Neither instrumental act, nor mediated action can be considered as units of analysis. This leads to the question of whether the model of three generations is an example of inadequate assessment of Vygotsky's theoretical position; an example where ideas from different periods of his creative career are heaped together? Does this mean that the concerns of Yaroshevsky and Gurgenidze expressed in 1982 are still relevant? These are questions which I suggest provide a new area for dialogue and critical discussion.

In Conclusion: Questions, Answers, Suggestions for a Further Dialogue

This paper is intended to contribute to a continuing dialogue on the history of the development of cultural-historical theory and its contemporary perception in Western academia by clarifying several critical moments from the point of view of theoretical continuity and discontinuity. Two examples which I have examined, indicate that in some cases, we still deal with the situation not only where concepts from different periods are heaped together, but where the whole periods of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution are lost and others, merely located elsewhere. Therefore, further clarification of the key moments in the process of the development of cultural-historical theory requires further collective discussion and dialogue.

Here I will present my suggestions for advancing a critical dialogue, using five questions:

My first question is, "What are the moments of continuity and discontinuity in the first two stages of Vygotsky's theoretical evolution?". Zakharino's notebooks and the defectological works might give an answer. The general task that was to rebuild psychology as an objective science of human consciousness remained. What was radically and dramatically changed was the direction of that search. Old empirical reflexological/behaviouristic theoretical frameworks gradually disappeared and new cultural-historical genetic methodology gradually began to appear. "Embryonic buds" of

several key concepts of cultural-historical theory began to emerge. From that moment Vygotsky did not return to the "old" theoretical framework, however the terminology[13] remained in some cases, gradually acquiring new meanings and content.

My second question is, "Can Stage 2 be defined as "the instrumental period?". Yes, but what should be taken into account and what should not be forgotten is that studies of sign mediation, mediating activity and instrumental acts were only part of a very complex research programme of the experimental study of the whole process of the cultural and historical development of higher mental functions; a development from two lines which are "inseparably connected, but never merging into one" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 14). What Vygotsky defined as an instrumental method was the component of a complex experimental genetic method. Stage 2 signifies the discovery of the general genetic law of cultural development, the concept of the social environment as a source of development and some other discoveries which go far beyond the study of instrumental acts.

My third question is "What are the moments of continuity and discontinuity between Stage 2 and Stage 3"? Again, the task, of continuing to build a new theory of cultural-historical development of human consciousness remained. What was changed was not the theory as such, but the focus, the area of research — from studying the laws of development of separate functions to investigation of inter-functional relations and connections, an internal plane, in order to discover laws of re-organisation of the whole internal structure of consciousness as a psychological system and the appearance of new psychological systems. This reorganization (metamorphosis) was viewed as an integral part of the process of development — "how the social becomes the individual" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 198). Concepts developed at Stage 3 can therefore, be fully understood only in relation to the concepts of Stage 2.

My next question is, "Can we consider Stage 3 as a time when Vygotsky reconsidered many of his ideas from Stage 1?". I think yes, we can. However, they were reconsidered within the frame of cultural-historical theory developed at Stage 2. In some cases, Vygotsky's experimental research was a direct application of cultural-historical theory to the particular problems (such as the problem of the relations between learning and development;

[13] For example, in some works of Stage 2 we can find old terms such as 1) a sign as artificially created signal; 2) cultural forms of behaviour used as a synonym of a higher psychological function; 3) the method of double stimulation as an integral part of the experimental-genetic method.

the formation of concepts and the development of thinking, and the problem of age).

And finally, my fifth, and last, question is: "Can mediated action be considered as a basic unit of analysis for Vygotsky?". I do not think so; when mediated action was studied at Stage 2, it was not studied as a unit of analysis. The idea of analysis by units appeared at Stage 3 only in relation to the task of studying inter-functional connections within consciousness as a whole. Units of analysis, experiencing (perezhivanie) as a unit of consciousness (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294) and word meaning as the unit of analysis of developing the unity of thinking and speech (Vygotsky, 1987) do not refer to mediated action. Speaking generally, the model of three generations of CHAT is, from my point of view, existing current and very influential example of simplification and fragmentation of Vygotsky's theoretical legacy. I am not saying this model is irrelevant or invalid; I simply want to say that it does not reflect all the historical and theoretical richness of three generations of cultural-historical theory and may neglect the evolution of Vygotsky's theory.

References

Bekhterev, V. (1925). Psychology, reflexology and Marxism. Moscow: GRIM Publ. (In Russ.)

Bozhovich, L. (2004a). Developmental Phases of Personality Formation in Childhood. *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*, (42), 35–54.

Bozhovich, L. (2004b). L.S. Vygotsky's Historical and Cultural Theory and Its Significance for Contemporary Studies of the Psychology of Personality. *Journal of Russian and East European psychology,* (47), 59–86.

Chaiklin, S. (2003). The zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's analysis of learning and instruction. In: A. Kozulin, B. Gindis, V. Ageyev, S. Miller, (eds.). Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context. (pp. 39–64). Cambridge Publ.

Cole, M. (1997). Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University.

Cole, M., Engeström, Y. (1993). A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. In: G. Salomon, (ed.). Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations. (pp. 1–46). New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Cole, M., Engeström, Y. (2007). Cultural-historical approaches to designing for development. In: J. Valsiner, A. Rosa, (eds.). The Cambridge handbook of sociocultural psychology. (pp. 484–507). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Dafermos, M. (2015). Critical reflection on the reception of Vygotsky's theory in the international academic communities. In: B. Selau, R. Fonseca de Castro, (eds.). Cultural-historical theory: Educational research in different contexts. (pp. 19–38). Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS.

Dafermos, M. (2018). Rethinking cultural-historical theory: a dialectical perspective to Vygotsky. Singapore: Springer Publ.

Daniels, H. (2008). Vygotsky and research. London: Routledge Publ.

Elhammoumi, M. (2001). Lost—or merely domesticated? The boom in sociohistoricocultural theory emphasizes some concepts, overlooks others. In: S. Chaiklin, (ed.). The theory and practice of cultural-historical psychology. (pp. 200–217). Aarhus: Aarhus Univ. Press.

Engeström, Y. (1987). Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit Publ.

Engeström, Y. (1990). Learning, working, imagining: Twelve studies in activity theory. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit Publ.

Engeström, Y. (1999). Innovative learning in work teams: Analysing cycles of knowledge creation in practice. Perspectives on activity theory (pp. 377–406). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

González Rey, F. (2011). A Re-examination of Defining Moments in Vygotsky's Work and Their Implications for His Continuing Legacy. *Mind, Culture, and Activity,* (18), 257–275.

González Rey, F. (2017). Advances in subjectivity from a cultural-historical perspective: Unfoldings and consequences for cultural studies today. In: M. Fleer, F. González Rey, N. Veresov, (eds.). Perezhivanie, emotions and subjectivity: Advancing Vygotsky legacy. (pp. 173–195). New York: Springer Publ.

González Rey, F., Mitjáns Martinez, A. (2017). Epistemological and methodological issues related to the new challenges of a cultural-historical based psychology. In: M. Fleer, F. González Rey, N. Veresov, (eds.). Perezhivanie, emotions and subjectivity: Advancing Vygotsky legacy. (pp. 195–216). New York: Springer Publ.

Hedegaard, M. (2002). Learning and child development. Aarhus: Aarhus Univ. Press.

Jones, P.E. (2015). Language and Social Determinism in the Vygotskian Tradition: A Response to Ratner. *Language and Sociocultural Theory, 3*(1), 1–8.

Kozulin, A. (1990). Vygotsky's psychology: A biography of ideas. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Leontiev, A. (2010). Vygotsky's Vocabulary. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Lisina, M. (1986). Problems of ontogenesis of communication. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Luria, A.R. (1982). Stages of the road travelled: scientific autobiography. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press (In Russ.)

Mescheryakov, B. (1998). Logic and semantic analysis of the concept of L.S. Vygotsky. Samara. (In Russ.)

Mescheryakov, B. (2007). Terminology in L.S. Vygotsky's writings. In: H. Daniels, M. Cole, J. Wertsch, (eds.). The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky. (pp. 155–177). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Miller, R. (2011). Vygotsky in perspective. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Morozova, N. (1969). The formation of cognitive interests in abnormal children. Moscow: Prosveschenie Publ. (In Russ.)

Packer, M. (2008). Is Vygotsky Relevant? Vygotsky's Marxist Psychology. *Mind, Culture and Activity, 15*(1), 8–31.

Pavlov, I. (1927). Conditioned reflexes: An investigation of the physiological activity of the cerebral cortex. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Rieber, R.W., Robinson, D.K. (eds.). (2004). The essential Vygotsky. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publ.

Rogoff, B. (2003). The cultural nature of human development. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Roth, W.M., Lee, Y.J. (2007). "Vygotsky's Neglected Legacy": Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(2), 186–232.

Schneuwly, B. (1994). Contradiction and Development: Vygotsky and Paedology. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 9*(4), 281–291.

Stetsenko, A. (2016). The transformative mind: Expanding Vygotsky's perspective on development and education. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Valsiner, J. (2007). Culture in minds and societies: Foundations of cultural psychology. New York: Sage Publishers.

van der Veer, R., Valsiner, J. (1991). Understanding Vygotsky: A quest for synthesis. Oxford: Blackwell Publ.

Veresov, N. (1999). Undiscovered Vygotsky. Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang.

Veresov, N. (2010). Forgotten methodology: Vygotsky's case. In: A. Toomela, J. Valsiner, (eds.). Methodological thinking in psychology: 60 years gone astray? (pp. 267–295). Charlotte: IAP Publ.

Veresov, N. (2014). Refocusing the lens on development: Towards genetic research methodology. In: M. Fleer, A. Ridgway, (eds.). Visual methodologies and digital tools for researching with young children, international perspectives on early childhood education and development. (pp. 129–149). New York: Springer Publ.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1935). Mental development of children in the learning process. Moscow, Leningrad: State Educational and Pedagogical Publishing House. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 5. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1987). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky. Vol. 1. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1989). Concrete Human Psychology. *Soviet Psychology, 27*(2), 53–77. https://doi.org/10.2753/rpo1061-0405270253

Vygotsky, L.S. (1993). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1997a). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky: in 6 vol. Vol. 3. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1997b). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky: in 6 vol. Vol. 4. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1998). The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky: in 6 vol. Vol. 5. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1999). The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky: in 6 vol. Vol. 6. New York: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (2001). Lectures on pedology. Izhevsk: Udmurt University Press. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S., van der Veer, R.E., Valsiner, J.E., Prout, T.T. (1994). The Vygotsky reader. Boston: Basil Blackwell Publ.

Yaroshevskii, L.G., Gurgenidze, G.S. (1982). Afterword. Vygotsky, L.S. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Zavershneva, E. (2010). The Vygotsky Family Archive: New Findings. Notebooks, Notes, and Scientific Journals of L.S. Vygotsky (1912–1934). *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 48*(1*)*, 34–60. https://doi.org/110.2753/RPO 1061-0405480102

Zavershneva, E. (2009). The Key to Human Psychology: Comments on the Notebook of L.S. Vygotsky from the Zakharyino Hospital (1926). *Voprosy Psikhologii,* (3), 43–61. (In Russ.)

Zavershneva, E. (2012). "The Key to Human Psychology": Commentary on L.S. Vygotsky's Notebook from the Zakharino Hospital (1926). *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology, 50(*4), 16–41.

Zavershneva, E., van der Veer, R. (2017). L.S. Vygotsky's notebooks. Moscow: Canon Publ. (In Russ.)

Zavershneva, E., Van der Veer, R. (2018). Vygotsky's notebooks: A selection. Singapore: Springer Publ.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nikolay N. Veresov, PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor, Professor at the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, nveresov@hotmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8714-7467

Received: 13.12.2023; revised: 15.02.2024; accepted: 19.03.2024.

HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-48
UDC 159.9.019; 159.922

Time in L.S. Vygotsky's Creation

Tatiana D. Martsinkovskaya [1,2,3] ✉

[1] Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation
[2] Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis, Moscow, Russian Federation
[3] Russian State Humanitarian University, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ martsinkovskaya.t@rggu.ru

Abstract

Background. Currently, different versions of Russian and foreign concepts are being developed in a single scientific field. In this context, the high heuristic potential of L.S. Vygotsky's concept is revealed as his ideas are in tune with the challenges of information culture.

Objectives. The goal of the current work is to present the integrity of L.S. Vygotsky's concept of culture and the variability of his ideas about emotional experience, sign and tools, the social situation of development, crises at different periods and in different situations in the development of science. The connection between continuity and change over time makes Vygotsky's concept flexible and productive for a digital society.

Methods. The historical-genetic approach, historical hermeneutics and categorical analysis are used to trace the internal logic and stages of the formation of L.S. Vygotsky's scientific views, as well as to outline his opponents and the origins of his methodology and discoveries.

Results. Personal and sociocultural (temporary) factors in the emergence and development of the concept of L.S. Vygotsky were analysed. The role of the initial works on the psychology of culture and theatre in the formation of psychological concepts of emotional experience and personality was shown. A holistic picture of the dynamics of the scientist's views on the development of psyche, the role of the tool-sign, the social situation of development and crises, as factors that determine the boundaries of possible personality changes, the connection between affect and intelligence throughout ontogenesis was presented. The transformation of the concept of interiorisation, which becomes one of the central ones for the development of the psyche in a digital society, was revealed.

Conclusions. Variability over time and, simultaneously, the fundamental integrity of L.S. Vygotsky's approach to culture in its various forms (word, sign, emotional experience, theatre, society) are the basis for the high productivity and creative potential of his ideas, which make it possible to transform them in different social situations of the development of science. The personality of the creator in the context of his life and the life of his ideas gives possibility to interpret it in terms of the psychology of drama, expanding the boundaries of analysis and incorporation of the scientific worldview and concepts of L.S. Vygotsky in modern psychology.

Keywords: cultural psychology, emotional experience, interiorization, tool-sign, social situation of development, affect, intelligence, concept of crisis

Funding. The research was supported by a grant from the Russian Science Foundation within the framework of project No. 22-18-00140 "Dynamic stability of personality in the space of sociocultural uncertainty."

For citation: Martsinkovskaya, T.D. (2024). Time in L.S. Vygotsky's creation. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal, 47*(4), 188–198. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-48

"*Times change, and we change with them*"
Latin proverb
"*I've known one thought, one and the same,*
a thought of passion and of flame"
M. Yu. Lermontov

The figure of L.S. Vygotsky is complex in that though everyone knows this name, not everyone understands the essence of his work, his personality, changes in both creativity and personality. The attitude to the figure of the creator as an icon, regardless of whether he is a physicist, psychologist, artist, poet, is never productive. Moreover, if we talk about creators who lived and worked at difficult, turning-point times, such as the time at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. Therefore, it seems important to look at how time was reflected in the work of L.S. Vygotsky, and present his life and works as a drama of the artist (his fate and early death, of course, can be considered in terms of drama) with a prologue, acts (periods of creativity) and an epilogue.

Introduction (Prologue)

The beginning of the 20th century was a unique period in the development of science and art in Russia. The turn of the century, starting from the New Age, was reflected by both scientists and artists as a certain turning point, a transition to new realities, new social and ideological concepts, and new approaches to the construction of knowledge. It is not surprising that

many artists associated the last decades of the 19th century with autumn, while the first decades of the 20th were associated with spring.

This understanding of the necessity and irreversibility of changes occurring in the surrounding world was especially clear, more acutely than in previous centuries, and was reflected by people at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. However, it was even more acutely reflected in our time, at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries (Martsinkovskaya, 2015). These periods of time brought together science and art. The commonality in the understanding of changes was manifested in the fact that both scientists and artists believed that times was connected by people and the fruits of their creativity (Asmolov, 2007). The studies of literary scholars and philologists of the early twentieth century were aimed at understanding the psychology of crisis, the psychological characteristics of the era. These studies were extremely important for L.S. Vygotsky.

This time gave birth to many outstanding scientists who created universal theories. Not only great thinkers during this period dealt with a wide range of issues, but it was also a period of creative syntheticism. The breadth of coverage can manifest itself when systematising the material being studied by summing up the results of the work of several groups or even generations of scientists. However, there are eras when scientific thinking leads to new perspectives and constructs that not only unite and systematise known facts, but also consider them from new angles. At this time, tasks are set that open the way for the next generations of scientists. According to T.I. Raynov's definition (Raynov, 1934), this is the era of creative synthesis, such as at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky was a scientist who opened up new horizons for the development of science. His views are most consistent with the challenges that science still faces today in connection with the changes taking place in the context of globalisation and the development of a digital society. They help to understand how a person can maintain his uniqueness in a changing and fragile world.

Act I. Theatre

In the first decades of the 20th century, the central interests of L.S. Vygotsky were art, theatre and music. From the very beginning, he sought to understand how time is reflected in art, and how the changes taking place in the world relate to human psychology. The decline of Europe was considered by O. Spengler among others as a crisis of the old society in which culture, society, and people were formed. This feeling of crisis contributed to the emergence of personalistic concepts. Prior to this, psychology

intertwined the study or consideration of personality into general theories of cognition and the social arrangement of the world.

We can say that L.S. Vygotsky was one of the first to address the problem of personality, social and spiritual activity of a person who is both a creator, a subject of the emergence of a new situation, and an object of ongoing changes. The initial appeal to art may be due to the fact that artists, before scientists, felt the apocalyptic mood of the crisis and tried to capture it in their poems, canvases, and music (Martsinkovskaya, 2015).

However, by the end of the first decade of the 20th century, scientists realised the need not only to record, but also to reflect on these experiences, turning to science in search of appropriate tools, to the science that was primarily associated with human experiences — psychology. Vygotsky approached psychology from the sphere of art (theatre and speech), trying to reflect the demands of the time. Yet he attempted not only to reflect, but to understand how a person rises above time, overcomes environmental pressure, and becomes a master of life.

Through art and through understanding the language of art, he sought to answer the question of what personality is. He became in essence, not in form, a pioneer in developing the foundations of personality psychology. In personality he saw a holistic fusion of affect and intellect, which manifested itself in emphasising the significance of experiences. This concept became central to many scientists of that time — S.L. Rubinshtein, L.S. Vygotsky, B.M. Teplov (Martsinkovskaya, 2004). For Vygotsky, aesthetic experience was primary, proving that he was aware of the significance of the connection between the psychological state, worldview and art. In dramaturgy, Vygotsky saw not only the acting of actors, but also the literary outline — the word embodied by the actors and the director within the entire performance. (Sobkin, 2022).

This is proven by his subtle and deep theatre reviews, such as an analysis of a performance based on Shakespeare's "Hamlet". These reviews were published by V.S. Sobkin (2015).

Connection with different types of art was of fundamental importance for the choice of psychological problems. For Vygotsky, prose and poetry were of greatest interest. That is, he placed the word in its various forms at the forefront, considering it necessary for psychology to study it from a new perspective — as a tool for the formation of cultural self-awareness and mastery of one's psyche. The fact that the word (sign) is associated with the general laws of development, to some extent determined the interest in general trends in the development of the psyche, and analysis of the patterns of its formation in ontogenesis, including the formation of

speech, thinking, and sign. The word leads to focusing on the conscious, intellectual side of mental development. From this point of view, it becomes clearer why for Vygotsky mastery of a sign was identified with the formation of volition. The significance of his opponent circles, which were comprised of I.P. Pavlov, I.M. Sechenov, V.M. Bekhterev, reflexology, and paedology also becomes clearer. (Yaroshevsky, 1993; 1994). From the very beginning, Vygotsky sought in his constructions to create generalised, complete constructs, no matter how diverse his interests were. Therefore, the experience, which will be discussed below, was considered by him not only as a reflection of the protagonist's emotions, but also as a recording of the general experiences of the era.

Act II. Crises and the social development situation

Since the early 1920s, Vygotsky was actively involved in the field of psychological research, combining psychology and art. Coming to a conclusion regarding the importance for modern science of an integrated approach to the psyche and the development of paedology, he naturally became one of the leading theorists and practitioners in this field (Vygotsky, 1984).

Studying the development of the intellectual sphere of children, Vygotsky focused on the formation of the child's self-awareness, claiming that the concept of "personality" as a cultural, social formation, is identical to self-awareness. At the same time, while developing self-awareness, the child masters his own psyche and his own behaviour and his dependence on the immediate surrounding reality decreases, allowing him to act under the influence of his own motivation. Since personality, according to L.S. Vygotsky, is the result of cultural development like all higher mental functions, it is formed during the process of internalisation of social and cultural forms of behaviour, which become methods of individual adaptation, behaviour, and thinking. From here, the importance of the environment, especially the cultural environment, for the formation of all spheres of the psyche becomes clear.

Reflections on the role of the environment led Vygotsky to the discovery of the "social situation of development". L.S. Vygotsky's approach to an environment that he did not consider immutable and stable was novel. He noted that depending on the age and level of development of the child's consciousness, the meaning of a seemingly stable environment changes. The child experiences the same facts differently and, therefore, at different periods of life, the environment has different influences on the child. Such a change in the social situation of a child's development occurs precisely

during periods of crisis, bringing the child to a new level of development (Vygotsky, 1983).

An important idea to consider here is the idea of crisis, which was the leitmotif of the era. An equally significant characteristic of Vygotsky's cognitive style was the fact that crisis was considered as a dynamic category with alternating stable periods (lysis). The crisis is thought to lead to gradual personal growth and a person's ascent to the cultural psyche, which is mastered through sign, another influence of the era. A sign, in contrast to a symbol, is a cultural tool, it is a culture that grows into a child, giving him the opportunity to rise above himself and grow as a person. This, in fact, is the manifestation of the personalistic idea of crisis as one of the determinants of overall development.

