

Introducing cultural historical theory: main concepts and principles of genetic research methodology

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This paper explores two main topics. First, it presents main concepts and principles of cultural-historical theory (CHT) in relation to development. Second, it describes principles of the genetic research methodology, which are derived from the CHT framework. In other words, I will try to provide a systemic overview of Vygotsky's psychological theory in order to answer two questions: (1) what is cultural-historical theory about and (2) what does it mean to make an experimental psychological study meeting requirements of cultural-historical theory*.

Keywords: cultural-historical theory, genetic research methodology.

Development of human mind: subject matter of cultural-historical theory

Undoubtedly, Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory has the higher mental functions of human beings as its principle object of study. However, this object is not simple and should be clarified. The distinction between the lower mental functions, equal in animals and human beings (such as sensations, representations, perception etc.) and the higher specifically human mental functions (abstract thinking, logical memory, voluntary attention, etc.) was originally introduced to scientific psychology by W. Wundt. He propounded that the higher functions could not be studied in experimental psychology, but by the historical analysis of various cultural products (folktales, customs, rituals and so on). Vygotsky's theory took an opposite approach – the higher mental functions (human mind) should become the subject-matter of scientific experimental psychology. Psychology should create a new methodology of experimental research, and new theoretical instruments (concepts and principles).

Vygotsky explained that higher mental functions which have already matured (the «fruits of development») are closed for direct investigation by traditional experimental methods. Even more, when a function becomes ingrown, i. e., when it «moves within», an extremely complex transformation of that function's structure takes place, and its entire construction becomes indiscernible. Galperin explained «when functions are developed they «recede into the depths» and are covered by phenomena of a completely different appearance, structure, and nature» [1, p. 26]. A new, different kind of methodology, a genetic approach, is required to investigate this circumstance. In this situa-

tion, traditional, classical, quantitative methods are not valid and must be replaced by qualitative ones. «To understand the mental function means to restore both theoretically and experimentally the whole process of its development in phylo- and ontogenesis» [2].

The one-sidedness and erroneousness of **the traditional view** (emphasis mine – NV) ...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...

Putting it more simply, with this state of the matter, the very process of development of complex and higher forms of behaviour remained unexplained and unrealised methodologically [12, p. 2].

«Development» is the key word here. «Fruits» (results, products) of development become accessible for the analysis through the theoretical and experimental reconstruction of the whole process of development. For Vygotsky, the subject matter of the theory was not the «higher mental functions» as they are, but the very process of their development. *Cultural-historical theory was the theory of the origin and development of higher mental functions.*

Accordingly, every concept and principle of cultural-historical theory refers to a certain aspect of the complex process of development of the higher mental functions. The role, place, and interrelationships of all the concepts and principles within the theory become clear in terms of the origins and development of the higher mental functions.

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However, what is «mental development»? What kind of understanding of development is CHT based on? From various papers of Vygotsky we find important notes concerning this matter. Development **is not** just a simple change. Development **is not** an organic growth or maturation. Development **is not** the collection of quantitative changes. Development **is** a complex process of qualitative change, reorganisation of a certain system. Psychological theory might be the theory of development when it is able to represent a system of concepts and principles, which explain main aspects of the process of development, such as:

- nature of development;
- sources of development;
- moving forces of development;
- specific features of development;
- results of development;
- main law (laws) of development.

The essence of the methodological alternative proposed by Vygotsky was that cultural-historical theory was the theory in which the main concepts ***are related and reflect theoretically these aspects of development***. I could put it even stronger: there was (and there is) no other developmental theory in psychology which describes and theoretically reflects all these aspects of the process of development in their interrelations and unity.

In the next section of the paper I will try to present some key concepts of CHT and their relations to these aspects of the complex process of development.