Vygotsky talks about the dynamics of experiences during a child's transition from one age-related crisis to another and shows the connection between experiences and conflict situations. At this time, children perceive the ordinary life situation especially acutely, and this is reflected in their experiences. Experiences, which gradually become one of Vygotsky's central themes, are an indicator of various periods in the life history of children, an indicator that the child has moved to a new level of development. Consequently, the experience represents the personality in a social situation of development. The social situation of development cannot be associated simply with experience (although it remains an important parameter), but must necessarily be supplemented by a cognitive component, or the experience of interaction with people.

In the analysis of the social situation of development, L.S. Vygotsky was the first to move from a statement regarding the importance of the environment for development to identifying the specific mechanism of this environmental influence, which, in fact, changes the child's psyche, leading to the emergence of human-specific higher mental functions (HMF). With this mechanism, L.S. Vygotsky considered interiorisation, primarily the interiorisation of signs and symbols artificially created by mankind, designed to control one's own and others' behaviour.

Vygotsky outlined the first version of his theoretical generalisations concerning the patterns of development of the psyche in ontogenesis in the work "Development of Higher Mental Functions", which he wrote in 1931. This work presented a scheme for the formation of the human psyche in the process of using signs as a means of regulating mental activity. Speaking about the fact that there are natural and higher mental functions, Vygotsky came to the conclusion that the main difference between them is the level of voluntariness. That is, unlike natural mental processes that cannot be

regulated by humans, people can consciously control higher mental functions. This regulation is associated with the indirect nature of HMF, and they are mediated by a sign or symbolic means, which creates an additional connection between the influencing stimulus and the human reaction (both behavioral and mental). This situation has already become important for the development of people in the digital world.

It must be emphasised that, unlike a symbol that can be invented by the child himself (for example, a knot on a scarf or a stick instead of a thermometer), signs are not invented by children, but are acquired by them in communication with adults. Thus, the sign first appears on the external plane, the plane of communication, and then passes into the internal plane, the plane of consciousness. At the same time, signs, being a product of social development, bear the imprint of the culture of the society in which the child grows up. Children learn signs in the process of communication and begin to use them to manage their inner mental life. Thanks to the internalisation of signs in children, the sign function of consciousness is formed, and the formation of such strictly human mental processes as logical thinking, will, and speech occurs. That is, the internalisation of signs is the mechanism that shapes the psyche of children.

Based on his view of the psyche, Vygotsky attached particular importance to the symbolic nature of the word, revealing its role as a special sociocultural mediator between the individual and the world. Signs (or symbols) are understood by him as mental tools, which, unlike tools of labor, do not change the physical world, but the consciousness of the subject operating them. Thus, even in the early stages of his work, Vygotsky was already connecting culture and speech with the development of the psyche, self-awareness, and personality of a person. The view of experience is transformed and enriched. The child actively responds to stimuli that come from the environment, otherwise there can be no development. Thus, Vygotsky's work combines the ideas of reflexology, paedology and aesthetic experiences.

Act III Experiences: the dynamic synthesis of affect and intellect

Works by L.S. Vygotsky opened a new page in the study of the category of experience (Martsinkovskaya, 2004). He built his concept on the basis of philosophical theories of emotions, here almost all the leading philosophical and psychological theories of experience by R. Descartes, W. Dilthey and, of course, by his beloved B. Spinoza fell into his circle of opponents.

Vygotsky, like Spinoza, emphasized the energetic and ethical potential of emotions. No less important for Vygotsky was the idea of the

connection between emotions and other categories of philosophy and psychology. Since the emotional component is an indispensable part of the motive, it is natural that the categories of motive and experience are closely related. In this case, experiences are considered as a person's emotional response to the phenomena of the external world and to the actions and thoughts. The regulatory function of experience connects it with the category of activity. The study of the relationship between external and internal activities, the processes of internalization and exteriorization brings to the fore the problem of experience, since the very possibility of appropriating experience and the transition of external activity to the internal plane is based on experience. All these questions update Vygotsky's ideas about the role of experience in the process of modern fluid socialization.

An important point in Vygotsky's concept was the connection between experiences and intentional, motivational and value structures, as well as with the concept of personality, which was just emerging in psychology at the beginning of the 20th century. Personality is a fusion of affect and intellect, and therefore, when concerned with its development, it is necessary to examine both of these sides: the development of thinking and the development of the child's emotions. From this point of view, Vygotsky did not refute Descartes' position that awareness of experiences is closely related to the mind. Therefore, in an adult, the reasons for his actions and his experiences are the property of self-awareness. However, he disputed Descartes' idea that emotions are not an intentional, dynamic category and cannot determine one's attitude towards the world. Vygotsky considered experience to be a real, dynamic unit from which consciousness is composed, in which all its basic properties are represented. Therefore, experience is the most complete value in the structure of consciousness and acts as a specific form of manifestation of an integral personality.

Experience contains a person's attitude to a particular moment of reality. Experience is not only a fusion of affect and intellect, but also a unification of personality and environment. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account what a given moment in the environment represents for a particular individual. The same situation is experienced differently by different children. Hence, the environment determines the child's development through the experience of external influences. The situation itself, taken without regard to the child, cannot determine the nature of the impact on the course of his further development. The environment is given only in relation to the child, or how he experiences this environment. This "how" depends on the extent to which all the characteristics and properties

of the personality that have developed are involved in a certain moment, at a given time, and in a given situation.

Returning to the idea of experience as a marker of crisis, Vygotsky says that, at different age stages, a child perceives the influences of the environment differently and experiences its influences differently. For example, during the crisis of seven years, a child loses spontaneity, which arises due to the generalisation of his experiences. A preschooler also has experiences, and the child experiences every reaction of an adult as a good or bad assessment of him, but these experiences are momentary, they exist only at a separate moment in life, and then quickly pass. Experiences, therefore, are an indicator of different periods in the life story of children, an indicator that the child has moved to a new level of development.

Thus, in Vygotsky's concept, experience acts as a primary and initial psychological fact.

Conclusion (epilogue)

The digital society has become a new challenge for modern science. New technologies are changing the picture of the world and ways of processing information. This gives cause to say that technological society has already moved to the next stage of development, in which technology is not something external to humans. Man perceives machines not as mechanisms, but rather as a part of our environment, often as an extension of our mental abilities, and not just as tools. We can say that technical means are internalised by people, determining the specifics of their perception of the world, interaction with objects, and communication with others (Voiskunsky, Soldatova, 2021; Castells, 2004; Martsinkovskaya, 2019; 2021). The digital society is specific in that the information and knowledge received become the main parameter for assessing a person and society as a whole.

It is also necessary to take into account that one of the leading challenges today is the problem of maintaining emotional well-being and, at the same time, the desire for self-realisation. These two tendencies (towards emotional stability and towards development, self-realisation) are continuums, sometimes with opposite poles.

In solving this problem, the leading role is played by the sign-tool, which helps to implement human search activity. Thus, a transformed scheme of using a tool (sign) in different space-time continuums (real, network, and mixed) can be proposed as a model for studying the behaviour and experiences of people.

In this context, culture is considered as the stock of knowledge that helps a person to imagine a particular concept, and, therefore, as a tool. The

disruption of connections between individual sections of this knowledge, or the loss of certain sections leads to a disruption of perception, thinking, and speech. The specificity of the action of information as a special type of tool, closely related to different spaces and sociocultural contexts, was tested empirically in the studies conducted by A.R. Luria in Uzbekistan (Luria, 2003), as well as in the comparative study of mental development in primates and children carried out by A.R. Luria together with L.S. Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1983).

The study of personality traits that help work productively with information and the transformation of a tool into a sign adequate to the situation has shown that experiences, both positive and negative, can contribute to the internalisation of certain images, ideas and signs. Thus, the works of L.S. Vygotsky, reimagined for our time and in the new social situation of human development, show that his concepts of a tool, a sign, an experience and, especially, culture, do not lose their meaning. It also appears that the concept of internalisation should become one of the cornerstones in the concept of the information society, as well as the concept of experience.

The heuristic potential of this concept is extremely high, since trends towards considering culture and human activity in a new, changing digital society are increasingly in demand.

Thus, it can be argued that the versatility and depth of the scientist's creativity is one of the most important factors of sustainable interest to his works and to his personality in a changing and constantly updating world.

References

Asmolov, A.G. (2007). Psychology of personality: cultural-historical understanding of human development. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Castells, M. (2000). The Information Age: Economy, Society, Culture. Moscow: GU VSHE Publ. (In Russ.)

Luria, A.R. (2003). Psychological heritage. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Martsinkovskaya, T.D. (2015). History, Culture, Development as Constituents of the Historical-Genetic Paradigm. *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology,* (4), 69–78. (In Russ.)

Martsinkovskaya, T.D. (2019). Information Space of The Transitive Society: Problems and Prospects of Development. *Konsul'tativnaya Psikhologiya i Psikhoterapiya = Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy, 27*(3), 77–96. (In Russ.)

Martsinkovskaya, T.D. (2021). A New Methodology for Researching the Transitivity of the Life Space of a Changing Personality. *Novye Psikhologicheskie Issledovaniya = New Psychological Research*, (2), 31–45. (In Russ.)

Martsinkovskaya, T.D. (ed.). (2004). The category of experience in psychology and philosophy: a collective monograph. Moscow: Prometei Publ. (In Russ.)

Rainov, T.I. (1934). On the type of the versatile scientist. Socialist reconstruction and science. Moscow: Kolos Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2015). Comments on theater reviews by Lev Vygotsky. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education, RAE Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2022). Tragicomedy of Lev Vygotsky's searches: the experience of reconstructing the author's meanings. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Voyskunsky, A.E., Soldatova, G.U. (2021) Social-Cognitive Concept of Digital Socialization: New Ecosystem and Social Evolution of Psyche. *Psikhologiya. Zhurnal Vysshei Shkoly Ekonomiki = Psychology. Journal of the Higher School of Economics, 18*(3), 431–450. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1983). Problems of development of psyche. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 3. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). Child psychology. Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 4. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Yaroshevsky, M.G. (1993). L.S. Vygotsky: In search of a new psychology. St. Petersburg: International Foundation for the History of Science Publ. (In Russ.)

Yaroshevsky, M.G. (1994). Historical psychology of science. St. Petersburg: Nauka Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tatyana D. Martsinkovskaya, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Head of the Laboratory of Adolescent Psychology at the Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research; Dean of the Faculty of General and Clinical Psychology, Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis; Professor of the Department of Personality Psychology at the Institute of Psychology of the Russian State Humanitarian University, Moscow, Russian Federation, martsinkovskaya.t@rggu.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2810-2554

Received: 04.03.2024; revised: 20.04.2024; accepted: 07.06.2024.

HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-49
UDC 159.9

Lev Vygotsky: letters to Emma

Nina L. Savchenko ✉, **Marina V. Siyan**

Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ savchenko.ni.leo@yandex.ru

Abstract

Background. The current publication presents the text of three previously unknown letters from L. S. Vygotsky to E.I. Heifetz, which were written by him in 1918, 1920 and 1921. A psychological analysis of the letters was carried out in the context of the author's life at the time of their writing.

Objectives. The goal is to disclose previously unknown aspects regarding the personal and professional development of L.S. Vygotsky.

Methods. Analysis of archival documents in comparison with biographical materials from the period of Vygotsky's life under study.

Results. The letters represent a unique source for understanding the experiences and moral and ethical views of the young Vygotsky: in them he provides reflections on his "Life's Work", the personal choices and social "sacrifices" required for its realisation and talks about the mystery of personal feelings. The analysis shows how these feelings and Vygotsky's life views changed over time.

Conclusions. The analysed letters, along with characteristics of relationships within the family and in the microsocial environment, reveal the uniqueness of Vygotsky's self-perception and personal self-determination in his youth.

Keywords: L.S. Vygotsky, E.I. Heifetz, D.I. Vygodsky, archival documents, letters, personal choice, self-determination

Acknowledgements. The authors would like to thank Vladimir S. Sobkin, a chief researcher of the Laboratory of the Center for Sociocultural Problems of Contemporary Education, Federal Scientific Centre of Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences for his help in the preparation of this article.

For citation: Savchenko, N.L., Siyan, M.V. (2024). Lev Vygotsky: letters to Emma. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *47*(4), 199–220. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-49

Preliminary remarks

The archive of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky was carefully studied by many researchers (G.L. Vygodskaya, T.M. Lifanova, E.Yu. Zavershneva, V.S. Sobkin, etc.). The valuable materials discovered therein have mostly been published and are known among people interested in the work of the great Russian scientist. Yet there exists the feeling that much about his life remains unknown. This feeling is the driver of the current research. One day V.S. Sobkin, who previously published "Comments on theatrical reviews by L.S. Vygotsky" (Sobkin, 2015), as well as the young scientist's first manuscript "Tragicomedy of Strivings" (Sobkin, 2022) and some other materials from Vygotsky's creative heritage, gave us the idea to visit St. Petersburg, where the archive of David Isaakovich Vygodsky, the cousin of Lev Semenovich, is kept in the Manuscripts Department of the Russian National Library. In conversations with V.S. Sobkin, we suggested that new materials about Vygotsky's life could be discovered in the archive, thanks to the close communication and strong friendship between the cousins. In this regard, when working with the archive, we focused on searching for traces of their correspondence.

The aforementioned trip took place in August 2022. The first few days of work with the archive materials were intense, but to no avail. The days allotted for the business trip were coming to an end, and there arose a feeling of resentment for wasted time. Suddenly, we came across a document: a letter to D.I. Vygodsky's wife, Emma, but the letter was not written by the hand of her future husband — the letter "B" was used as a signature. Beba was L.S. Vygotsky's pet name. We recognized his handwriting. Two more letters followed. One was written two years later, the other a year later. All the three letters were found in one archive cell. They describe deeply personal experiences. Could we have even dreamt of coming across something like this?

The tone of this article, as the reader will have noticed, is far from a strict scientific presentation. This is explained by the authors' reverent attitude towards the material they found. L.S. Vygotsky himself asked the addressee to destroy the messages — but contrary to his wish, they were preserved, and here they were in front of us. In agreement with the descendants of Lev Semenovich, it was decided not to deprive the professional community of the opportunity to read these letters. We do not offer the reader material for speculation and gossip, but for an acquaintance with another facet of the author, with his *experiences of youth*, which had a serious influence on the formation of his worldview, including scientific

Gomel, 1921. Photograph of Lev Semenovich, kept by his students

views in adulthood. Of course, we can talk about the social significance of a person, judging by the fruits of his activities. It is sometimes impossible to talk about a *person* without understanding the relationship to their own activities, to others, and without getting to know their personal experiences, not on the basis of "reconstructions", but from their first person.

Of course, it would be too bold to pretend to solve all the meanings hidden in the letters, but we will try to provide comments on some, in our opinion, important points.

Let us start with context.

In 1917, Lev Semenovich completed his studies at Moscow University and returned to Gomel in December (Vygodskaya, Lifanova, 1996). However, before returning, in the autumn of the same year, he spent some time in Samara, as revealed by his correspondence with R.Yu.E., with whom he planned to write a book on the Jewish question. This period is noted by Vygotsky's biographers as a turning point; an emotionally difficult time of worldview restructuring (Zavershneva, 2013). L.S. Vygotsky himself would later talk about "the still unreasonable and unfree, and therefore spontaneous, strong, captivating sadness of our adolescence" in his letter to N.G. Morozova, dated July 29, 1930, describing "minutes and hours of powerlessness, a faint state of soul and will, deep bitterness — almost despair..." (Vygodskaya, Lifanova, 1996, pp. 165–166).

However, it was not only spiritual strivings and intellectual explorations that filled twenty-year-old Lev Vygotsky with anxiety and doubt. This time was also marked by difficult external circumstances. It was during the First World War and life in Gomel was unstable with the occupation, change of government, etc. Upon arriving home, Vygotsky took upon himself the work of caring for his seriously ill mother and younger brother. Unable to find a permanent job, he earned money by offering private tutoring. After some time, Vygotsky's brothers died from tuberculosis and typhoid. In the spring of 1919, with the advent of a peaceful and relatively stable life in the city, he devoted himself to public education, which began the period of his active work in the field of pedagogy and psychology and became actively involved in issues of literature and theatre (Vygodskaya, Lifanova, 1996).

Until now, not much was known about Lev Semenovich's relationship with Emma Iosifovna. The letters we discovered were written in 1918, 1920 and 1921, before Emma Iosifovna Kheifetz became Vygodskaya, the wife of David Isaakovich, in 1922. It is also known that in 1922, David Isaakovich, Emma Iosifovna and Lev Semenovich worked together on the release of the journal "Veresk" (Sobkin, 2015). Emma Iosifovna herself was a children's writer. Her social circle included talented writers, translators,

and philologists who visited her and her husband's house in St. Petersburg. In 1922, she graduated from the Romance-Germanic department of the Faculty of History and Philology at the First Moscow State University. She worked with S.Ya. Marshak, and, after the arrest of David Isaakovich in 1938, Emma Iosifovna corresponded with the NKVD, boldly defending the life of her husband.

Three letters to Emma

In letters, L.S. Vygotsky reflects on his relationship with Emma Iosifovna (at that time still under the name Kheifetz). The first letter was written four years before the marriage of Emma Iosifovna and David Isaakovich, and the last was written one year before. Thus, it is conceivable that the relationship between the young Vygotsky and Heifetz could have been romantic at that time. There was at least was mutual sympathy between them. Although the exact nature of their communication outside of correspondence is unknown, the contents of the letters indicate either a breakdown in the relationship or a refusal to approach one another. In this regard, three ideas are important in which Vygotsky defines changes in his worldview:

• The need for isolation from loved ones to implement the "Work of Life";

• The desire to preserve an idealized image ("the mystery and eternity of impossible feelings");

• Reflection of one's own personal changes.

There is emotional tension in the letters. Judging by the tone and content, by the time the letters were written, a difficult relationship had already developed between Lev Semenovich and Emma Iosifovna. The first letter is in many ways harsh towards Emma and categorical in its statements. The second letter appears to be a revision of the first, where Vygotsky admits his mistakes and expresses his readiness for change. The third letter demonstrates the release of former tensions in the relationship between Vygotsky and Heifetz.

It is worth noting that the first letter was written on 16th November. Emma Iosifovna was born on the 15th of November and Lev Semenovich's birthday was the 17th of November (according to the new Gregorian calendar). Traditionally, many Jewish people do not celebrate their birthdays. On this day, attention is usually directed to the state of one's inner life, learn lessons and correct something in the new year, which, if one works on oneself, will bring happiness. It can be assumed that partly the appeal to rethinking life plans and guidelines, which is reflected in the letter, was

provoked by a special period of reflection during the transition to the next year of life (in connection with the "birthday").

Let us present sequentially the texts of the letters themselves (Archival materials, OR RNL, f. 1169, item 692).

16-XI-18. Evening

Now I'm back from you. — You are all hesitant. You're right. I've known for a long time (even before 1st April) that this is exactly the way it should be. It is impossible to combine incompatible things, even in relation to "pathology" (I'll use this nasty word). It is quite something.

This is not serious to you in the least. For you it is not completely true. It comes with question, hesitation, choice, recognition.

Of course, you (albeit not completely) know that both the first and second (especially) things you have heard are ≠ not true. But the truth is far worse.

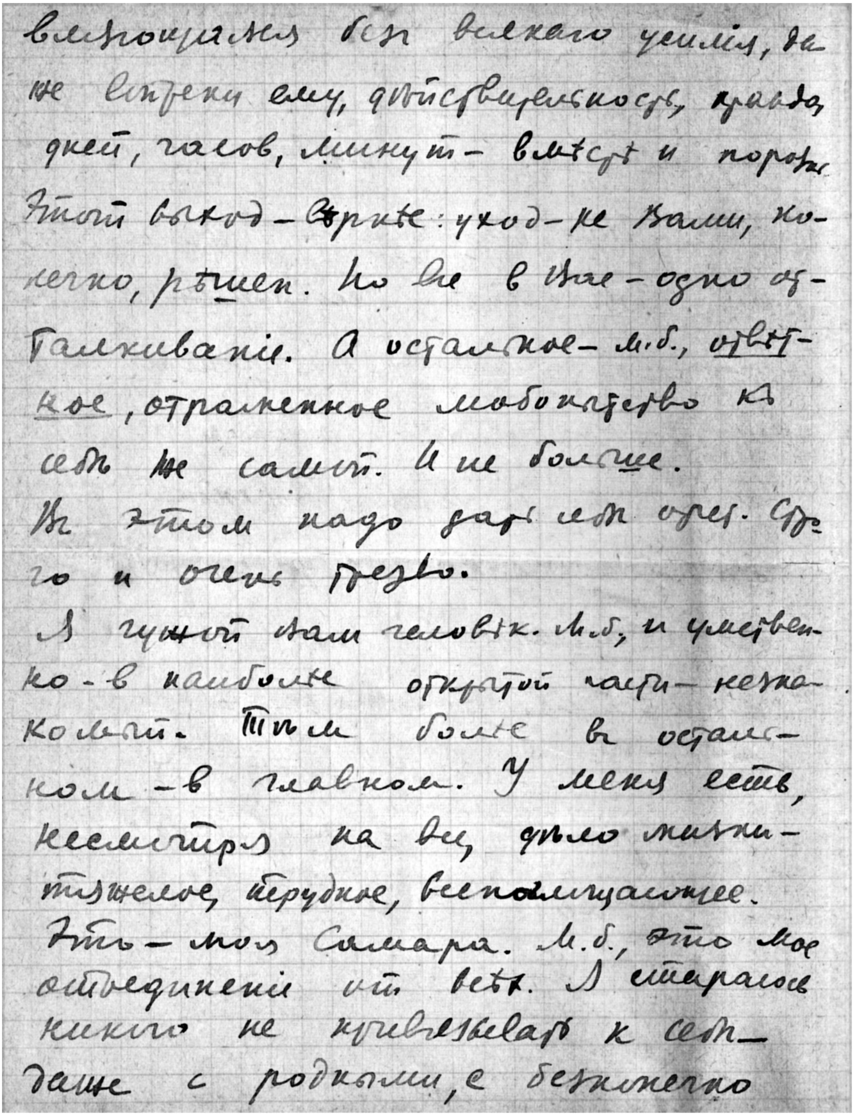
There is only one conclusion from all this. Not a decision or intention, but realised without any effort, and not in spite of it, the reality, the truth of days, hours, minutes — together and separately. This exit — or rather, departure — has been, though not by you, easily decided. But everything about you is interpretation. and the rest is, perhaps, reciprocal, reflected curiosity towards your own self. And there is nothing more.

You need to be aware of this — strictly and absolutely soberly.

I am a stranger to you. Possibly, intellectually — for the most part — unfamiliar to you. Particularly in the other things — in the main thing. Despite everything, I have a life purpose — hard, difficult, all-consuming. This work is my Samara. Perhaps, this is my disconnection from everyone. I try not to tie anyone to me — even my family, my infinitely close ones — I slowly and surely kill every spiritual connection. This is my "work" for now. I can't yet "take on" more. But for me just any life is not possible. And all the paths in it, everything that makes up my life, is trialled by those final trials and falls away like husks. That is, perhaps, it remains, but — dead, lifeless, indifferent. And one thing remains. On this basis, failure and divergence with close people, with everyone, and with you, takes shape and is outlined.

An addition to this: who I am — and what have you already guessed, or, in any case, are unconsciously beginning to guess.

I want to say one thing. I know that we are not together — apart. You need knowledge and more. Not for me. But no matter how life turns out, no matter how bad you later (and now) think about me, no matter how far I go from your life and everything from which it is woven: know one thing. Mine to you is everlasting. If it is impossible and will not be, it is deeper and more



воспоминания без всякого усилия, да-
же вопреки ему, действительность, правда
дней, часов, минут — вместе и порознь.
Этот выход — Стрикс: уход — не Вами, ко-
нечно, решен. Но все в Вас — одно от-
талкивание. А остальное — м.б., ответ-
ное, отраженное любопытство к
себе же самой. И не больше.
В этом надо дать себе отчет. Стро-
го и очень трезво.
Я чужой Вам человек. М.б., и умствен-
но — в наиболее открытой части — незна-
комый. Тем более в осталь-
ном — в главном. У меня есть,
несмотря на все, дело жизни —
тяжелое, трудное, всепоглощающее.
Это — моя Самара. М.б., это мое
отъединение от всех. Я стараюсь
никого не привязывать к себе —
даже с родными, с безнадежно

secret than possibility and life. But it is always there — even in the things that take you away from it. It is always there.

One more thing: go where you rushed under the first impression. And answer the question differently. This will be my happiness for you. I think if it is meant to be, it's happiness, and joy, and opportunity.

But never reveal to anyone (ever!) what we did not and could not have. There's a reason for this and that's your responsibility forever, no matter how easy you take it later.

I'm finishing. These are my penultimate words to you. I hope to say one last thing. We're staying, perhaps, for another day. The inscription is owed.

Be sure to destroy this letter if my sincere request means anything to you. B[1].

Envelope with the signature on it: to Emma Iosifovna Kheifets
15(2) Apr. 1920

I would like to call you Dear Emma this time, because you are not only sweet, but dear; because you are dear to me. — I need to tell you a few brief words of truth — simply and seriously. Yesterday I felt sad and hurt, I did not have the strength to say what I needed to say. Besides, our conversation always takes a deceitful, false and humorous tone, and I need to write a few serious words.

I want yesterday to be a turning-point and a decisive day for me, so that nothing that happened before will ever happen again. This is the day of my most important and deepest decisions — forever.

My words to you this evening — I want to repeat them: never forget, never give up your prejudice.

It also often seemed to me that in the end there would be something that you talked about yesterday, and that I don't want to name.

We have spoiled and made a complete joke of this sacred word. Now I think (who knows?) that this will never happen.

Get married — rather — simply and strictly and wisely: without love, without expectations and joy, but for the difficult task of life. I will never forget the excitement that gripped me all over when in a dark and empty room (your folks were at the dacha) you said that you were getting married; and this excitement gives wings to my thoughts and thoughts about you and allows me to say to you now — on the threshold of my days: — yes, do get married.

This is how life will pass. But at an inescapable hour

[1] In all three letters, Vygotsky signs himself "B" in accordance with his pet name "Beba".

I will answer for you to God.

And this confidence also tells me to say these words that are bitter and difficult for me.

As for me, I forever renounce that frivolous and vulgar tone of my relations with you, of which I am now painfully ashamed and which is perhaps the worst of all the things I have sinned against before people, before myself, before God. I don't have pride now — to seem better than I am; there is no other wish — (there was! there was!) — to seem worse. But looking deeply into my soul and calling it to a strict response and judgment, I find nothing in it except the terrible and inexorable, except the cruel and irreparable.

Forgive me.

It would be better if I were like one of those passing by, like a stranger.

Every time it is better to be silent and far from you than to turn every meeting into torture. I say this without declamation or lies. For me, the blasphemy of my light conversations was torture — and not a joyful one. Now I put an end to them.

If there cannot be another conversation, another communication between us, it is better not to have it at all. This is one of the important decisions I made last night.

There is one thing I am not guilty of before you: I did not say the most cruel and sick thing in your face, as you reproached me yesterday.

With my wanton lies, I have poisoned my joy forever — to see you simply, as your family, friends and relatives see you; sometimes walk next to you, hear you. Maybe someday it will all come back to me. M.b., and you will be calmer. We'll wait.

In the meantime, I need you to know that I am no longer the same with you that I was, that my soul is going on new paths, and from there I can better see what is mine to you, that I have ruined and wasted in vain.

About April, 1st: this is a day of sadness for me, a day of lies about the truth. ~~И~~ On this day I will never be with you again, but I will superstitiously celebrate this anniversary when I buried a part of myself. But if I am alive and new, I will give you another day. — forever and unchangeably, and only you. — I kiss your hand. Yours B.

Gomel.
March 13, 1921.
Sunday.

Dear Emma, in this very difficult and serious moment for you, accept my white joy for you, about L.A.

I felt it sharply, lightly, brightly. I excitedly give it to you just the same. Accept it. I ask you to.

Heartily devoted to you B.

Outline of experience: from subjective identification to the author's position

It is remarkable that under the sign of these tense and contradictory relationships a significant period of Vygotsky's life passes, which began at least no later than the mentioned "fatal" April 1 (recall that Lev Semenovich had already returned to Gomel at the beginning of 1918) and lasted for 3 years.

About these letters, in the words of Hamlet, we could say: "Words, words, words...", and add to them from Vygotsky's thoughts about this play: "Everything happens off stage. Here, as it were, there are only echoes and reflections, gleams, glows of what is happening, only a story, only a shadow..." (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 367). The essence is ineffable for the author himself, if, again, we rely on Vygotsky's ideas of those years, expressed in his first work on Hamlet. The appeal to Shakespeare's tragedy here is not accidental: the work was his favourite one throughout his life, as evidenced by his daughter Gita Lvovna, Lev Semenovich collected different editions of the tragedy, reread it in different languages and could partially quote it by heart (Vygodskaya, Lifanova, 1996). Let us recall that the first serious analysis of "The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, by Shakespeare" (1916) was carried out by him as a part of his diploma work at the university of A.L. Shanyavsky and was later highly appreciated by literary and theatre critics as a fresh, previously unnoticed look at a widely known work.

We find surprising similarities between the way Vygotsky describes the experiences of the protagonist of the tragedy and the way his own experiences appear in the discovered letters. Moreover, the first of them was written two years after the completion of the analysis of Hamlet. In this regard, two considerations can be made.

The first one concerns the assumption that Vygotsky's identification with Hamlet developed into the phenomenon of "reflected subjectivity." Thus, the tragic character, which deeply affected the young Vygotsky, acquires an "ideal representation" in his personality, becomes a "source of new meaning" and contributes to the "transformation of life's relationships to the world" (Petrovsky, 1985, pp. 18–21). However, we note that it can be interpreted in another way: Lev Semenovich recognized himself in Hamlet — his moods, thoughts — and therefore the hero became close and dear to him. One thing is true: his *experiences resonated with the character's experiences*.

The presence of such a strong identification of Vygotsky with Hamlet is in itself not surprising: as V. S. Sobkin notes, the starting point of work with Hamlet for Vygotsky is not just a positive attitude towards the work, but "a special emotional state of "delight"" (Sobkin, 2015, p. 17). Hamlet undoubtedly had a huge influence on the development of Vygotsky's personality. At the same time, he himself notes the importance of the reader's identification mechanism with the protagonist in tragedy: "the essence of the psychological impact of tragedy lies in the fact that we identify ourselves with the protagonist. It is absolutely true that the protagonist is the point in the tragedy, based on which the author forces us to consider all the other characters and all the events that take place" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 239).

The second consideration is related to the change in Lev Semenovich's view of both his favourite work and the world as a whole. Vygotsky would later write that "the essence of any crisis is a restructuring of internal experience", which implies a change in attitude toward the environment (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 385). Based on the above letters and publications by Vygotsky during those years, a *transformation of experience* for him is evident: in many ways like "Hamlet's", his attitude to the world is transformed, the conflict is eliminated, a different understanding of reality and his place in it comes, along with this, the understanding of Hamlet's tragedy changes. In this regard, the work "Psychology of Art" (1925) becomes the result of the spiritual and creative path he passed: from a phenomenological view of art to an attempt to objectively comprehend it. One of his addressees astutely noted this change in Vygotsky in 1922. "Your spiritual pattern is the very last word of modernity," writes R. Yu. E. jokingly in a letter to Lev Semenovich, with whom he had previously discussed national and religious issues (Zavershneva, 2013, p. 17).

And indeed, after the first sketch about Hamlet (1915–1916), ten years later, in "The Psychology of Art" (1925), setting himself the task of developing an objective analytical method for studying art, Lev Semenovich writes that in the absence of such a method, contemporary researchers "use vulgar philistine psychology and home observations" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 34). At the same time, he criticizes the "subjective view", having already had the experience of *reader criticism*, which is based on his own experience and understanding of the tragedy. The course of research is changing diametrically, and now it is designed to meet the requirements of scientific knowledge to a greater extent than the task of deepening into one's own inner world. At the same time, he offers a new approach to the analysis of Hamlet.

In this regard, in letters to Emma, we trace how the experience in Vygotsky's relationship with her changes against the background of both the transformation of his identification with Hamlet and his attitude towards the world as a whole.

"My disconnection from everyone"

"Hamlet's isolation, his complete isolation from people and his new life" is the main subject of study for the young Vygotsky in his first analysis of Hamlet (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 405). He also speaks about the need for "disconnection" in his first letter to Emma in relation to his own plans: "*... this is my separation from everyone. I try not to tie anyone to me — even my family, my infinitely close ones — I slowly and surely kill every spiritual connection*."

In this regard, we note that the idea of isolating from everyone does not correspond to the scientific views he later developed, according to which interaction with significant others and the expansion of the social environment as a whole play a key role in age-related development (Vygotsky, 1984). But such a position is quite understandable in the context of Vygotsky experiencing personal transformations at the time of writing the letters — in a situation of personal crisis. Moreover, it corresponds to the psychological characteristics of age: the first letter was written by Vygotsky on the threshold of his 22nd birthday, the second and third at the age of 23 and 24 years, respectively.

In this regard, using the terms of E. Erikson (who is somewhat similar to Vygotsky in understanding the processes of growing up in the context of relationships with the social environment), it can be noted that while writing letters to Emma, Lev Semenovich experiences the situation of entering "adult" life — coordinating identity in all its aspects. This finishes the psychosocial moratorium, "the essence of which is to test the lower limit of some truth, before entrusting the powers of body and soul to part of the existing (or future) order, to obey the laws existing in society" (Erikson, 2006, p. 248). Vygotsky himself defines this time of a person's life as late adolescence (18–25 years), which opens the period of maturity (Vygotsky, 1984, pp. 244–268). In adolescence, a person essentially begins to engage in self-determination in relation to the life situation in which he finds himself upon entering adulthood. And this period cannot be called calm, since it is full of search and doubts that accompany self-determination. According to E. Erikson, during this period, one's own ideals and aspirations with which one will move through life are established and tested.

According to Erikson, in late adolescence, as an echo of an *identity crisis,* a *crisis of intimacy* may arise: "a young man, unsure of his identity,

avoids interpersonal intimacy" (Erikson, 2006, p. 147). At the same time, "distance is an integral part of intimacy" but in a crisis situation its extreme form — isolation — can manifest itself (ibid.). It is surprising that it is the situation of Hamlet that Erickson cites as an example for an attempt to "penetrate into the essence of one of the 'ages of man'", which, in his opinion, Shakespeare managed to do in the tragedy (ibid., p. 248). The theme of truth and loyalty, first of all, loyalty to oneself — honesty with oneself — lies at the basis of the protagonist's behaviour. Hamlet, according to Erikson, is at an age when "he is ready to lose his moratorium" and must act on the basis of his own identity, which, however, is confused (ibid.). And then, being in an internal search, he plunges into a state of "*alienation* (our italics — N.S., M.S.) from human existence" (ibid., p. 250).

Thus, in the letter to Emma, in our opinion, not only can the manifestation of Vygotsky's identification with Hamlet be traced, but it also reflects the general pattern of experiencing a characteristic age-related crisis. Moreover, we can conclude that Hamlet acts as a special *symbolic device*, a symbol that Vygotsky implicitly uses to "work" with his experiences. This is a way of *cultural mastery of one's own behaviour* in the situation of "everyday" life.

The main idea of the first letter is the impossibility for Vygotsky to combine his "Life Purpose" ("*my Samara*") and any spiritual connection with others. First of all, the question arises of what exactly he sees as his "purpose/work", which requires solitude from him ("*separation from everyone*"). In a letter to R.Yu.E. Vygotsky shares his thoughts in connection with the planned "*Book of the Nation*," in which he wants to present a special view of the fate of a generation (Zavershneva, 2013, p. 11).

Just as Laertes warns Ophelia *against a connection* with Hamlet ("He is a *citizen of his birth* (our italics — N.S., M.S.) <...> The life and health of the entire power depend on his choice"), Lev Semenovich himself warns Emma *against connecting* with himself, since he sees his special role (*life purpose*) in understanding the unique destiny of his people, the Jewish national idea.

There is a clear echo of the characterization given by Laertes to Hamlet here:

"For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal."

Likewise, young Vygotsky is on a spiritual search; he is looking for national, ideological foundations on which he can rely.

Just as Hamlet, having returned to Elsinore from the university in Wittenberg, languishes in his hometown from external circumstances alien to

his inner world, Vygotsky, having returned to Gomel from Moscow, cannot apply the knowledge he has acquired during his studies at Moscow universities. S. F. Dobkin testifies to this in his memoirs: "Everything he knew went far beyond the Gomel everyday life of that time. He could not apply his knowledge. It was a very difficult time for him" (Dobkin, 1996, p. 55). The occupation, the uncertainty of the fate of his native land, the lack of a place to work, difficult family circumstances — all this was depressing and gave cause for thinking about the future.

These thoughts in the context of his own biography and the significance of his relationship with Emma can also be judged from an unsent letter to R.Yu.E., where Vygotsky gives a draft of the preface to "Book of the Nation": "The book is an autobiography in some way. Our language (Russian), meaning, mental life, psychological capital (worldliness, spending time, interests, tastes, aspirations, self-judgment), *conversations with Emma* (our italics — N.S., M.S.). To remember the circle that was inspired by reflection on the fate, the meaning of the Jewry..." (Zavershneva, 2013, p. 11). Thus, among what influenced Vygotsky's worldview, a special place is given to Emma as a significant interlocutor.

Against this background, his words unexpectedly sound in a letter addressed to Emma herself: "*I am a stranger to you. Possibly, intellectually — for the most part — unfamiliar to you. Particularly in the other things — in the main thing*." Such a contradiction reveals an acute crisis in personal relationships. But this is not just a break, but a need caused by the "hard, difficult, all-consuming life purpose" to "slowly and surely kill every spiritual connection."

A special "Hamlet" pain lies behind this. Note that three years before his first letter to Emma, where he shares his experiences with her, Vygotsky describes the experiences of the Prince of Denmark in many similar ways in "A Study of Hamlet" (1915–1916): "For Hamlet, marked by mourning not from here, there is no women's love. Love is all in the world, he is outside the world; and there is no place for it in his soul <...> He is not only detached from people and treats them that way — he is detached from himself and treats himself the same way <...> Love as an indirect affirmation of life (the beginning of life), birth, marriages, peace, everything that tragedy rejects — it has no place in Hamlet's soul" (Vygotsky, 1986, pp. 441–444).

Vygotsky, analysing Hamlet, focused on the hero's internal conflicts, especially his detachment from the world around him and his inability to accept love as a positive and life-affirming principle. Both Hamlet, as perceived by Vygotsky, and Vygotsky himself, experience isolation from the world and refuse to connect with others. But if for Hamlet this relates to

the tragedy of his father's death, for Vygotsky it relates to his work, which becomes a priority for him. If Hamlet's view of reality is determined by a connection with the *other* world (the shadow of his father), in Vygotsky it is a search for historical roots, national and religious self-determination.

Through the prism of Hamlet's experiences, Vygotsky examines the characters and the events taking place, not in tragedy, but in the drama of his own life, which is confirmed by his intonations in the first letter: "*the truth is far worse*," "*for me, just any life is not possible*," "*...what will remain is dead, lifeless, indifferent*."

Vygotsky's idea of isolation, like in Hamlet, is associated with the feeling of the "primordial sorrow of existence". This grief is tragic: "and no matter how we directly and immediately name the cause of the tragic state: fate or the character of the protagonist, we will still come to the source of this state; to the endless, eternal isolation of the "I", to the fact that each of us is infinitely alone" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 487).

"The very fact of human existence — his birth, his life given to him, his separate existence, isolation from everything, isolation and loneliness in the universe, getting from the unknown world to the known world and his constant devotion to two worlds — is tragic" (ibid., p. 358). Thoughts about another world, self-determination regarding spiritual and religious issues, were among the most pressing for Vygotsky in those years (Sobkin, Klimova, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Sobkin et al., 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). S.F. Dobkin notes that Vygotsky received a very good religious education and deeply studied the roots of the Judaic worldview. His reflections in this area were more "historical and moral" than "clerical" in nature (Dobkin, 1996, p. 40). He began searching in this direction at least from the age of 16, when he prepared a report "The Tragicomedy of Strivings" based on reflections on the text of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes (Sobkin, 2022). Based on the distribution of lines from it by periods of life proposed by Vygotsky, one cannot help but notice the similarity between the self-perception of the young Vygotsky in the 1917–1920s and the mental state of his protagonist in the second period of his life. This is "loss of purpose and meaning of activity" (or at least doubts and uncertainty in this regard), and "the desire to test oneself," and an acute sense of time, and recognition and establishment of a relationship with God (ibid., p. 56 –60).

The mysterious Hamlet problem seeks to find its solution in Vygotsky's life in his reflections on the fate of the Jewish people (Zavershneva, 2013). For him, his life's work becomes the embodiment of ideas about the eternal in the context of modernity, about the preservation of unity, traditions and, most importantly, spirit. Having not yet completed such a complex dialogue

in his soul and having not conveyed it to his contemporaries, he cannot give himself to any other work. His heightened sense of community with his own people is accompanied by a feeling of alienation and loneliness among close and dear people. At the same time, let us pay attention to one more detail: the restructuring of relations with the immediate environment is associated not only with his current theme of the history of the people, but also with the history of his own life: an autobiography. Such a look at one's past in the context of the present is a unique way (psychotechnics) to overcome a personal crisis.

The mystery of impossible feelings

The second plot in the letters is Vygotsky's absolute confidence in the depth of his feelings, unchanged under any circumstances and independent of his own decision to distance himself from others.

"But no matter how life turns out, no matter how bad you later (and now) think about me, no matter how far I go from your life and everything from which it is woven: know one thing. Mine to you is everlasting. If it is impossible and will not be, it is deeper and more secret than possibility and life. But it is always there — even in the things that take you away from it. It is always there."

Firstly, it is worth noting that in none of his letters does Vygotsky give a name to his feelings: *"mine to you", "it"* — something inexpressible. And again, when turning to Vygotsky's text about Hamlet, a certain similarity is discovered; it becomes clear that this way of expressing personal experiences is not accidental. Vygotsky places special emphasis on the specificity of Hamlet's feelings for Ophelia: "He loves her all the time, but there is almost not a word about this in the play — the best example of the inexpressibility of his feelings." (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 441)

The inexpressibility of Hamlet's feelings for Ophelia and Vygotsky's for Emma is an important element of the tragedy, part of its *mystery* in both cases. It is the uncertainty and incomprehensibility of these feelings that make them eternal and deep.

Early Vygotsky often comes across the idea that literary creativity does not end with the completion of the process of creating a work but continues in the process of subjective perception by the reader. This is exactly how Vygotsky tried to consider "Hamlet" — not from a traditional, academic point of view, but from a subjective one, studying the work as a mystery that cannot be interpreted logically, because "if critics want to remove the mystery from the tragedy, then they deprive the tragedy itself of its essential part "(ibid., p. 207). Instead of perceiving a work as a "secret" that has

a certain solution, Vygotsky perceives it as a *mystery* — inexplicable and eternal (Bubbles, 2005).

Vygotsky also expresses his feeling — the unnameable *"mine to you", "it"* — which he experiences for Emma. This feeling is "*more secret than possibility and life*" precisely because of its impossibility, unfeasibility. And that is why "*it is always there*" — like an inexplicable *mystery*.

Personal change under the influence of feelings

The pessimism and detachment in Vygotsky's personal experiences in the first letter emphasise the complexity of his relationships with others and his desire for isolation in conditions of internal conflict. Moreover, Vygotsky himself becomes the initiator of separation from loved ones. Note that in his letter to Emma, he seeks to characterise his behaviour ironically, but this is a kind of *mask*. We can also judge the reasons for this by how Vygotsky interprets Hamlet.

"In the performance scene, Hamlet says taunts to Ophelia. In the cynicism of this conversation there is something masking, something that covers, veils. But both the veil and the mask are highly characteristic and important. Here (Hamlet is waiting for the performance, looking at the stage) something hysterical is heard, something humiliatingly joyful and evil, when the shame of the soul, sin has stripped away all external decency and embarrassment, when the nakedness of the soul is no longer cynical (this must be noted — cynicism — vulgarity, but in Hamlet's words there is deep pain and anguish of the soul)" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 444).

The cynicism of Hamlet's words is perceived by Vygotsky as a manifestation of his mental pain. It is noticeable how the tone of Vygotsky's first letter to Emma is also largely dictated by the disguise of internal doubts and contradictions. Such a painful disguise manifested itself not only in letters, but also in personal communication between them, which Vygotsky himself emphasises in the second letter: "*Yesterday I felt sad and hurt, I did not have the strength to say what I needed to say. Besides, our conversation always takes a deceitful, false and humorous tone, and I need to write a few serious words.*"

And indeed, the second letter is more sincere compared to the first. Here is its beginning: "*I would like to call you Dear Emma this time, because you are not only sweet, but dear; because you are dear to me.*" What a contrast there is in such a detailed address compared to the first letter, in which there is no address to Emma at all! One gets the impression that this letter is really being written to *Dear Emma*, while the first letter does not seem a letter at all, but an excerpt from the work "The Tragedy of Vygotsky."

In the second letter, Vygotsky tries to express his unspeakable feelings for Emma. He still refers to them as "*mine to you*," but now he really communicates with Emma, tries to convey to her the meaning of "his" relationship. The mask of cynicism, which covers aggression and resentment, is dropped, tenderness and guilt appear. Vygotsky writes that he refuses the "frivolous and vulgar tone" of his relationships, the wish to seem better/worse, he asks for forgiveness. And suddenly, there is a feeling that the second letter was written by a different person: perhaps Vygotsky, in whom there was less *Hamlet*, but more *Vygotsky*.

It is worth noting that the reasoning in the carefully considered second letter (it even adheres to the pre-revolutionary rule of putting the letter "ъ" at the end of words) is confessional in nature. Confession of guilt before people and before God, thoughts such as "*now — on the threshold of my days*", "*my soul is going on new paths, and from there I can see more clearly — what is mine to you, what I destroyed and wasted in vain*", *"if I am alive and new,*" give reason to assume that for some reason Vygotsky was thinking about the finitude of life at that time. Perhaps he felt the proximity of death due to the exacerbation of tuberculosis, which, according to some evidence, he fell ill with in the "Gomel period".

At the time of writing his first letter, his identification with Hamlet plays a key role in Vygotsky's self-perception. But over time, new motives appear in his worldview that do not correspond to his "inner Hamlet". If, in the first letter, he tries to form an idea of his own feelings on the basis of his ideas about Hamlet's feelings, in the second letter, he reveals a new sense of self — more mature and formed.

In everything I seek to grasp
The fundamental:
The daily choice, the daily task,
The sentimental.

B. Pasternak

We can only guess about what kind of feeling Vygotsky lived in relation to Emma, but in his words about the education of feelings from "Pedagogical Psychology" we will say: he "not only thought talentedly, but also felt talentedly" (Vygotsky, 2012, p. 27). He also wrote the words: "love can become the same talent and even genius as the discovery of differential calculus" (ibid., p. 27). This could only be written by someone who actually experienced the many facets of love; someone who loved. Emphasising the paramount importance of the transformation of experience for the development of personality, he undoubtedly relied on his own experience.

He clearly understood the role of feelings in education: "not a single moral sermon educates as much as living pain, living feeling" (ibid., p. 26). And this feeling, alive, beats in the found lines.

Let us note that for Vygotsky, in his concept of conceptual thinking, the unification of affective and cognitive principles, on the basis of which self-awareness develops, is especially important. The word is a connecting link here, a means and an indicator of development: "in order to catch his mental movements, in order to comprehend his external perceptions, a person must objectify each of them in a word and bring this word into connection with other words" (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 68). He insists on the importance of feelings and their intellectualization for life, for action: "Not the best extreme of emotional education is excessive and falsely inflated sensitivity, which should be distinguished from feeling. By sensitivity we must understand such forms of emotional reactions when the emotion is not associated with any action and is completely resolved in those internal reactions that accompany it. <...> As much as emotion is powerful and important for action, sentiment is so sterile and insignificant" (Vygotsky, 2012, p. 27). We see the implementation of these principles in his own life, using the example of these letters: it is not enough for him to feel, he wants to understand, he wants to be sincere, real, he wants to reflect on his relationships.

Vygotsky sums up his reflection on his own feelings in two lines:

> *This is how life will pass. But at an inescapable hour*
> *I will answer for you to God.*

Note that this is an implicit appeal to the poem of A. Blok:

> *In fire and in cold of a troubles' spot-*
> *The life will pass. We shall remember,*
> *That meeting surely was fated all by God*
> *Standing at grave — in hour of expiation.*

According to Dobkin, A. Blok is Vygotsky's second favourite poet, after Pushkin. Moreover, he was always more attracted to philosophical and tragic motives in poetry (Dobkin, 1996, pp. 41–42). In this case, Vygotsky turns to Blok in an attempt to indicate the uniqueness of the relationship connecting him and Emma. At the same time, he is sure that Emma knows this poem and can understand his true attitude towards her. Such an allegory of her attitude is necessary due to her upcoming marriage. At the same time, this is a moment of rethinking, renewal: in his words, he is "*no longer the same*".

And here the third letter is of particular importance. In it, Vygotsky expresses "*white joy*" about an unknown event related to Emma, showing attention to her life and his readiness to support her in a "*serious and difficult*" moment for her. Although this letter is much shorter than the previous ones, it gives us the opportunity to draw a key conclusion for this story about the rebirth of former passions into a different form of relationship, characterized by care and support.

A year later, Emma will become the wife of his cousin, David Vygodsky. To complete the story, here is an excerpt from another letter that we found in the same archive as the first three. This is a joint letter from Lev Semenovich and his wife Rosa Noevna to David Vygodsky in St. Petersburg. There are many subjects in the letter (Sobkin, Emelin, 2023). Below is a humorous fragment that interests us concerning Emma according to Rosa's characterization:

"I can tell you only a little comforting information about your wife. We saw her only once, the rest of the time she enjoys spending time with her relatives... I once spent a whole day waiting for her, having agreed the day before, of course. But she is not one of those petty and bureaucratic people and bunglingly forced me to be sloppy in the city, waiting for her.

I think that upon your return, you will give her the appropriate talking to require her, if not to remain in town, then to only make relatively careful visits."

We see that the relationship between Vygotsky and Emma has changed and integrated into the system of close interfamily relationships. They are determined by a different context. And here, let us smile, there is a dialectic of its own, when history repeats itself twice — "the first time in the form of a tragedy, the second time in the form of a farce" (Marx, 1957, p. 119). One might think that Lev and Emma are already laughing about their past.

Conclusion

A letter is a continuation of a conversation, holding and prolonging a thought. The above letters, at least the first and the second ones, were written after tense meetings, "unspoken" words, phrases, answers to questions. It is clear that personal correspondence contains features of an oral statement that do not require clarification of the context and details that are obvious to the interlocutor. It is easy for the reader and interlocutor of Vygotsky's letters to imagine how this would be said — with what intonation, facial expression. Let us say this in the words of Vygotsky himself: "The mental closeness of interlocutors... creates a commonality of apperception

among speakers, which, in turn, is the determining moment for understanding from a hint, the abbreviation of speech" (Vygotsky, 1982, p. 343).

At the same time, writing is an indirect personal conversation, therefore, in it "speech relations become determinants, sources of experiences that appear in consciousness about themselves (i.e., speech relations)" (ibid., p. 340). We also notice that the first letter, driven by an emotional impulse, resembles a "mental draft" — inner speech. And remembering that "the internal meaning (or subtext) of a transmitted message can be much richer than its external grammatical content" (Knebel, Luria, 1971, p. 77), we must say that Vygotsky's world of soul is still full of mysteries.

In conclusion, we note once again: these letters have never been and should not have become public, they are a living feeling, very personal. Let none of our speculations disturb the memory of the genius of Russian psychology, but each assumption serve as one of the paths to the knowledge of his personality — multifaceted, unexplored, and unforgettable as it is.

References

Archival materials. The Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia. F. 1169. D. 692. L. 1–9. (In Russ.)

Archival materials. The Manuscripts Department of the National Library of Russia. F. 1169. D. 601. L. 6–7. (In Russ.)

Dobkin, S.F. (1996). L.S. Vygotsky: The way he started. In: I.M. Feigenberg, (ed.), S.F. Dobkin's Memoirs. Vygotsky's early essays. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Publishing Center. (In Russ.)

Erickson, E. (2006). Identity: youth and crisis. Moscow: Flint Publ. (In Russ.)

Knebel, M.O., Luria, A.R. (1971). Ways and Means of Encoding Meaning. *Voprosy Psihologii,* (4), 77–83. (In Russ.)

Marx, K. (1957). The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In the collection of K. Marx and F. Engels Works: in 30 vol. Vol. 8. (2nd ed.). Moscow: State Publishing House of Political Literature. (In Russ.)

Petrovsky, V.A. (1985). The Principle of Reflected Subjectivity in the Psychological Study of Personality. *Voprosy Psihologii*, (4), 17–31. (In Russ.)

Puzyrei, A.A (2005). Psychology. Psychotechnics. Psychogogy. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2015). Commentaries on Lev Vygotsky's Theatrical Reviews. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education RAO. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2022). Lev Vygotsky's Tragicomedy of Strivings: the experience of reconstruction of author's meanings. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Emelin, G.D. (2023). Vygotsky's Criticism of Fascism in German Psychology of the 1930s: Political, Socio-psychological and Personal Contexts. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *46*(3), 189–215. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A. (2017a). Lev Vygotsky on Joy and Sorrow (Comments on the Article "Thoughts and Moods"). *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *3*(23), 71–82. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2017130309

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A. (2017b). "Mourning Lines": on the of National-Cultural Self-Determination of L.S. Vygotsky. *Kulturno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 13(2), 4–12. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2017130201

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A. (2018). Lev Vygotsky: Who Are We? Where Do We Come From and Where Are We Heading For? (On the Question of National and Religious Identity). *Kul'turno-istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *14*(1), 116–125. (In Russ.). https://doi.org/10.17759/ chp.2018140113

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A., Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Santos de Araujo, E. (2024a). "Linhas do Luto": sobre a autodeterminação nacional e cultural de L.S. Vigotski. *Educação Em Foco*, (29) (Especial), e29005.

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A., Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Santos de Araujo, E. (2024b). Lev Vigotski: sobre alegria e tristeza: Comentários ao artigo "Ideias e ânimos". *Educação Em Foco*, (29) (Especial), e29006.

Sobkin, V.S., Klimova, T.A., Prestes, Z., Tunes, E., Santos de Araujo, E. (2024c). Lev Vigotski: quem somos, de onde viemos e para onde vamos? Acerca da questão da identidade nacional e religiosa. *Educação Em Foco*, (29) (Especial), e29007.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982). Collected works: Problems of general psychology (2nd ed.). Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1984). Collected works: Child psychology (4th ed.). Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1986). Psychology of Art. Moscow: Art. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (2012). Education of Feelings. *Vestnik Prakticheskoj Psihologii Obrazovaniya = Bulletin of Practical Educational Psychology*, *9*(4), 26–27 (In Russ.)

Vygodskaya, G.L., Lifanova, T.M. (1996). Lev Semenovich Vygotsky. Life. Activity. Touches to the Portrait. Moscow: Smysl Publ. (In Russ.)

Zavershneva, E.Y. (2013). "I Pray for the Gift of Spiritual Effort": L.S. Vygotsky's Thoughts and Moods in 1917–1918. *Voprosy Psihologii*, (2), 1–21. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nina L. Savchenko, Junior Researcher at the Laboratory of the Center for Sociocultural Problems of Contemporary Education, Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, savchenko.ni.leo@yandex.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8250-9254

Marina V. Siyan, Junior Researcher at the Laboratory of the Center for Sociocultural Problems of Contemporary Education, Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, siyan.marina@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1680-6896

Received: 16.04.2024; revised: 11.05.2024; accepted: 04.06.2024.

HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-50
UDC 159.9

Notes on Lev Vygotsky's "The Psychology of Art": The Metamorphoses of Its Evaluation by Russian Psychologists

Vladimir S. Sobkin ✉

Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Multidisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ sobkin@mail.ru

Abstract

Background. The relevance of the current work is connected to the significance of L.S. Vygotsky's early studies on the formation of the foundations of the cultural-historical approach in psychology and theoretical and methodological principles of modern research on the psychology of art.

Objectives. The aim is to determine the peculiarities of the approach to the study of aesthetic response in Vygotsky's work *The Psychology of Art*. Identification of substantive aspects concerning Vygotsky's research "method" is important for studying the psychological uniqueness of artistic experience. The theoretical and ideological contexts that determine the ambiguity of assessments of *The Psychology of Art* by Russian psychologists will be established.

Methods. Critical historical theoretical analysis, comparative textual analysis of the original text of Vygotsky's dissertation *The Psychology of Art. Analysis of Aesthetic Response* (archive of the Vygodsky family), subsequent editions of *The Psychology of Art*, critical articles by leading Russian psychologists regarding *The Psychology of Art*.

Results. It is shown in *The Psychology of Art* that, when studying the peculiarities of aesthetic reaction and cathartic experience, Vygotsky uses not only the principles of structural, functional and genetic analysis of the artwork, but also a wide range of psychotechnical techniques aimed at interpreting the meaning of the artwork. At the same time, the peculiarity of his use of methodological principles of reactological and psychoanalytical approaches, models of mental experiment in analysing psychological features of the artwork impact are revealed. It is shown that subsequent critical evaluations of *The Psychology of Art* were influenced not only by the theoretical attitudes of various authors, but also by ideological connotations ("ideological filters", "mechanisms of social protection of the text", etc.).

A shift in the substantive critical assessments of the work was recorded: from the dynamic analysis of artistic experience ("waste of energy", "explosive reaction") to the tasks of personal meaning to resolve affective contradictions arising in the perception of different levels of the organisation of the artwork. It is the attitude to the socio-biological type of human development that determines the pathos of the study of *The Psychology of Art* as a "social technique of feeling".
Conclusions. In *The Psychology of Art* the main questions regarding the mechanisms of sign mediation of emotional mental processes and meaning making are thoroughly developed.

Keywords: The Psychology of Art, aesthetic reaction, catharsis, structural-functional analysis of text, artistic form, mental experiment, text comprehension, cultural-historical theory of psyche

For citation: Sobkin, V.S. (2024). Notes on Lev Vygotsky's "The Psychology of Art": the metamorphoses of its evaluation by Russian psychologists. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *47*(4), 221–249. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-50

"...and my utterly desperate vocals
were transformed to a pleasant falsetto
by the technical marvels of science."

Vladimir Vysotsky, "Monument"[1]

"*One is telling as he's willing,*
One is willing what he's feeling,
As he's feeling so he's telling"

Bulat Okudzhava, "I am writing a historical novel"[2]

Preliminary remarks

These "notes" were written in connection with the preparation of a new edition of *The Psychology of Art* by L.S. Vygotsky. The initial motivation was a proposal made to me by Vygotsky's daughter and granddaughter more than ten years ago to prepare the first volume of the 16-volume complete works of Lev Semenovich, which they had conceived. Unlike the *Collected Works in Six Volumes* (1982), this edition, according to their plan, was also to include Vygotsky's works that had already been published separately. These include the monograph *The Psychology of Art*, published in 1965 (the second edition — corrected and supplemented — was published in 1968).

[1] Translated by Kirill Tolmachev
[2] Translated by Evgenia Sarkisyants

After that, the book was published several times with different "prefaces" and "afterwords", but the text remained practically invariant.

The Psychology of Art was supposed to become the main work of the first volume, its content center, which would also include other texts by Vygotsky on art. Lev Semenovich's daughter, Gita Lvovna Vygotskaya, and his granddaughter, Elena Evgenyevna Kravtsova, wanted the text of "The Psychology of Art" to be published in its original form, without the cuts made in the first editions; the removal of very significant fragments from the original author's text. For this purpose, they provided me with the materials available in the family archive (the digitised original typewritten version of "The Psychology of Art", numerous articles by Vygotsky on art, notes, letters, etc.). I accepted their offer with gratitude. However, upon my first superficial acquaintance with the materials provided, I realised that Vygotsky's works on art and their commentary would not fit into one volume. Therefore, I suggested making two. The offer was accepted and, in 2015, under my editorship, with an introductory article and commentary, the first volume of Lev Semenovich Vygotsky's *Drama and Theater* was published (Vygotsky, 2015). In addition, my *Comments on Lev Vygotsky's Theater Reviews* (Sobkin, 2015b) and a small monograph *The Tragicomedy of Searches* by Lev Vygotsky (Sobkin, 2022) were published as separate editions.

Unfortunately, after the deaths of Gita Lvovna and Elena Evgenyevna, work on the publication ceased. Apart from the first, none of the other 16 planned volumes were ever published.

Recently, in connection with a proposal from the Publishing House of Moscow State University, I have resumed the work on preparing Lev Vygotsky's *The Psychology of Art* for publication. In addition to the necessary editorial and proofreading work, which was carried out jointly with E.I. Tashkeyeva (restoring fragments removed from previous editions, checking quotes used in the text, clarifying the information on the authors often not indicated in the text, supplementing the list of references, proofreading, etc.), there was also a need for an editorial preface to the new edition. The notes below are, in a sense, its substantive framework.

Problem, goals and objectives

Though 100 years have passed since it was written, *The Psychology of Art* is still interesting to read today. Are there many such PhD theses in psychology? I would think only very few. Moreover, the text is of interest not only to psychologists, but also to art historians, philologists, sociologists, cultural scientists, and physiologists. In short, to specialists in a variety of

professions. Perhaps this is because the work is an experience of implementing a comprehensive study, as we would call it today. In this regard, evaluating *The Psychology of Art*, we can conclude that it is an example of a scientific work where its main subject — "aesthetic reaction" — is considered from different angles; described in the languages of different scientific disciplines. Such a "polyphony of voices" provides for the internal dialogue organised by its author in the text itself regarding the main declared subject of the study; dialogue as an "obstetric method for generating truth". In this regard, the book itself, in its general composition, structural organisation of chapters, and style, is internally dialogic. When reading the book, an attempt to hear these different voices, in dialogue with which its author finds himself, sets perhaps the main intrigue regarding its meaning — it's understanding today.

The text invites us to a dialogue, and it is designed to do so. What does it mean to take part in a dialogue? Let me remind you that thinking by its nature, as Vygotsky himself noted, is internally dialogic (Vygotsky, 1982); therefore, an invitation to dialogue is also an invitation to the reader to co-thinking, a special responsive understanding.

Hence, another task arises. I will outline it briefly. Indeed, 60 years have passed since the first publication of *The Psychology of Art*. During this time, several generations of psychologists have read it. They have placed substantive emphases in the interpretation of Vygotsky's work differently, depending on their ideas and preferences in the field of art and their own scientific views. At the same time, of special interest — and, accordingly, the subject of my analysis — is the consideration of the attitude to *The Psychology of Art* of those who considered themselves to be Vygotsky's closest colleagues or disciples. I will note that among them this work was also assessed ambiguously. Therefore, I will try, at least as a first approximation, to present an outline of their opinions regarding *The Psychology of Art*. Perhaps the discovery of differences in their assessment and interpretation of this early work of Vygotsky will be useful for understanding not only the contradictions, but also the "zone of proximal development" of the cultural-historical approach in psychology today.

Main results

1. The first professional assessment — K.N. Kornilov

A letter from Kornilov addressed to Vygotsky has been preserved in the family archive. The letter was written in October 1925, on the eve of Vygotsky's defense of his dissertation, the material for which was the text

of *The Psychology of Art*. At that time, Kornilov was the director of the Psychological Institute, where Vygotsky worked and where the defense was to take place. *The Psychology of Art* was presented to Kornilov for expert evaluation of its compliance with the scientific requirements to a dissertation in psychology. Before the defense, Vygotsky ended up in the hospital due to an exacerbation of his pulmonary disease. This explains the appearance of the letter. The fact that the letter has been kept in the family archive for 100 years indicates its great personal significance for both Lev Semenovich and his family. Here is its full text.

Envelope:
Here. B. Serpukhovskaya, 17, apt. 1.
To Lev Semenovich Vygotsky
On the postmark — sent and received 13.10.25.

Dear Lev Semenovich!

If I had not read your dissertation (and I have just finished it), I would have called you by the usual word "respected", but now I want to say as my whole being asks — "dear". And here is why.

I will not conceal from you that I began reading your work in the spring, but only finished reading up to the 5th chapter. Contrary to my expectations, I read it with great effort. Your first chapters are interesting for a specialist, for a philologist, a historian of literature. Fable, story, drama, Krylov, Bunin, Shakespeare — all this is interesting in its own way, and the most important thing is that it is not so easy to grasp where you are leading your reader. And this is almost up to the 9th chapter. And only here do you reveal your cards, only here does that which constitutes the whole essence of your work begin and where you see the face of the author with your own eyes. In accordance with your theory of two opposing tendencies tearing apart every work of art, you have constructed your work in this way, putting everything less interesting and less fundamental at the beginning and concentrating everything most important and fundamental at the end. This construction makes the work lose out for those who do not have enough patience to read it to the end, but it leaves an exceptional impression on those who manage to read it to the last line.

What struck me in your work is the exceptional ideological closeness of the positions we have taken. After all, you were the last to come to our Institute and, as it seemed to me, you came with great mistrust and, perhaps, prejudice, inspired in you (so it seemed to me) by Ivanovsky [most likely referring to the monograph by Vl.N. Ivanovsky "Methodological Introduction to Science and Philosophy" (1923) — V.S.]. And now this enormous work lying in front of me, the work which is your firstborn, as the first major work, in which therefore one cannot be insincere, this work speaks of the exceptional closeness of our

positions in the field of psychology. In fact, your application of the principle of unipolar expenditure of energy to the field of emotions is exceptionally good, I had not thought of such an interpretation of the application of this principle. But what particularly struck me was the simultaneity of the question raised by both you and me about explosive reactions. While you arrived at these explosive reactions purely from theoretical considerations about art, I, as you know, arrived at this question purely experimentally, as a direct continuation of the study of reactions of the most complicated order. And if in my last year's report on the result I had obtained, I could not yet give an exact answer to the question of whether there is an explosive nature of reactions, then on the basis of last year's work, where I introduced an extremely complicated type of reactions (mental arithmetic), the results were, as I wrote about this to Alexander Romanovich in Berlin, completely clear. In all subjects without exception, during complex mental operations, covering up to 3–5 minutes, the explosiveness is completely clear, which can be seen from their curves. And now, when I am processing this question about the experimental study of explosive reactions for publication, I did not have any visual illustrations to confirm this from life facts, like those borrowed from literature and art, which I selected to substantiate the principle of unipolarity. And now I do not even need to select: I can only refer in full to your work, which, following its own path, comes to the same conclusions. It was this coincidence of results with completely different methods that struck me: it is the best proof of the ideological affinity between us. And for the first time it somehow clearly emerged in my consciousness that if we had managed to work together for a few more years, we would undoubtedly have represented an exceptionally close-knit ideological team. And for some reason it occurred to me that no one else but you, with your creative nature, could have organically grown into this team, while at the same time preserving all the richness of your individuality. That is why it is extremely painful for me to feel your temporary withdrawal from our ranks, due to your illness. Let us hope that it is temporary and that you will soon recover. I regret very much that we will not be able to arrange a public defense of your dissertation, in order to have the opportunity to tell everyone about its exceptional value. But I think that only now, when your illness has worsened, we will conduct all the formalities through the board and other authorities. When you get stronger, we, regardless of any formalities, will arrange a public discussion of your work. We will take our own, but for now we will give you the opportunity to use all your rights related to your work, to which you have an unconditional right.

I spent a week over your work, learning from you how to interpret an aesthetic reaction, as it should be given from the point of view of our position.

You did it superbly, and I am infinitely glad that I have such a strong comrade in our joint work, and this joy gave me the right to call you "dear", which, I hope, you will not complain about.

With deep and sincere respect for you, K. Kornilov

12/X- 25. P.S. No answer is needed, since any tension for you should be eliminated now. We will talk later.

The style and respectful tone of the letter itself attracts attention; this is communication that presupposes equal interlocutors. And yet we must not forget that Kornilov was the director of the Psychological Institute, and was twenty years older. In fact, his recognition of the work as a completed dissertation study opened the way for young Vygotsky to professional psychological science.

I emphasise that the above letter is the first professional assessment of *The Psychology of Art*. At the same time, noting the erudition and subtlety of the art history analysis carried out in the first chapters of the work, Kornilov pays most attention to the ninth chapter, which is devoted to the study of the experience of catharsis in the perception of art. Moreover, for the author of the letter it is important to emphasize that *The Psychology of Art* is carried out in line with the reactological approach in psychology developed by Kornilov himself. He certainly had a basis for this. For example, Vygotsky's very designation of the subject of his research — "aesthetic reaction" — testifies to the significance of Kornilov's ideas about the connection between mental processes and experiences in a single reaction of the organism to environmental stimuli. In this regard, the aesthetic reaction, according to Kornilov, can be considered as an "atom of mental life" in the perception of art, since the reaction, from his point of view, contains the subjective side along with the physical one. At the same time, Kornilov notes that the tendencies identified in the dissertation on the material of art confirm his law on the "unipolar expenditure of energy": the more nervous energy is spent on thought processes, the less of it remains for external manifestation, i.e. mental and physiological manifestations are inversely proportional to each other. The activation of thought processes, the role of imagination, in particular, explains the uniqueness of the aesthetic reaction, as a reaction with an "inhibited end", which is specifically discussed by Vygotsky (intellect — inhibited will; fantasy — inhibited feeling). But perhaps the most important thing, according to Kornilov, is Vygotsky's explanation of the explosive mechanism of cathartic experience, the basis of which is the contradiction of artistic form and the material — the process of "closing" different substantive plans of the organisation of a work of art at one point. And this is a manifestation of the same tendency that, according to

Kornilov, he discovered in his experimental studies, where it was shown that the complexity of stimuli brought to the limit leads to an explosive reaction of the subject — an affective resolution of contradictions.

I will note that it is precisely this subject, concerning the reactological theoretical foundations of Vygotsky's interpretation of the aesthetic reaction, that M.G. Yaroshevsky also notes in his afterword to *The Psychology of Art*, republished in 1989 (Yaroshevsky, 1989). At the basis of the cathartic action of the aesthetic reaction lies that counter-feeling, the affective resolution of which is conditioned by the objective structure of the work of art — the contradiction between the material and form.

2. Change of the sociocultural context and theoretical guidelines — A.N. Leontiev

For forty years, the typewritten text of *The Psychology of Art* lay in the family archive, and only in 1965 its first edition appeared, "with minor" (as the editor of the publication Vyach.Vs. Ivanov notes) abbreviations. It is clear that before that only a few people were familiar with the text; those who were part of the "inner circle". I will note that there were other typewritten copies. One of them, a typewritten manuscript with Vygotsky's author's corrections, was found in the archive of S.M. Eisenstein. Based on it, the second — "corrected and supplemented" — edition of *The Psychology of Art* was published in 1968, which until recently was canonical.

The introductory article to the first editions was written by A.N. Leontiev. Today it is of particular interest, both in connection with the experience of interpreting this early work of Vygotsky in the logic of the activity approach (according to Leontiev, in this work,Vygotsky "often says his own thing in words that are not yet his own"), and in relation to the ideological subtexts contained in the article, conditioned by the desire to protect the text from possible official criticism in the 1960s. It is important to hear and "read" these subtexts today; in this regard, Leontiev's article is of unconditional cultural interest. I will note four points.

2.1. Transformation of the original text — the influence of ideological filters

One of the motives of the introductory article, as it seems to me, was the desire of Alexei Nikolaevich to publish the text of the monograph, which was clearly "questionable" for censorship reasons, protecting it from possible bans. In this regard, he uses the technique of reducing the significance of the text for Vygotsky himself: "As is known, *The Psychology of Art* was not published during the author's lifetime. Can this be seen as

just an accident, just the result of an unfavorable combination of circumstances? This is unlikely. After all, in the few years after *The Psychology of Art* was written, Vygotsky published about a hundred works... Rather, this can be explained by internal motives, due to which Vygotsky almost never returned to the topic of art" (Leontiev, 1968, pp. 10–11).

What are these "internal motives", why did he not publish this work? In many ways, they become clearer if we turn to those "minor cuts" made by the editor. Mostly, they concern references in Vygotsky's text to Trotsky and Bukharin in the first and last chapters of the book. In relation to the total volume of these chapters, the volume of editorial deletions is about 16%. It is up to the reader, who will now be able to read the full text, to judge their "insignificance".

I will cite only, as an example, a fragment from the original text with which Vygotsky practically finished his book (I have italicised Trotsky's text, which was omitted from the publication. — *V.S.*): "Since the plan for the future undoubtedly includes not only the reorganisation of all mankind on new principles, not only the mastery of social and economic processes, but also the "remelting" of man, the role of art will undoubtedly change. *"Man," says Trotsky, "will want to master the semi-conscious, and then the unconscious processes in his own organism: breathing, blood circulation, digestion, fertilization — and, within the necessary limits, subordinate them to the control of reason and will. Life, even purely physiological, will become collectively experimental; the human race, frozen homo sapiens, will again enter into a radical reworking and will become — under its own fingers — the object of the most complex methods of artificial selection and psychophysical training. This lies entirely along the line of development... Man will set himself the goal of mastering his own feelings, raising instincts to the pinnacle of consciousness, making them transparent, extending the wires of will into the latent and underground, and thereby raising himself to a new level — to create a higher socio-biological type, if you like — a superman" (Trotsky, 1924).* It is impossible to imagine what role art will be called upon to play in this re-molding of man ..."(Vygotsky, 1925, pp. 263–264).

Thus, for Vygotsky, the refusal to publish his book is most likely connected with self-censorship, since in ideological terms, *The Psychology of Art* turned out to be "not at the right time" just a year and a half after he defended his dissertation (in 1927, Trotsky was removed from all his posts and sent into exile). For the initiators of the publication of the text in 1965 (Leontiev and Ivanov), "minor deletions" are a forced compromise so that the book would be published; at least in the 1960s.

At the same time, in my opinion, the quote from Trotsky was extremely important for Vygotsky in terms of meaning, namely as an explanation of the last line, which concludes the entire text of *The Psychology of Art*: "…as Spinoza said: "What the body is capable of, no one has yet determined" (Vygotsky, 1968, p. 331). I will add that this phrase of Spinoza is also taken out as an epigraph to the entire book. The work begins with it, it determines the ideological and emotional tone of the research. But the point is not only that Vygotsky uses here the stylistic device that is characteristic of the poetics of his texts (especially critical articles on art), when the beginning and end of the text are compared (literally repeated); as if cathartically resolving in a semantic explosion the author's (and, I will add, the interested reader's) reflection on the problem posed at the beginning (Sobkin, 1981; 2015b). Quoting Trotsky, at the very end of the book (putting the "final point"), Vygotsky seeks to emphasise the *social pathos* of his work, that orientation toward the future development of the characteristics of the human psyche ("social technique of feeling") that inspired him as the author of the study. I will say otherwise: such an ending reveals the semantic "closure" (emotional explosion) of the movement of the author's thought, his experience of intellectual catharsis.

I do not know how "insignificant" this deletion is, it is not for me to judge…

I will only emphasise that the importance of a special socio-cultural line of evolution in the development of the human psyche is clearly indicated by Vygotsky here, in his work on the psychology of art. And this, as we know, is the originality and "*social pathos*" of cultural-historical psychology: the biological line of human development has practically ended (cf.: "*frozen homo sapiens*") and socio-cultural factors in the creation of a new "*social-biological type*" come to the fore. These factors are becoming the most important subject of psychological research, both by Vygotsky himself and his followers.

Incidentally, today we are witnessing this clearly expressed tendency of the influence of techno-evolutionary processes in modern culture on changes in mental processes. Thus, numerous studies show how computer technologies change the features of mental development as early as in early childhood.

2.2. From Reactology to the Activity Approach

In addition to overcoming the ideological barriers that made it difficult to publish *The Psychology of Art* in the 1960s, Leontiev undoubtedly

faced another problem: the problem of clarifying precisely those theoretical psychological foundations on which Vygotsky's early work was built.

For reasons understandable to a historian of Russian psychology, Leontiev had to address the inevitable question of the connection between *The Psychology of Art* and the theoretical ideas of reactology. As I noted above, this is exactly how Kornilov himself read Vygotsky's work, supporting it as an original *psychological dissertation study* (Kornilov, 1925). Meanwhile, it is worth recalling that in 1931, a "reactological discussion" was held at the Psychological Institute, in which Kornilov and representatives of the direction he headed were subjected to sharp criticism. The essence of the accusations concerned ignoring the qualitative specificity of higher mental processes, misunderstanding the "essence of the social conditioning of human consciousness". It is clear that Leontiev remembered this discussion well, especially since both Luria and Vygotsky spoke out against the reactological approach in it. Considering this criticism and its negative administrative consequences for the supporters of reactology, it was important for Leontiev (even 35 years later) to emphasise the lack of connections between *The Psychology of Art* and the theoretical and methodological foundations of reactology. I will quote his statement on this matter: "In his book, L.S. Vygotsky does not always find precise psychological concepts to express his thoughts. At the time it was written, these concepts had not yet been developed; the doctrine of the socio-historical nature of the human psyche had not yet been created, *the elements of the "reactological" approach propagated by K.N. Kornilov had not yet been overcome* (the emphasis is mine — V.S.); a concrete psychological theory of consciousness was outlined only in the most general terms. Therefore, in this book Vygotsky often says what he has to say in words that are not his own" (Leontiev, 1968, p. 10). And yet, it should be borne in mind that for Vygotsky himself, the question of studying the aesthetic reaction was of key importance. Moreover, emphasising the significance of this topic, he specifically included it in the title of the book. The text, which is kept in the family archive, is entitled: *The Psychology of Art. Analysis of the Aesthetic Reaction* (Vygotsky, 1925). In the 1965 edition (and all subsequent ones), the second part of the title — "*Analysis of the Aesthetic Reaction*" — is missing. However, I will note that the title, as a special category of poetics, is considered as a *certain key* to understanding and interpreting the work, *given by the author*. Thus, in the "slightly" changed title, we are given a "key", though adapted, as it were, "for a different lock"; for understanding Vygotsky's text in a different socio-cultural and scientific context, that is,

within the framework of the activity paradigm. Most of his subsequent interpretations will be developed in this direction.

2.3. On Vygotsky's objective analytical method and psychoanalysis

Despite the fact that a special chapter in the book is devoted to Vygotsky's criticism of the psychoanalytic approach of researching art, Leontiev considered it necessary to strengthen Vygotsky's negative attitude to psychoanalytic research. This can be explained quite simply and is connected with the philosophical and theoretical contradictions between Marxist and Western psychology; and, what is most important for Leontiev, the opposition of the activity approach, as a continuation of Vygotsky's research line, to psychoanalysis. However, in my opinion, Alexei Nikolaevich fails to correctly complete this task in his short introductory article. I will give a typical example that concerns the key issue of the research method used by Vygotsky.

Leontiev writes: "... in his book he (Vygotsky — V.S.) opposes traditional *psychologism* in the interpretation of art. The method he chose is objective**,** analytical" (Leontiev, 1968, p. 7). In the quoted phrase, I specifically highlighted the comma in bold. It would seem like a trifle... But we all remember from childhood the popular expression "Refrain not to kill King Edward is right", where the meaning of the statement changes dramatically with the place of the comma. Here, too, by placing a comma, Aleksey Nikolayevich tries to destroy the association of Vygotsky's work with Freud's objectively analytical method, which is familiar to a professional reader-psychologist. However, such a technique is unconvincing, since Vygotsky himself already wrote in the preface to the book: "We consider the central idea of the psychology of art to be the recognition of the material being overcome by artistic form or, what is the same, the recognition of art as a *social technique of feeling*. We consider the objective analytical method (note that the comma is missing. — V.S.) proceeding from the analysis of art in order to arrive at a psychological synthesis, as the method of studying this problem, it is the method of analysing artistic systems of stimuli" (Vygotsky, 1968, p. 17). And here follows an explanatory footnote from Vygotsky himself: "S. Freud uses a similar method to recreate the psychology of wit in his book "Wit and its relation to the unconscious" (ibid., p. 504). It can be noted that at this point the publishers of the book resort to a "small trick" by placing this clarification by Vygotsky at the very end of the book, in the "Comments" section (that is, the reader must flip through 500 pages to understand the methodological connection between

Vygotsky's study of the "aesthetic reaction" and Freud's approach to the analysis of the "laughter reaction").

Digression 1. Comments on "Vygotsky's method". The comma placed by Leontiev between the words objective and analytical does not clarify the essence of the method, but rather, on the contrary, obscures it. In this regard, it is important to turn to Vygotsky's essay on Hamlet, written in 1915, where his "experience of reader criticism" is presented in detail, as well as to his theater reviews of 1917–1923 (Vygotsky, 1968; 2015). It is here, as it seems to me, that the essential features of those psychotechnical methods and techniques that he uses in interpreting works of art are manifested. It is clear that, in *The Psychology of Art,* the very "psychotechnics" of discovering meaning, revealing subtext, is subordinated to other, specifically research tasks. At the same time, Vygotsky's ability to "run into meaning", to pose and solve "problems with meaning" when reading a text is of great importance for his objectively analytical method; without this, his "living research" would remain "foul-smelling, dead words" (N. Gumilyov, *The Word*) about art.

Discussing the uniqueness of the "Vygotsky method", I will note only four points.

The first point is that in Vygotsky's etude about Hamlet, it is assumed (and this is one of the key initial psychotechnical conditions of his analysis) that the reader-critic himself experienced an acute emotional experience (*catharsis*) when perceiving this work of art. Moreover, it is important to discard other known interpretations and remain "face to face" with the text, since this is precisely his own reading. At the same time, the reader-critic in the process of reading is in a *dual position*: simultaneously correlating the change in his semantic experiences with the artistic features and content of the text. Thus, the text is considered as a kind of "musical notation" of the score of the reader's semantic experiences. These "*notes*" must not only *be read* (which implies knowing the features of the artistic language, its means of expression, etc.), but also *be played*, evoking the corresponding feelings and experiences. And here the ability to detect in the structure and content of the text those internal affective contradictions that determine the further development of artistic experience; the development of a semantic understanding of the text is of fundamental importance. I emphasise that it is not only *detection* that is important, but also *response*.

In this regard, I will return to Vygotsky's definition of his method: "…an objectively analytical method, proceeding from the analysis of art, in order to arrive at a psychological synthesis — a method of analysing artistic systems of stimuli" (Vygotsky, 1968, p. 17). Note that here the *analysis*

concerns the work of art, and the *synthesis* concerns those experiences and meanings that arose in the reader. It is this *analytical-synthetic unity* that determines the uniqueness of the method.

Moreover, Vygotsky specifically illustrates in detail the essence of such analytical-synthetic activity using the example of two chapters devoted to the study of the fable: one of which concerns the methods of *analysing the elements* of the construction of the fable (Chapter 5), and the other (Chapter 6) — *synthesis* — those techniques for detecting the affective contradiction and "subtle poison" of experiences during its (the fable's) perception. In general, the study of the fable demonstrates a method for identifying the conflict between the declared idea of the fable (moral maxim) and the logic of the development of the process of the reader's experience during its perception; detection of the course of the process of that "counter-feeling" that *refutes* the moral of the fable formulated at the level of *meanings*.

The second point characterising "Vygotsky's method" is associated with the experience he acquired as a professional art critic when writing numerous (about 70) theater reviews (Sobkin, 2015a). If the experience of "reader criticism" is oriented toward introspection of one's own experiences in connection with the structural features of the text, then the main subject of professional criticism is *artistic generalisation* aimed at identifying, on the one hand, the author's idea (its "super-task"), and, on the other, the range of those basic social problems that determine the ideology of the work. Here, the critic turns out to be a special cultural mediator between the author, the text and the audience. And this, in turn, requires "expanding the social context", giving the text general cultural significance, its special "understanding". In this regard, the artistic text is fundamentally open not only to individual "empathy", but also to art history and cultural interpretations.

Accordingly, the method of psychological analysis of a work of art changes, since it is necessary to find not only substantive connections between various structural levels of the text and semantic experiences, but it is also important to *translate these senses into meanings*, turning to social, cultural, and political contexts for this. Such a transition from "*intra to inter*" is necessary for Vygotsky's research method, since it is precisely this that allows for a psychological analysis of art as a "social technique of feeling".

Moreover, here the peculiar "shuttle" nature of the process of interpreting a work of art is clearly evident: the initial emotional experience associated with a particular fragment (episode, character's action, plot, artistic device, etc.) is comprehended in the context of the general structure of the work of art when searching for its ideological concept. Then again, on the basis of awareness, the same fragment of the text is experienced anew, in

new interconnections, in a new semantic context. Such a "shuttle" process (sometimes multiple) of emotional experience and its comprehension characterises the complex "fermentation of meaning", *when the tear of the initial emotion turns into the wine of the feeling experienced by the reader*. This, ultimately, is aimed at determining the logic of the socio-psychological mechanism that underlies art as a "social technique of feeling".

The third feature of the "Vygotsky method" is the use of a *thought experiment*. Its uniqueness requires special explanation. In this regard, I will give a slightly different formulation of Vygotsky's definition of his objectively analytical method: "... every work of art is naturally considered by a psychologist as a system of stimuli, *consciously and intentionally* (emphasised by me. — V.S.) organised in such a way as to evoke an aesthetic reaction. At the same time, by analysing the structure of stimuli, we recreate the structure of the reaction" (Vygotsky, 1968, p. 40). In this definition, it is important to pay attention to the "conscious and intentional organisation" of the artistic structure.

In this regard, I will note that a *thought experiment* presupposes researcher's special ability to put himself in the *author's position*: mastery of the psychotechnics of methods for organising a special artistic communication "writer — text — reader". In the course of such a thought experiment, a research psychologist "probes" how certain changes in the relationships of certain elements of form and content of a work of art influence its (the work's) emotional-semantic perception ("aesthetic reaction"); he tries to "return the shame of sighted fingers, and the bulging joy of recognition" (O. Mandelstam, *The Swallow*). Moreover, the fundamental difference from the "live" real process of artistic communication here consists precisely in the reflexive analysis of the content of the mental "experiments" conducted by the psychologist, where the variables are the changes and deformations introduced into the text, and the results are assessments of the features of possible emotional-semantic shifts in one's own experience, as a *response* to such changes.

In essence, we are talking about identifying the meaning of the artistic form, when the mental deformations carried out by the researcher lead to the disappearance of artistic experience ("aesthetic reaction"). In support of this, I will cite here another remark made by Vygotsky regarding his method: "The objective analytical method takes as the basis of the study, as its starting point, the difference that is revealed between an aesthetic and a non-aesthetic object. The elements of a work of art exist before it, and their effect has been more or less studied. A new fact for art is the method of constructing these elements. Consequently, it is precisely in distinguishing

the artistic structure of the elements and their non-aesthetic unification that the key to unraveling the specific features of art lies. The main method of research is comparison with the non-artistic construction of the same elements. That is why form serves as the subject of analysis; it is what distinguishes art from non-art: the entire content of art is also possible as a completely non-aesthetic fact" (Vygotsky, 1968, p. 506).

A similar method of research is clearly presented by Vygotsky in the 7th chapter of the book, devoted to the analysis of the story by I. Bunin "Easy Breathing". In it, he examines the relationship between the plot and the storyline, revealing the internal contradiction that arises between the sequence of events in the heroine's real life and how they are presented in the novella. I will note that he, not at all accidentally, defines the logic of such an analysis through the opposition "anatomy — physiology" of the story. This is of fundamental importance. The fact is that here "physiology" presupposes the definition of the function that this or that element of a work of art plays (specifically, in the analysis of the story, its "event" side) for the generation of artistic experience — catharsis. Thus, it is precisely in relation to the functional goal (providing a certain "aesthetic" effect) that the structure of the text (its "anatomy") is considered. At the same time, I would like to emphasise that the opposition itself ("anatomy — physiology") already contains a methodological position that is fundamental for Vygotsky's subsequent psychological research: "function generates organ"; a position that, as we know, is important not only for the line of biological evolution, but also for the line of socio-cultural development of man; his higher sign-mediated mental functions.

I would like to add that the principle of text deformation outlined here by Vygotsky is possible not only in the form of a "thought experiment", but also on real material. For example, Lev Semenovich himself, on the pages of his book, repeatedly turns to a comparative analysis of different translations of the same text into Russian, while recording various semantic shifts in its understanding and experience. In general, such an approach opens up broad prospects for the development of research in experimental aesthetics (Lotman, Petrov, 1972; Gracheva et al., 1988); I will also refer to some of my own studies (Sobkin, 2006; Sobkin, Adamchuk, 2012; Sobkin, Markina, 2010; Sobkin, Shmelev, 1986).

Moreover, I will note that another line of experimental psychological research in the field of art psychology is also possible, aimed not at *deformation*, but, on the contrary, at *generating* artistic texts (Sobkin, 1985). A similar *generative principle* in real artistic practice manifests itself when, for example, a master needs to "*slightly*" correct a student's work so that it

"sounds aesthetically pleasing". The principle is well known in art pedagogy; Vygotsky also draws attention to such co-creation between teacher and student.

In fact, here it is necessary to take only one small step to discover the connection between the principle of *generative experiment* in art and Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The step is "small", but behind it lies an important, in my opinion, clarification. The fact is that, when discussing the issue of the ZPD as a space for joint activity of an adult and a child, it is often overlooked that the "zone" defines a single (common) *semantic space* of the activity of a teacher and a student (more broadly — an adult and a child). This presupposes the ability of an adult to take the child's position, to look at a problem through his eyes, to feel his meanings when solving a problem situation. In fact, in the "zone", motivational and goal-oriented aspects of activity are worked out and experienced; this is a special space, a field of semantic development.

Finally, the fourth point associated with the peculiarity of the "Vygotsky method" is clearly manifested when considering the general methodological concept of the empirical part of the study in *The Psychology of Art*: "it was most convenient to arrange the study from simple to more complex, and we intend to consider a fable, a short story and a tragedy as three literary forms that gradually become more complex and rise above one another" (Vygotsky, 1968, p. 117).

What does Vygotsky mean when he speaks of "complexity"? I will note that such *complexity* and *elevation of forms* is conditioned, in turn, by accepting Hegel's classification of poetry into epic, lyric and drama, which are considered as three types of *historical development* of literature. Thus, for Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art*, it is important to study the differences in the "aesthetic response" to different types and genres of literature, as well as the *historical evolution of the aesthetic response*: how from the initial "seed" of contradictions in the fable (opposite direction of action, contradictions of the plot and story, contradictions of character) different specific, more "complex" types of aesthetic response grow and develop. Hence, the conclusion is quite legitimate that in this early work Vygotsky proceeds from the idea that the analysis of the *historical evolution of the structural features of literary forms* allows us to trace, in turn, *the phylogenesis of the development of the psychological features of the aesthetic response*; to discover precisely *the historical development of the psychological mechanisms of the artistic experience of art*. And this, I note, is one of the key theoretical postulates underlying his cultural-historical psychology; the postulate of the need to compare the development of mental processes in phylo- and ontogenesis.

The approbation of the possibilities of studying the phylogenesis of the development of aesthetic reaction is carried out in *The Psychology of Art*. Here, the evolutionary line of complication of artistic experience is manifested in the movement from the discovery of an affective contradiction between the actions of characters and morality (fable), to the feeling of destruction of material by form (short story) and to the experience of a catastrophe based on the mechanism of identification with the protagonist (tragedy). Moreover, the evolution of aesthetic reaction is considered precisely as the "absorption" of previous forms and the superstructure of psychological mechanisms that determine artistic experience.

Summarising the above regarding the "Vygotsky method", we can conclude that *The Psychology of Art* contains in implicit form the key triad — *structural, functional and genetic analysis*, which characterises the methodological uniqueness of the organisation of research into the study of the characteristics of mental processes and mechanisms within the framework of the cultural-historical approach. Of course, this statement is important, but in order to understand the uniqueness of the *method* used by Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art*, the triad itself cannot be considered in isolation from those *psychotechniques* of analytical-synthetic activity to detect subjective affective experiences and methods of interpreting a work of art. It is clear that the psychotechnical uniqueness of this analytical-synthetic activity — *the ascent from abstract meanings to senses* — is presented here by Vygotsky only on specific examples of research of certain works of art and is not disclosed in its entirety. However, the main requirement is obvious: the sensitivity of the research psychologist in the analysis of art to affective contradictions and the ability to be surprised, to respond to them. This gives me reason to call Vygotsky a *meaning-maker* in psychology; to define him with the word that Osip Mandelstam used regarding his close circle, saying: "we are meaning-makers". As S.S. Averintsev notes, a meaning-maker is characterised by "exceptional tenacity with which the poet's mind follows, without retreating, the same thought, sometimes going into the depths, sometimes coming to the surface" (Averintsev, 1996). And I will add: "the mind of a psychologist-meaning-maker".

2.4. Catharsis as a meaningful center of aesthetic reaction

At the very beginning of the article, I noted that Kornilov drew attention to the *explosive* nature of the aesthetic reaction as the most important result of Vygotsky's research in *The Psychology of Art*. I will add that the completion of the "explosion" is a state of *harmony*, when all parts come together into a single whole, into a single gestalt. Here, counter-feeling finds

its resolution and this causes a kind of *pleasure*, harmonising the emotional sphere of the individual during the experience of catharsis. Thus, if we discuss the dynamic aspect of the cathartic experience, then at its core lies a simultaneous explosion of affective contradictions and, at the same time, a feeling of completion of the gestalt in the work of art.

At the same time, I will emphasise that the issues of catharsis are touched upon by Vygotsky when discussing various aspects related to the psychological uniqueness of the aesthetic reaction: thinking, imagination, emotional-volitional processes, problems of understanding, personality traits, etc. Moreover, in the course of analysing the psychological phenomenology of the aesthetic reaction, various existing theoretical concepts and explanatory schemes are often used (or rather, tested). This gave Leontiev the right to say: "he often says *his own* things, *not in his own* words". For me, it is important to draw attention to something else here: for Vygotsky, analysis is not simply "reduction to the known," but a willingness to enter into *dialogue* with other authors, a desire to show that in order to explain the phenomenology of aesthetic reaction, new approaches are needed. In these dialogues he really does "say his own thing".

For example, discussing the uniqueness of artistic cognition, the importance of imagery and allegory in art, Vygotsky introduces a special concept of *emotional intelligence*, which he considers as a special type of thinking with the help of synthetic judgments based on affective states during the creation and perception of works of art. Analysing the issue of understanding, he compares such different ways of interpreting works of art as "reading out" from the text and "reading into" the text, the latter being done by the reader who imposes his own ideas on the text. An important role in the "reading into" is played by emotional mental processes: pleasure, hedonism. Discussing the importance of ideological aspects in art, Vygotsky in parallel specifically analyses the phenomenology of unconscious mental phenomena and the role played here by the mechanisms of substitution, "deception" of censorship, masking, repression, rationalisation, de-automatisation of perception and the experiences associated with them: sublimation of desires; expenditure and saving of efforts; condensation, concentration, delay and inhibition of affective states; the substantive dynamics of repression and the transition from painful negative states to pleasure and enjoyment. In this regard, catharsis acts as the most important mechanism for transforming the unconscious into the conscious social; a mechanism for expanding the personal experience of the "I" in the general process of the impact of art and its social role as a "social technique of feeling".

Moreover, considering issues related to the experience of catharsis in art, Vygotsky emphasises the fundamental importance of imagination and fantasy, which, through the actualisation of a special psychological process of "empathy", allow the reader to bring into a work of art from within himself — to *empathise* with it — certain feelings of his own, which determines the uniqueness of the cathartic experience in the process of aesthetic reaction. Moreover, he emphasises the possibility of the existence of affects of two kinds. One is *compassionate empathy*, when we, together with Othello, experience his jealousy, his suffering, when we *sympathise* with him; the other is a *contributing affect*, when we worry about Desdemona, who does not know what threatens her. It is characteristic that in both cases (compassionate and contributing) we feel the *value of our participation in the other*. This is what determines the positive emotional experience as a result of catharsis: "we cry out our grief", and not the character.

I will emphasise that all the listed substantive moments in the various directions of analysis of the aesthetic reaction are oriented towards identifying the central moment — the uniqueness of the catharsis experience in art.

Let us return to Leontiev's introductory article to the 1968 edition of *The Psychology of Art*. In it, although briefly, he specifically dwells on the topic of catharsis. Moreover, just as with the research method used by Vygotsky, he again emphasises the obvious difference between Vygotsky's approach and psychoanalytic interpretations of catharsis. He writes: "The meaning of this term in Vygotsky's work, however, does not coincide with the meaning it has in Aristotle's treaties; even less does it resemble the flat meaning it received in Freudianism. Catharsis for Vygotsky is not simply the elimination of suppressed affective drives, liberation through art from their "filth". It is, rather, the solution of some personal task, the discovery of a higher, more humane truth of life phenomena, situations" (Leontiev, 1968, p. 10).

Of course, such an interpretation of Vygotsky's understanding of catharsis is legitimate. Moreover, here we see Leontiev's clear desire to fit *The Psychology of Art* into the theoretical concepts of the activity approach he himself developed; the desire "*to pronounce Vygotsky's words in his own words*"; in his own language, in his own terms and concepts that are close to Leontiev (and, I note, later also to Vygotsky). In this case, the distinction between *meaning* and *sense* is central; *setting the task* for *personal sense*.

Meanwhile, it is important to keep in mind that Vygotsky clearly takes into account both the Aristotelian *phenomenology* of the experience of catharsis when characterising the uniqueness of the aesthetic response,

and the role of *unconscious processes and mechanisms* when interpreting the *effect of pleasure* that arises during the perception of art. This, I note, is what I wanted to show above. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the phenomenology, the "image" of the aesthetic response that Vygotsky was guided by.

Digression 2. On the uniqueness of cathartic experiences in art. I will try to define the "image" of the *cathartic experience* that Vygotsky could take into account in his research; the image of that unique *cultural norm of artistic experience*, which, as a value-target reference point, determines, in turn, the substantive nature of the study of various aspects of the aesthetic response. This norm, as they say, is "on everyone's lips". I will give characteristic quotes — stable "formulas" of the aesthetic experience that have become entrenched in the culture. Each of them captures certain of its facets.

Here is a classic definition by Aristotle: "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an important and complete action, having a certain volume, [imitation] by the means of speech, decorated differently in each of its parts; by means of action, and not of a story, accomplishing by means of compassion and fear the purification of similar affects" (Aristotle, 1957, p. 56). There are many interpretations of this definition and their consideration is not included in my task. At the same time, it can be assumed that the position closest to Vygotsky was that of I.V. Goethe, who understood catharsis as a pacifying completeness between compassion and fear. This echoes Vygotsky's idea of the closure of meaningfully different affective lines in a cathartic experience. Moreover, in Goethe, such reconciliation of various passions is accomplished with the help of *consciousness* — understanding and revealing the essence of the phenomena that gave rise to the tragic action. In this regard, I would like to note that Vygotsky not only takes into account the importance of the participation of consciousness, but places a special emphasis on the character itself, the uniqueness of "comprehension" in the purification of affects; this comprehension is carried out with the help of a special *emotional intelligence*.

Though there is another aspect to Aristotle's definition. It concerns the special role of *action* ("imitation of action") in the experience of catharsis in the perception of tragedy. Since Vygotsky was well acquainted with Stanislavsky's system (Vygotsky, 2015; Sobkin, 2015b), he felt and understood perfectly well the effective basis of catharsis, the uniqueness of the viewer's (reader's) *co-action* to the character. Hence the special significance he attached to the need to isolate *action and counteraction* in the structural analysis of different levels of organisation of a work of art.

Finally, of special interest is the consideration of the role of the mechanism of effective identification in the cathartic experience, associated with feelings of *compassion and fear*. Such duality, two-dimensionality is of fundamental importance for understanding the uniqueness of artistic experience: if *compassion*, in my opinion, refers to the hero, *fear* refers to oneself, acting in an imaginary tragic situation.

In addition to Aristotle, in Russian culture, the statements of A. Pushkin are undoubtedly of key importance in determining the uniqueness of the psychological influence of art on personality. I will cite three of his statements that touch upon important aspects of this problem; these are those of his statements that were undoubtedly known to Vygotsky, as a person who received a professional philological education.

In 1830, Pushkin wrote the poem "Elegy" (Pushkin, 1957, p. 178). It begins with a description of the depressed emotional state of the lyrical character ("Of madness years the faded joy and laughter / Weigh gravely like a hazy morning after.... / My way lies dreary. Work and grief are written). But the poem ends with an enlightened feeling: " And, it could be, my sunset's melancholy / One final smile of love will lighten, jolly"[3]. In fact, here in poetic form a description of the state of catharsis is given. It is a description associated with the "cleansing" of the character from negative experiences.

I have not yet mentioned the most important thing. The structure of this poem includes three more lines: " Amidst the anguish, daily charge, and sadness: / I'll bare my soul for harmony to sweep; / Upon a fiction, heavy tears I'll weep". These three lines characterise that unique way when, with the help of art (experiencing the aesthetic feeling of beauty — " bare my soul for harmony "), the hero resolves his life contradictions. This is a necessary way out of a real-life situation into an imaginary one. I would like to emphasise that the *awareness* and *understanding* of the tragic nature of one's personal situation (cf. Goethe's "pacification") is included by Pushkin in the very structure of the artistic text. Such an artistic device of "modeling" the way of resolving a conflict by including the very way of understanding a conflict situation in the structure of a work of art allows us to draw a conclusion about the fundamental significance of a *reflexive exit* regarding one's negative states when experiencing catharsis in art; a reflexive exit, placing oneself *above* one's real-life situation, turns out to be a mechanism of personal development.

[3] Translated by Evgenia Sarkisyants.

Meanwhile, I would like to note that in the artistic environment, as a rule, only one line is quoted from this entire poem: "Upon a fiction, heavy tears I'll weep." A capacious and fundamental thought for understanding the peculiarities of perception of art is expressed here in a clear, memorable "formula". Indeed, when perceiving art, we retain two planes: our real, life plane and the artistic, fictional plane. The difficulty lies in explaining the psychological mechanism of this fundamental phenomenon: our *real tears* over a *fictitious situation*. Hamlet's question: "What is he to Hecuba, what is Hecuba to him?" is still awaiting its psychological resolution.

In this regard, it is important to pay attention to the two preceding lines. In them, Pushkin gives us a kind of a hint. The perceiver of a work of art must have his own *personal experience* of filling his own "sorrows". Moreover, the perceiver himself must be in a certain psychological state of *readiness to respond* to the work of art, readiness to *recognise* his personal problem, his "sorrows, worries, anxieties" in the work of art. Without this, he cannot feel the harmony of art ("sweep in harmony"), in order, in turn, to harmonise himself.

In 1830, Pushkin also wrote the poem "Hero", which contains two lines that are often found today in evaluative judgments about art: "The dark of lower truths is dearer — / We're subterfuge aspirant… " (Pushkin, 1957, p. 200).[4] Two points are important here. One concerns the opposition "banality — originality"; more broadly, — the opposition of an everyday life situation, and that unusual structure, those *forms* of organisation of *space and time, events and characters* that determine the originality of works of art. This was shown by Vygotsky in the analysis of the fable and Bunin's short story "Easy Breathing", and in the analysis of Hamlet.

Another point is connected with the meanings of the words "aspirant" and "subterfuge" used by Pushkin to understand the uniqueness of the feeling that arises when perceiving art.

Thus, "subterfuge" is not just an imaginary, conventional situation. This is a special distinction between the *truth of life* and the *truth of fiction*. Here a special, extremely important facet is noted: art is "not like in life", it is "subterfuge", it is "fable". Vygotsky pays special attention to this, drawing parallels and, at the same time, recording the differences between conventionality in art and in play; between an imaginary situation in children's play and an imaginary ("deceptive") situation in art. Speaking about the importance of "deception" in art, it should be emphasised that on the part of the perceiver this is *voluntary participation in deception*. Moreover, he

[4] Translated by Thomas Beavitt.

wants to *be deceived*. Director A. Ya. Tairov put it wonderfully: "A theater ticket is a contract of deception. The theater undertakes to deceive, and the spectator undertakes to believe (that is, to be deceived, to succumb to deception). In order to comply with the contract, both parties must fulfill their obligations well and voluntarily, willingly" (Tairov, 1970, p. 475). But the game is also voluntary, and the child *wants* to play it and plays it without external coercion. But who is he *deceiving*, why does he *like it*, from whom and in "what currency does he buy the ticket"? What is the nature of this "Homo ludens"?

Finally, the idea of the "elevating" deception is clear: cathartic experiences associated with the perception of art make a person better, elevate him above himself. In this regard, art is a kind of amplifier of human cultural potential. And, at the same time, art presupposes the manifestation of *creative activity* on the part of the perceiver (reader, viewer, listener): in art, man creates himself in proportion to the human race. In this regard, the socio-cultural context becomes obvious, which allowed Vygotsky to formulate the main thesis of his work on the social function of art as a "social technique of feeling".

I will cite the last, third statement of Pushkin, which is important in connection with the definition of the uniqueness of the phenomenology of artistic experience. In the autumn of the same 1830, Pushkin wrote an article *On Folk Drama and the Drama "Marfa Posadnitsa"*. We encounter another judgment, brought to the point of a formula in it: "The truth of passions, the plausibility of feelings in the supposed circumstances — this is what our mind requires from a dramatic writer" (Pushkin, 1958, p. 213).

The judgment is especially widespread in the theatrical environment. However, its meaning is usually significantly transformed, since the statement is often attributed to the actor, and not to the playwright, as in Pushkin. Therefore, following Stanislavsky, instead of "assumed circumstances" they often talk about *proposed* circumstances. Outwardly, the differences are insignificant, but in fact they are quite significant. Thus, *assumed* circumstances imply creative activity, the imagination of the writer for whom the situation is not yet complete, it must be invented, *assumed*. For the actor, the creative process unfolds along a different line — he works with an already "prepared" situation, namely, one proposed by the playwright. Here, there is another creative psychological mechanism, not so much fantasy but imagination; a mechanism when it is necessary, like the reader, to include oneself in the *proposed* circumstances. In this regard, I will note that Vygotsky in *The Psychology of Art* subtly captures, despite

the external synonymy, these psychological differences between fantasy and imagination.

It is also worth paying attention to the peculiar combination of two experiences in this statement by Pushkin: "the truth of passions and the verisimilitude of feelings." Why did he combine them so strangely? And what does this opposition mean: "truth — verisimilitude"?

From the context of the article, it is clear that we are talking about a comparison of "truth in life" and "truth in art." On the one hand, art should reflect life, and true human manifestations are important here ("true passions"), but on the other hand, feelings should be expressed in artistic form, correspond to the norms of art, therefore they are conditional ("verisimilar"). Here, not only the uniqueness of artistic experience is emphasised (the dual nature of feeling in the aesthetic reaction itself), but also the uniqueness of the nature of artistic communication, that "*what our mind requires from a dramatic writer*".

To conclude the current digression, I will touch upon one more aspect. It is fundamental for understanding the nature of catharsis. Here, I must turn to the work of another poet — to the poems of Osip Mandelstam. Exactly one hundred years after Pushkin's tragic death at a duel, Mandelstam wrote in 1937 while in exile in Voronezh: "Perhaps this is the point of madness, / Perhaps this is your conscience — / The knot of life, in which we are recognised / And untied for existence" (Mandelstam, 1991, pp. 258–259). "The knot of life" ... This is an epitaph common on Jewish tombstones, signifying the connection of the soul with God. If "your conscience" is not pure, then the soul will be thrown away by him like a slingshot, rejected. In this regard, catharsis presupposes a person's *trial* in an extreme, tragic situation of moral and ethical choice in the conditional space of *existence*, the space of art. As Averintsev noted, this is a struggle "for full consciousness on the very edge of delirium, a struggle for catharsis on the very edge of absurdity" (Averintsev, 2011, p. 19). Perhaps this is what Leontiev had in mind when he wrote: "Catharsis for Vygotsky… is, rather, a solution to some personal problem, a discovery of a higher, more humane truth of life's phenomena and situations" (Leontiev, 1968, p. 5).

3. "The Psychology of Art" as the Beginning of Non-Classical Psychology — D.B. Elkonin

The 1968 edition of *The Psychology of Art*, in addition to Leontiev's introductory article, also contained detailed comments by Vyach. Vs. Ivanov. They allowed Vygotsky's work to be "fitted" into the contemporary context of Russian and foreign research on the psychology of art, and drew read-

ers' attention to details concerning the *multi-level structural organisation of artistic text*; to those diverse sign means whose unique psychological impact Vygotsky studied (Ivanov, 1968). Later, Ivanov also paid special attention to a detailed analysis of the significance of Vygotsky's works for understanding the deep structures of semiotic systems of art (Ivanov, 1976). Thus, the importance of this early work by Vygotsky on the psychology of art was emphasised as a special line, namely as a psychological direction for studying the role of complex sign systems.

However, for psychologists, Leontiev's introductory article, where this work was assessed as early and imperfect remained the main reference point when reading *The Psychology of Art*. However, in 1984, in connection with the 50th anniversary of Vygotsky's death, D. B. Elkonin made a special report, where, on the contrary, he emphasised the fundamental importance of *The Psychology of Art* as a key work defining the uniqueness of the cultural-historical direction of psychological research, the issue of the semiotic mediation of the psyche being precisely the center in it (Elkonin, 1989). This is how Elkonin writes about the uniqueness of this approach: "... from the form of a work of art through a functional analysis of its elements and structure, it is necessary to move on to the recreation of the affective-semantic formation that the author of the work wants to convey to readers. The formation already exists objectively in a literary work, and it is given to those who read it. Therefore, it is very important to find the elements of the structure of the work, to understand their functional meaning and what function they play in leading readers, forcing them to accept or, perhaps, reject this or that semantic formation" (Elkonin, 1989, p. 477). I have already noted this principle underlying Vygotsky's method more than once in the article. So, what is "non-classicality", then?

Answering this question, Elkonin emphasises that the essence of *non-classicality* is that "the primary forms of affective-semantic formations of human consciousness exist objectively outside of each individual person, exist in human society in the form of works of art or in other material creations of people, i.e., these forms exist earlier than individual or subjective affective-semantic formations" (ibid.). Hence, the understanding of psychological processes and mechanisms can be studied precisely through the "structure" of such systems, as generating affective-semantic formations. In other words, understanding how a corresponding affective state can be evoked with the help of a work of art, we also reconstruct the method — the pattern — of their emergence. The nature of psychological patterns lies not inside, but outside. Thus, it is in *The Psychology of Art*, that Vygotsky

already relies on the fundamental theoretical principle of his theory: the transition from *inter*psychic forms to *intra*.

In a work of art, psychological mechanisms are at "rest"; they exist in a filmed form. But in order to "revive" them, "recognise" them, translating them into the subjective experiences of the reader, special psychotechnics are required., such as the "reader's criticism" that Vygotsky used in his early work on Hamlet. Above, I specifically discussed this point, considering the range of issues related to the "Vygotsky method". Now it is necessary to make one final clarification.

In 1986, A. A. Puzyrei's book on the theoretical problems of cultural-historical theory appeared (Puzyrei, 1986). Discussing Vygotsky's *The Psychology of Art*, he notes that the work of art itself is considered a kind of "trap" for the psyche, oriented towards certain psychological patterns. Quoting Vygotsky: "Every lyric poem is such an experiment. The task of analysis is to reveal the law underlying the natural experiment" (ibid., p. 47). Most importantly, the uniqueness of a work of art as a "trap" is that it generates a meaningfully new experience that we did not have before. Continuing his thought, I will say: a work of art is a special "feeling machine"; before reading the corresponding artistic text, this experience was not in us. Therefore, art is a special amplifier of our psychological capabilities.

Conclusion

It is clear that I gave only a general outline of those problems that seem important to me in Vygotsky's *The Psychology of Art*. At the same time, I wanted to show, at least as a first approximation, how views on this work changed among his followers and colleagues. Of course, the circle of authors chosen for consideration is far from complete, but I was limited by the framework of the article. Two topics — "Vygotsky's method" and the uniqueness of artistic experience ("catharsis") — seem especially important to me, so I have given them special attention.

Different generations have read the text of the monograph, placing different semantic accents. How will those who are entering psychology today read *The Psychology of Art*? I do not know… The cultural situation is changing, many works and names are fading into the background, forgotten, displaced.

But I hope that Lev Semenovich's book will acquire a new "light breath" and a new generation of psychologists will "read out" and "read in" new meanings to it. Perhaps, in some miraculous way, it will become the Zone of Proximal Development for those who are entering psychology today.

References

Averintsev, S.S. (1996). Poets. Moscow: Yazyki russkoi kul'tury Publ. (In Russ.)

Averintsev, S.S. (2011). We are the Meaning-Makers. In: P. Nerler, D. Mamedova, (eds.). In: Averintsev and Mandelstam. Articles and Materials. (pp. 19–24). Moscow: RSUH Publ. (In Russ.)

Aristotle. (1957). On the Art of Poetry. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1925). The Psychology of Art. Analysis of Aesthetic Response. Text from the Vygotsky Family Archive. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1968). The Psychology of Art. Moscow: Iskusstvo Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (1982). Collected works: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. Thinking and Speech. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Vygotsky, L.S. (2015). Collected works: in 16 vol. Vol. 1. Drama and Theater. Moscow: Lev Publ. (In Russ.)

Gracheva, A.M., Nistratov, A.A., Petrenko, V.F., Sobkin, V.S. (1988). Psychosemantic Analysis of Understanding the Motivational Structure of a Film Character's Behavior. *Voprosy psikhologii*, (5), 123–131. (In Russ.)

Ivanov, V.V. (1976). Essays on the History of Semiotics in the USSR. Moscow: Nauka Publ. (In Russ.)

Ivanov, V.V. (1968). Comments on Vygotsky's Psychology of Art. Moscow: Iskusstvo Publ. (In Russ.)

Ivanovsky, V.N. (1923). Methodological Introduction to Science and Philosophy. Minsk: Beltrestpechat Publ (In Russ.)

Kornilov, K.N. (1925). Letter to L.S. Vygotsky dated 12.10.1925. L.S. Vygotsky Family Archive. (In Russ.)

Leontiev, A.N. (1968). Introduction to L.S. Vygotsky's Psychology of Art. Moscow: Iskusstvo Publ. (In Russ.)

Lotman, Yu.M., Petrov, V.P. (1972). Semiotics and Art Measurement. Moscow: Mir Publ. (In Russ.)

Mandelstam, O.E. (1991). Collected works: in 4 vol. Vol. 1. Poems. Moscow: Terra Publ. (In Russ.)

Pushkin, A.S. (1957). Complete works: in 10 vol. Vol. 3. Poems 1827-1836. Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences Publ. (In Russ.)

Pushkin, A.S. (1958). Complete works: in 10 vol. Vol. 7. On the Folk Drama and the Drama "Marfa Posadnitsa". Moscow: USSR Academy of Sciences Publ. (In Russ.)

Puzyrey, A.A. (1986). The Cultural-Historical Theory of L.S. Vygotsky and Modern Psychology. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (1981). On the Study of the Poetics of L.S. Vygotsky's Texts. Moscow. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (1985). On the Study of the Mechanisms of Meaning Formation in the Generation of Fiction. Proceedings of the VII All-Union Symposium on Psycholinguistics and Theory of Mass Communications (abstracts of reports). Moscow. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2006). Cartoon as a means of socio-psychological analysis of the moral and ethical development of a child (based on research materials from 1985 and 2006). In: Sociology of preschool education: Works on the sociology of education. In: V.S. Sobkin, (ed.). Vol. XI. Issue XIX. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education of the RAE Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2015a). Introductory article. Complete works of L.S. Vygotsky: in 16 vol. Vol. 1. Drama and Theater. Moscow: Lev Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2015b). Comments on theatrical reviews by Lev Vygotsky. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education of the RAE Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S. (2022). "Tragicomedy of Searching" by Lev Vygotsky: an attempt to reconstruct the author's meanings. Moscow: Moscow Univ. Press. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Adamchuk, D.V. (2012). Features of the perception of Picasso's painting: an attempt at psychosemantic research. Works on the sociology of education. Vol. XVI. Issue XXVIII. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education of the RAE Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Markina, O.S. (2010). The film "Scarecrow" through the eyes of modern schoolchildren. Moscow: Institute of Sociology of Education of the RAE Publ. (In Russ.)

Sobkin, V.S., Shmelev, A.G. (1986). Psychosemantic study of the actualization of social-role stereotypes. *Voprosy psikhologii*, (1), 124–136. (In Russ.)

Tairov, A.Ya. (1970). Director's notes. Articles. Conversations. Speeches. Letters. Moscow: VTO Publ. (In Russ.)

Elkonin, D.B. (1989). On the Sources of Non-Classical Psychology. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

Yaroshevsky, M.G. (1989). Afterword. L.S. Vygotsky as a Researcher of Problems of the Psychology of Art. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ. (In Russ.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vladimir S. Sobkin, Academician of RAE, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Head of the Center for Socio-Cultural Problems of Modern Education, Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Moscow, Russian Federation, sobkin@mail.ru, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2339-9080

Received: 05.07.2024; revised: 08.07.2024; accepted: 13.07.2024.

DISCUSSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Research Article
https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-51
UDC 159.9.07; 159.9.016.5

On the Classicism of "Non-classical" Psychology

Gennady G. Kravtsov [1], Oleg G. Kravtsov [2]✉

[1] Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russian Federation
[2] V.Ya. Kikot' Moscow University of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉ kravtsovog@gmail.com

Abstract
Background. The article discusses the current problem of the methodological foundations of psychological science. The article argues that the dangerous crisis for psychology, which was analysed by L.S. Vygotsky has not gone away, but moved from an acute form to a chronic one. "Methodological pluralism" in modern psychology is the triumph of blatant eclecticism. The authors see the main reason for the impasse which psychology has reached as the desire of this science to become like positive sciences from the field of natural science.
Objective. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the point of view according to which L.S. Vygotsky created the only possible scientific psychology of the future, which will rightfully be classical.
Method. The article discusses the fundamental principles and postulates of the cultural-historical approach, and outlines ways of research conceptualising the idea of a systemic and semantic structure of consciousness.
Results. The authors analysed the methodological and philosophical foundations of psychological science. Based on the analysis carried out, the article highlights the approach proposed by L.S. Vygotsky.
Conclusions. Comparison of the scientific fate of Galileo with the scientific fate of L.S. Vygotsky allowed the authors to assert that neither one nor the other discoverer of a fundamentally new method of comprehending reality had like-minded people during their lifetime. Their theoretical and methodological bar was raised too high, which made their work inaccessible to understanding by their contemporaries. The article concludes that the legacy of L.S. Vygotsky is not the historical past of psychological science, but its only possible and most promising future.

Keywords: cultural-historical concept, "non-classical" science, crisis in psychology, category of development, logic of self-motion, free individuality, psychological means, problem of universals, tool and sign, structure of consciousness

For citation: Kravtsov, G.G., Kravtsov, O.G. (2024). On the classicism of "non-classical" psychology. *Lomonosov Psychology Journal*, *47*(4), 250–264. https://doi.org/10.11621/LPJ-24-51

Introduction

D.B. Elkonin introduced the tradition to refer to the cultural and historical concept by L.S. Vygotsky as "non-classical psychology." There are many reasons for this. Summarising the results of the psychological analysis of the study in the first chapter of the monograph "History of the Development of Higher Mental Functions" (Vygotsky, 1983), L.S. Vygotsky concludes that traditional children's psychology could not correctly pose the problem of personality, since it did not know the most important thing, namely, the history of the child's cultural development. In the same final paragraph of the first chapter of the mentioned monograph, he argues that only a decisive step beyond the methodological limits of traditional children's psychology will allow an approach to the study of that higher mental synthesis, which is rightly called the child's personality. What exactly this "decisive departure beyond the methodological limits of old psychology" is L.S. Vygotsky does not specify. However, in the scientific heritage he left behind, this "exit" into the space of "non-classical" psychology was realised.

It should be noted that V.T. Kudryavtsev was the first modern psychologist to express the idea that L.S. Vygotsky's "non-classical" psychology is the only possible and truly classical psychological science. The current authors share this point of view. To substantiate and confirm its legitimacy, we can refer to the historical fact that traditional science, which is now referred to as "classical" was at the time perceived not only as something contrary to the generally accepted physics of Aristotle, but as an outright heresy against the dogmas of the Catholic Church. The Inquisition fought the heretics sentencing them to be burned alive at the stake.

1. Classical science

The first visionary on the subject of physics was Galileo. Galileo was subjected to the Inquisition because he adhered to the Copernican system to explain the movement of celestial bodies, and not the generally accepted Ptolemaic view on celestial mechanics. This is an erroneous opinion, since at the time of Galileo, the theory of Copernicus was not yet considered contrary to the tenets of Catholicism. Still being very controversial, and even sinful, it was more accepted than somewhat earlier, when Giordano Bruno was sentenced by the Inquisition to be burned at the stake. Galileo

"fell into heresy" in his youth, writing the article "The Assayer," where, following Democritus, he proved the atomic structure of matter. This clearly contradicted Aristotle, for whom all things are modes of substance with their inherent accidents. Aristotle, both in the Middle Ages and later, was called the father of all sciences. However, all the supposedly "scientific" research and creations of Stagirite were based solely on common sense, which, being a generalised life experience and nothing more, has nothing in common with truly scientific knowledge. The Dominican monk Thomas Aquinas, recognized as one of the teachers of the Catholic Church, was a particularly passionate admirer of Aristotle. In adulthood, Galileo wrote a work extremely interesting for epistemology and cognitive psychology, "Conversations and Mathematical Proofs Concerning Two New Branches of Science" (1638). It was for this work that Galileo would have been burned at the stake if he had not earlier taken advantage of the advice of his patron — Pope Pius VIII himself, who, although he could not influence the Inquisition, saw that Galileo was a man of genius and must be protected at all costs. The Pope was much older and more experienced than Galileo. He offered to confess to a small, venial sin, publicly repent and renounce his heliocentric views, thereby avoiding a painful death, since the Inquisition did not have the right to bring a person to trial twice.

The above monograph is sometimes called the "Dialogue" of Galileo, since three characters are brought onto the stage, who engage in pseudo-scientific conversations and disputes regarding the laws and principles of the elementary motion of physical bodies. One of the characters shared the views set forth in Aristotle's "Physics", another was a supporter of Galileo, and the third was a layman who understood little about the physics of the motion of solid bodies. The problem was in the form of a thought experiment where the characters were in the hold of a ship with the entrance hatch closed and the windows battened down, but they had at their disposal any physical instruments or tools. They had to answer the question of whether the ship was sailing or anchored. After all the debates and discussions, the participants in this experiment, reminiscent of the maieutic conversations of Socrates, came to the conclusion that no physical instruments made it possible to establish whether they were sailing on a ship or standing still. From this, Galileo draws the final conclusion that uniform rectilinear motion and rest are one and the same thing, and formulates the fundamental law of physics, according to which a body moves uniformly, translationally and in a straight line, or is at rest if no force acts on it. This contradicts Aristotle's law of physics, according to which a body moves if it is acted upon by an external force that sets it in motion. In addition, the law of inertia

formulated by Galileo seems to ignore the law of the excluded middle, fundamental to logic. Indeed, for ordinary consciousness, operating with everyday concepts and ideas, the situation is that the body either moves or is at rest. There is no third way. It was impossible for the inexperienced layman to transcend the boundaries of common sense and everyday experience. Therefore, all Galileo's attempts to find like-minded people were unsuccessful. Even the most educated people of that time could not look at the world with Galilean eyes and see the subject matter of scientific physics with mental vision. To do this, they had to either as genius as Galileo or master the method of scientific physics. Galileo did not have this method. It was created only half a century later by Isaac Newton.

Shortly before his death, L.S. Vygotsky stated that his fate reminded him of the fate of Moses, who led his people through the desert for forty years, knowing that he himself would never see the Promised Land. From our point of view, the fate of L.S. Vygotsky is similar to the fate of G. Galilei, who offered humanity a qualitatively new way of understanding reality, radically different from the epistemological principles of Aristotelian teaching. The scientific feat of L.S. Vygotsky is comparable to the discoveries of Galileo, although, in fact, the legacy he left is more significant than Galileo's physics. Understanding the life goals facing him, L.S. Vygotsky emphasized that he did not want to create another psychological theory by quoting from the classics. Having learned from the entire method of Karl Marx, he set the task of writing his "Capital" in psychology. L.S. Vygotsky managed to create something greater than any "Capital". He laid the foundations for that higher way of comprehending reality, which Baruch Spinoza called intuitive.

2. Crisis in psychology

In the methodological work "Historical meaning of the psychological crisis" (Vygotsky, 1982a), L.S. Vygotsky analyses the state of psychology in 1926, when this study was published. He concludes that psychological science is infected with a lethal disease, externally manifested in the presence of many theories, approaches and scientific schools. However, this is an external manifestation of the crisis in psychology, and its internal essence consists in the loss of its subject matter. L.S. Vygotsky cites the words well known in psychology of that time that the psychologist was like King Priam on the ruins of Troy: his science has no subject matter, no methodology; it is not clear who a psychologist is and why he is needed. All that remains is to sprinkle ashes on your head. The entire scientific life of L.S. Vygotsky passed through the "period of open crisis" in psychology of the 1910s —

1930s (this phrase formed the basis for the title of the anthology on the history of psychology by P.Ya. Galperin and A.N. Zhdan). However, the main problem with psychology is that this deadly crisis has not gone away even today. It has developed from an acute form to a chronic disease, which we have gotten used and somehow adapted to. We push away the awareness that this disease carries with it a death sentence for psychological science. The validity of this judgment can be confirmed, for example, by attempts to answer the simplest question — what kind of psychology should students be taught at university? You can often hear the opinion that all psychologies that currently exist should be taught. Such "methodological pluralism" in the educational process, they say, will provide students with an outlook and broad knowledge, being the key to the future flourishing of psychological science. From our point of view, this is not just a naive mistake, but a frankly harmful judgment. The fact that, in the modern world, we have many different psychological theories and approaches means that no fundamental or real psychology exists. Total methodological eclecticism generates either a surrogate of pseudo-knowledge, or, at best, separate islands of more or less successful psychological practices. Because of this, graduates of psychological faculties for the most part turn out to be empty-minded pseudo-specialists "without a king in their heads".

The main trouble and "original sin" of all psychology that claims to be scientific, from our point of view, is its irrepressible desire to become like its older sisters in the field of natural science in order to become a truly positive science, such as, for example, physics, chemistry, biology, genetics, etc. For these traditional natural sciences, since the time of Newton, the phrase remains valid: the more mathematics in a particular discipline, the more scientific it is. However, what is suitable for natural science is unsuitable for psychology, which cannot be classified as natural science, humanities, or exact science. There is no place for psychology in this classification triangle of B.M. Kedrov. It must be moved out of its plane to the vertex of the tetrahedron.

It should be noted that traditional natural science is steadily subject to the logic of justification through something else, which follows from the formal logic of Aristotle. Justification through something else means that everything in the world has its own cause, that is, the world in which we live is causally determined. There is no place for human freedom in this Cartesian picture of the world. In the mechanics of Newton, based on the philosophy of European rationalism created by René Descartes, the first fundamental postulate is the statement that every action has an equal but opposite force. It is noteworthy that even in areas of knowledge where practice

is impossible without the recognition of human freedom, the fact is that a person does not have any real freedom. So, for example, in legal sciences, including in criminological literature, the legalized fact is recognized that the very institution of imputation of guilt is based on freedom, that is, on the control of actions by a person's consciousness and free choice. If a person did not have freedom when committing an act provided for by the criminal code, he cannot be found guilty. However, in criminological articles one often encounters phrases like "the so-called principle of 'free will'". Three objections immediately arise from this expression. Firstly, the phrase "free will" is tautological, since non-free will simply does not exist. The volitional sphere of the psyche is the highest instrument of consciousness, allowing a person to gain and realize freedom. Secondly, the phrase "so-called", immediately sets the reader up for a distrustful perception and an ironic attitude towards what will be said further by the author. To reinforce this mistrust, the words "free will" are placed in quotation marks. This verbal balancing act is necessary for the authors to maintain their reputation as real scientists, faithful to those laws and canons that are strictly observed by positive science. But the scientism imposed on humanity by traditional science was debunked and refuted at the beginning of the 20th century in L. Shestov's monograph "The Apotheosis of Groundlessness".

It is extremely interesting that all the fundamental postulates of Cartesian philosophy were refuted by a man who always claimed to be a faithful student and follower of Descartes, although they had never met. This man is known to us as Spinoza. There is every reason to assert that L.S. Vygotsky studied not only the entire method of Marx, as he himself indicated, but also the philosophy of Spinoza. In any case, a portrait of Spinoza hung in his home above his work desk, and, as an epigraph to his first fundamental monograph, "The Psychology of Art," he quotes from Spinoza's "Ethics," beginning with the words: "... that of which the body is capable, no one has yet determined ... " (Vygotsky, 1968).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whose teaching is recognized as the pinnacle of German classical philosophy, argued that, after the works of Spinoza, all of us, whether we want to or not, are forced to be Spinozists. It was Spinoza who formulated a consistent solution to the famous psychophysical problem of R. Descartes. The mechanistic picture of the world, characteristic of Cartesian philosophy, imposes on us the epistemological principle, according to which only what man himself has created is completely and truly knowable, and the essence of things created by God or Nature is incomprehensible to us.

In the philosophy of Spinoza, three types of knowledge of reality are distinguished. The first type is sensory knowledge, which often leads to misconceptions. Spinoza calls the knowledge obtained with *via* sensory knowledge opinions. The second type of knowledge, which is based on reason, is the source of reliable truths. From our point of view, this type of knowledge can be called scientific, although there was no science at the time of Spinoza. The fundamental work of Newton was to be published 10 years after his death. The third type of knowledge distinguished by Spinoza is very similar to the future unified science of man, which V.I. Lenin mentioned in *Philosophical Notebooks*. Spinoza wrote: "In addition to these two types of knowledge, there is, as I will show later, a third one, which we will call intuitive knowledge (scientia intuitiva). This kind of knowledge leads from an adequate idea of the formal essence of any attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (Spinoza, 1892, p. 117). The third type of knowledge is associated with the idea put forward by Spinoza of "causa sui" — internal cause of being and self-movement.

As already indicated, according to Hegel, we are all forced to be Spinozists. However, he himself could not remain at the level of epistemological thinking that was set up by Spinoza. The category of development became the stumbling block for Hegel. He understood perfectly well that development is always self-development, that is, free, internally determined self-movement. For Hegel, the unit capable of self-development is the totality, which he called the Absolute Spirit, and the self-development inherent in this totality is the self-knowledge of the Absolute Spirit with the help of the Objective and Subjective Spirit. In this system of objective idealism created by Hegel, human individuality is often characterized as "bad subjectivity", since man as an individual is limited, sinful, mortal and very often biased. In the philosophy of Marx, the dead-end of objective idealism was overcome. Man was endowed with the dignity of such a unit as the potential totality capable of self-development. Unfortunately, the consciousness and thinking of many psychologists does not accommodate the position of Marx that it is time to stop contrasting abstractly understood society and the individual, since the human individual is a social being.

In the above thesis of K. Marx, the words seem to be simple and well-known, although there are some philosophical subtleties in these phrases. For example, "abstractly understood society" is one or another society, which is always finite and has certain boundaries. However, society is the entire human race, which includes all generations of people who lived before us, everyone who lives now, and everyone who will live after us. For

Marx, the human individual is finite and limited, but potentially universal and, accordingly, is the totality that is capable of self-development.

L.S. Vygotsky has an extremely important concept for understanding the theoretical foundations of both child and general psychology, namely, consciousness of the "Pre-we" type. He discusses this concept in the article "Infancy" and calls it a new psychological formation of this age group (Vygotsky, 1984, pp. 269–317). The essence of this concept is that, when an adult communicates closely with a small child, they do not have a boundary separating their consciousness. It can be said that they psychologically form a single whole — a kind of "diado-monad", which is the human totality capable of self-development. Marx meant "abstractly understood society" and contrasted the words "socium" and "society". An in-depth analysis and coverage of these concepts can be found in the monograph by A.S. Arsenyev "Philosophical foundations of understanding personality" (Arsenyev, 2001). We must admit that man is, of course, a social being. In the same way, he is a biological individual. However, if we reduce man's essence to sociality, or to biological determinism, we inevitably find ourselves either in the dead-end of sociology or of biology. All attempts to build a more or less acceptable theory of the convergence of the two factors are doomed to failure, since it is impossible to create something that is at least outwardly similar to a correct theory from two false theories.

It should be noted that society be interpreted abstractly, but the human individual can also be taken as an object of study in the form of a real "living abstraction". This is how the individual is interpreted in the article by V.V. Davydov "The relationship between the concepts of "formation" and "development" of the psyche" (Davydov, 1966 p. 35–48). He argued: "The dignity of "development" in the dialectical understanding is possessed only by such objects that are integral systems ("totalities"), existing according to their own and exclusive laws (a law is a universal way of connecting special phenomena within a given system). Is a single person (individual) such a system? The whole point of theories that consistently reveal the inconsistency of "Robinsonades" is precisely what leads to a negative answer to the question posed. An individual person is not a system that has "inputs" and "outputs" in itself. This person is only an element of the truly integral system that is "society". It is the latter alone that is characterized by development as the self-development of immanent contradictions. An individual, taken on his own, does not have such development" (ibid., pp. 37–38).

In the last sentence of the above quote by V.V. Davydov, we see that, either voluntarily or involuntarily, he has named the reason that forced him to assert that the concept of development is not applicable to the individual.

This would be a fair statement if applied to an individual "taken by himself", as is the case in the reasoning of V.V. Davydov. This is the case when a real, living person, being devoid of his own essence, is an empty abstraction. This is the case when the words of Marx that the human individual is a social being do not fit into the heads of psychological theorists. This thesis in the philosophy of Marx means that man, unlike other animals, is not a species, but a generic being, and the word man simultaneously means both the individual and humanity as a whole. Mathematicians would say that these are sets of equivalent cardinalities. Therefore, there can be no contradictions between the individual and society, since, by and large, they are one and the same. However, within society these contradictions seem to be inevitable. In this context, it is noteworthy that in A. Maslow's concept, one of the qualities that distinguishes people who have reached the heights of self-actualization is resistance to socialization. Another consideration on the topic of the relationship between the individual and the race may be the theoretical insolvability of F.M. Dostoevsky's moral problem, posed by him in "The Brothers Karamazov". Namely, is it possible to sacrifice one baby for the well-being of all humanity? However, even today, endless wars are constantly killing and have killed everyone indiscriminately, and without any justification of these acts.

From our point of view, the theoretical and methodological mistakes of V.V. Davydov were largely due to the fact that he was an ardent admirer of the philosophy of E.V. Ilyenkov, who interpreted Marx from the standpoint of the Hegelian system of objective idealism. V.V. Davydov has always positioned himself as a representative of the scientific school of L.S. Vygotsky. However, he could not possibly be a Vygotskian, since he shared all the principles and postulates of the activity approach and was a faithful supporter of A.N. Leontiev's theory of activity, with which the cultural-historical and activity approaches are fundamentally incompatible.

A very serious and deep criticism of the activity approach "from the inside" was carried out by E.G. Yudin. Unfortunately, it was not adequately accepted by psychological science, and the "soap bubble" of the activity approach has still not burst. Criticism of E.G. Yudin was quite constructive (Yudin, 1978). He believed that the concept of activity is very valuable for psychological science and should be preserved. A.N. Leontiev placed the explanatory principle of psychological theory on a pedestal. It must be removed from this pedestal and take its rightful place as the most important working concept of psychological science.

Non-classical science

In 1975, V.S. Bibler published a monograph "Thinking as Creativity", in which he analysed the fundamental issues of psychological science, including the logical-philosophical and methodological problems of cultural-historical psychology by L.S. Vygotsky (Bibler, 1975). In this work, he reflected on the conceptual structure of a fundamentally new science, rightly called "non-classical," one of the founders of which was Niels Bohr: quantum mechanics. In quantum mechanics, qualitatively different laws and regularities operate, in comparison with the classical mechanics of Newton, which are based on the Cartesian picture of the world, on the epistemological subject-object relationship, on the working concepts introduced into science by G. Galileo, and on the formal logic inherited by us from the "father of all sciences" Stagirite. It is self-evident that, on such a logical-philosophical basis, only a method of cognising reality that leaves absolutely no room for human freedom in this "reality" can be built.

In "Notebooks", where L.S. Vygotsky recorded for himself the thoughts that came into his head, he noted that the highest problem of psychological science is the problem of human freedom. In the mentioned monograph "Thinking as Creativity", V.S. Bibler argues that in order to implement Spinoza's idea of "causa sui", the researcher needs to abandon the currently dominant logic of *justification through another* and transcend into the area of logic of internal self-justification. However, this logic, according to V.S. Bibler, has not yet been created. This means that L.S. Vygotsky, who set himself the task of creating a psychological science that could adequately approach the study of the central problem of all psychology (the problem of personality), had to work blindly, often resorting to the "universal" method of trial and error. It is akin to the task to "go there, I do not know where, bring something, I do not know what" in its difficulty. In this search, L.S. Vygotsky arrived at dead-ends and wrong decisions more than once, but he was not afraid to admit it and made new research attempts, relying, among other things, on his scientific intuition.

D.B. Elkonin told a remarkable story that the staff of L.S. Vygotsky's laboratory once approached their supervisor and asked where the experimental methodology he used in research and a newly published article was described. L.S. Vygotsky replied that he did not have such a technique, and he did not conduct any experiment at all, since he knows for certain that everything he described in the article corresponds to reality. The current author admits that in his youth he also decided to double-check some of the findings and conclusions of L.S. Vygotsky experimentally, since in his

works they are not substantiated in any way. For example, he divided stable age periods into two parts, and critical ages, according to L.S. Vygotsky, consist of three parts. Subsequent long-term research work in the field of psychology of education and child development has confirmed these provisions of L.S. Vygotsky. Here it is quite appropriate to recall that Spinoza calls the highest, third type of knowledge intuitive. According to Spinoza, "the highest aspiration of the soul and its highest virtue consists in knowing things according to the third kind of knowledge (Theorem 25)" (Spinoza, 1892, p. 367).

Methodological study "The Historical Meaning of the Psychological Crisis" Conducted by L.S. Vygotsky in 1926 allowed him to make a fundamentally important conclusion that psychology must necessarily be an explanatory and experimental science. This means, firstly, that the method of psychology has as its most important part a psychological theory based on an explanatory principle, the status of which is some fundamental concept. However, as L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes, such a concept must prove its "royal origin" and the right to be an explanatory principle of psychological theory, that is, this concept must be philosophically reflected. Secondly, since psychology, according to L.S. Vygotsky, is an experimental science, the explanatory principle of its theory must not only be philosophically substantiated, but also tested in a decisive experiment, which was previously called "experimentum crucis".

In his works, L.S. Vygotsky does not directly declare which fundamental concept is the explanatory principle of the theory of the cultural-historical psychology he created. At the same time, he makes no secret of this, unambiguously pointing to the highest form of movement, designated in philosophy by the category of development, as that "objective reality" about which neither traditional child psychology nor general psychology in any of its forms and in a variety of scientific schools and approaches knows anything. This categorical statement is fully applicable both to the psychology of the 1920s and 30s, and to all the numerous "psychologies" that currently exist. The only exception to this rule is cultural-historical psychology. Therefore, in Russia, the majority of completed psychological studies indicate the cultural-historical approach as their methodological basis, and then, complimentarily and side-by-side with it, other theories and approaches are listed, even though they are fundamentally incompatible. It seems that the authors of such works adhere to the well-known everyday principle: "you cannot spoil porridge with butter."

It has been deliberately emphasised that the development movement is not a purely mental construct, but an "objective reality". This quality of the

explanatory principle in the theory of L.S. Vygotsky is extremely important because it allows us to avoid the splitting of what is being studied into an object and a subject matter, which is obligatory in Cartesian philosophy and theory of knowledge. In Marx's "Capital", the initial abstraction in the form of direct commodity exchange, which underlies the subsequent ascent from the abstract to the concrete, also does not fit into the methodological framework of the method of understanding reality that Descartes left. His method of cognition, as already noted, allows us to truly know only what man himself has created, but the entire natural world surrounding man, including man himself, remains fundamentally unknowable. So, for example, we successfully use the laws and regularities discovered by science in the field of physics of electricity, however, we do not know what electricity itself is and what its essence is, and according to Descartes, we will never know it, since rational science allows us to reveal no more than the essential properties of things, but not their essence. Within the nationalized Marxism that became the dominant ideology of the Soviets, the electron was also considered to be as infinite in its deep unknowability as the atom. That is, in Russia, as in the rest of the world, a Cartesian, not a Marxist theory of knowledge reigns, despite the existence of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and numerous Marxist philosophers.

During initial stages of his research, L.S. Vygotsky had high hopes for the idea of mediation. Elementary mental functions and processes, according to his hypothesis, when mediated, turn into higher, cultural ones. A psychological means in the concept of L.S. Vygotsky, as is known, is a sign; and a sign is a sign because it has meaning; and meaning, in turn, is a generalisation. The problem of generalisations in the Middle Ages was called the problem of universals and was the central problem of all European philosophy (Kravtsov, 2022).

In "Tool and Sign", L.S. Vygotsky holds the idea that tools are the means by which we master the external world, and signs, among which are the words of speech, occupy a particularly important place, and are the means by which a person masters his own behaviour and mental processes. It can be noted that the idea of mediation itself appears simple and, in some ways, mechanical. However, if you take a closer look at this idea from all its angles, it turns out that it requires special psychological analysis and clarification of the phenomena and incidents associated with it. Thus, Francis Bacon, quoted by L.S. Vygotsky in connection with the idea of mediation, gave an example using a compass as a means to facilitate drawing a circle. Any person who has learned to use a compass correctly can easily draw a perfect circle in the right place and of a given size. We can say that the compass

equalises us, raising us to the level of absolutely accurate execution of the task of drawing a circle. A compass is not a tool, however. that facilitates mastery of the outside world, rather a tool for mental work in the field of descriptive geometry.

In psychology, the "probe phenomenon" described by A.N. Leontyev is well known. Before the operation begins, the surgeon uses a metal rod to examine the wound to determine the location of the bullet to be removed. A.N. Leontyev gives a clear answer to the question of where the surgeon's consciousness is concentrated: at the tip of the probe, with which the surgeon probes the wound. In the same way, the consciousness and sensitivity of a carpenter working with a chisel is placed on the sharp edge of this tool. L.S. Vygotsky has an extremely precise phrase that explains the essence of the above phenomena: "ingrowth of means". There is reason to believe that it was precisely this mobility of consciousness that prompted L.S. Vygotsky to declare it a subject matter of psychological science. However, consciousness must be understood differently from the way it was understood in the past psychology of consciousness such as in the physiological psychology of V. Wundt, or in the works of associationists. Old psychology, according to L.S. Vygotsky, studied what happens on the stage of consciousness, but the study of the facts of consciousness itself was inaccessible to it.

From our point of view, the most significant idea of L.S. Vygotsky was formulated by him as the principle of the systemic and semantic structure of consciousness. He considered the systematicity of consciousness to be its external characteristic, denoting the specifics and features of interfunctional connections at different stages of the ontogenesis of the psyche. The semantic structure of consciousness, according to L.S. Vygotsky, is its internal, and therefore the most significant, characteristic. It is associated with the emergence of new, higher levels and types of generalizations. In this regard, he writes a phrase that is striking in its depth and significance, saying that generalisation and communication are two sides of the same coin: we communicate in the same manner in which we generalise, and vice versa.

Conclusion

The decoding and concretisation of the principle of systematic consciousness may well be the periodisation of children's mental development, built on the basis of the scientific heritage of L.S. Vygotsky. He did not leave us a complete periodisation, but his works contain more than sufficient theoretical and methodological outline for its construction. The system-forming parameters in such a four-dimensional periodisation will be the

following fundamental concepts introduced into psychological science by L.S. Vygotsky: the central age-related psychological neoplasm, the social situation of development, the central psychological function, and leading activity.

However, this becomes more complicated when concerning the principle of the semantic structure of consciousness. Here, according to L.S. Vygotsky, we are dealing with generalisations and their development. That is, we are faced with the centuries-old problem of universals, central to all European philosophy and epistemology. L.S. Vygotsky dared to approach it experimentally in a psychological study, which he presented in the monograph "Thinking and Speech" (Vygotsky, 1982b). The main goal of this study, according to L.S. Vygotsky, was the study of the development of word meanings. The experiment was carried out using the double stimulation technique, also known as the L.S. Vygotsky and L.S. Sakharov technique. This technique, as noted by L.S. Vygotsky, was borrowed from N. Akh, but the instructions and experimental procedure in this technique were significantly altered, allowing us to study the processes of development of word meanings. In fact, N. Ach's method contained that irreducible interpretation of the nature and origin of generalisations, which was imposed on all humanity by Aristotle. In order to contrast his teaching with the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, he was forced to openly replace the category of the general with the concept of the same, since, in his epistemology, the source of both true and false knowledge is exclusively the world of things around us. Aristotle's "generalisations" can be called both empirical and nominative. However, they do not contain that which distinguishes genuine generalisations, namely, a reflection of the essence of things, as well as many other things that exist in the semantic space of human life.

A.N. Leontyev states wonderfully: "the axe also generalizes". However, when he begins to explain exactly how the axe generalises, he reproduces the Aristotelian interpretation of the origin of generalisations. An axe's blow at a corresponding object, according to A.N. Leontiev, extracts from this object the properties hidden in it, which can be abstracted, compared with each other, and the same properties can be designated in words and, thereby, generalised. Thereby, the axe is generalised by its inherent functional meaning and purpose (Kravtsov, Kravtsov, 2023).

The hypnosis of Aristotle's interpretation of the origin of generalisations is so great that almost all researchers of the problem of universals found themselves under its spell. The key to its solution was given by L.S. Vygotsky in his claim that generalisation and communication are two sides of the same coin. With the help of this postulate, a detailed theory

of the semantic structure of consciousness can be built. This key to the problem of generalisations allows us to analyse more deeply, for example, the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which has become something of a hallmark of the cultural-historical approach. In our opinion, the scientific heritage of L.S. Vygotsky is not the historical past of psychological science, but its only possible and most promising future.

References

Arsen'ev, A.S. (2001). Philosophical foundations for understanding personality. Moscow: Academy Publ.

Bibler, W.S. (1975). Thinking as creativity. Moscow: Politizdat Publ.

Davydov, V.V. (1966). The relationship between the concepts of "formation" and "development" of the psyche. Moscow: Enlightenment Publ.

Kravtsov, O.G., Kravtsov, G.G. (2022). On the Problem of the Semantic Structure of Consciousness. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology*, *18*(3), 124–131. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2022180315

Kravtsov, O.G., Kravtsov, G.G. (2023). Psychological Nature of Generalizations. *Kul'turno-Istoricheskaya Psikhologiya = Cultural-Historical Psychology, 19*(1), 106–113. https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2023190113

Spinoza, B. (1892). Ethics. Moscow: Proceedings of the Moscow Psychological Society.

Vygotskii, L.S. (1968). Psychology of art. Moscow: Art Publ.

Vygotskii, L.S. (1982a). Historical meaning of psychological crisis. Vygotsky L.S. Collection works: in 6 vol. Vol. 1. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ.

Vygotskii, L.S. (1982b). Thinking and speech. Vygotsky L.S. Collection works: in 6 vol. Vol. 2. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ.

Vygotskii, L.S. (1983). History of the development of higher mental functions. Vygotsky L.S. Collection works: in 6 vol. Vol. 3. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ.

Vygotskii, L.S. (1984). Early childhood. Vygotsky L.S. Collection works: in 6 vol. Vol. 4. Moscow: Pedagogika Publ.

Yudin, E.G. (1978). Systematic approach and operating principle. Moscow: Nauka Publ.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gennady G. Kravtsov, Dr. Sci. (Psychology), Professor, Head of L.S. Vygotsky Institute of Psychology, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russian Federation, kravtsovgg@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4418-3254

Oleg G. Kravtsov, Cand. Sci. (Psychology), Associate Professor at the Department of Legal Psychology, V.Ya. Kikot' Moscow University of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, Moscow, Russian Federation, kravtsovog@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8875-0169

Received: 05.02.2024; revised: 13.04.2024; accepted: 10.05.2024.