Lower and higher mental functions: the nature and the source of development

W. Wundt's distinction between lower and higher mental functions was a methodological reflection of the current situation at the time in classical psychology. For Vygotsky, this separation was a kind of methodological step forward in explaining the nature of human development. The first methodological task of distinguishing between the lower and higher mental functions was to discover development as a qualitative reorganisation of the system.

Higher mental functions are not built on top of elementary processes, like some kind of second storey, but are new psychological systems comprising a complex nexus of elementary functions that, as part of a new system, being themselves to act in accordance with new laws [10, p. 58].

In this passage the keywords are «new system» and «new laws». The task to create the non-classical cultural-historical psychological theory was the task to study these new systems and to discover these new laws, unknown to classical empirical psychology.

The second methodological task was to explain the sources of the development of higher mental functions. The lower and higher functions have different origins and natures. Lower mental functions are completely biological by their origin, whereas higher functions are completely social.

The social environment is the source for the appearance of all specific human properties of the personality gradually acquired by the child or the source of social development of the child... [13, p. 203].

In contrast to traditional psychology, which describes the development of human mind as a process influenced by two main groups of factors (biological and social), cultural-historical theory defines social environment not just as a factor, but as a source of development. The development of the human mind is not a biological, but rather a cultural-social process. Looking at this from historical perspective, Vygotsky claims:

The transition from the biological to the social path of development is the central link in the process of development, a cardinal turning point in the history of the child's behavior [14, p. 20].

The following famous example illustrates these theoretical items:

In *The History of Development of Higher Mental Functions* [12], Vygotsky examines the development of the pointing gesture in the child, which constitutes an extraordinarily important part in the development of the child's speech, and to some degree, creates the basis for all higher forms of development. In the beginning, the pointing gesture of a child is merely an unsuccessful grasping movement aimed at an object; the child tries to grasp a distant object, but its hand, in reaching for the object, remains hanging in the air while the fingers make grasping movements. This situation is the point of departure for the subsequent developments. When the mother comes to the aid of the child and comprehends his movement as a pointing gesture, the situation essentially changes. The child's unsuccessful grasping movement gives rise to a reaction not from the object, but from another person. The original meaning of this unsuccessful grasping movement is thus imparted by others. And only afterwards, on the basis of the fact that the child associates the unsuccessful grasping movement with the entire objective situation, does the child himself begin to treat this movement as a pointing gesture. Here the function of the movement itself changes: from a movement directed toward an object it becomes a movement directed toward another person, a means of communication; the grasping is transformed into a pointing. This movement becomes a gesture for oneself not otherwise than by being at first a pointing in itself, i. e., by objectively possessing all the necessary functions for pointing and a gesture for others, i. e., by being comprehended as a pointing by the surrounding people. The child is thus the last to realise his own gesture. Its meaning and function are created first by the objective situation and then by the people surrounding the child. Thus, the pointing gesture first begins to indicate by movement that which is understood by others and only later becomes a pointing gesture for the child himself.

This example, Vygotsky wrote, shows the essence of the process of cultural development expressed in a purely logical form. The personality becomes for itself what it is in itself through what it is for others. This is the process of the making of the personality [12, p. 105].

Thus, in cultural-historical theory the distinction between lower and higher mental functions is a fundamental methodological step directed toward the solution of two main tasks related to the problem of development. First, it defines its character and nature (development as qualitative change, emergence of a new system of functions acting according to new laws) and, second, it points to the social source of development. In other words, by making this methodological step, cultural-historical theory overcomes the limits of the traditional view on higher mental functions and clearly distinguishes the natural and the cultural, the biological and the social in mental development.

Interaction of ideal and real forms: moving force of development

Another main concept in CHT is that of the interaction of «ideal» and «real» (or present) forms. This concept is quite complicated, yet it reflects the form and the moving force of development. On the other hand, it is closely connected with the concept of the social-cultural environment as the source of development and therefore could not be separated from it.

According to cultural-historical theory:

The social environment is the source for the appearance of all specific human properties of the personality gradually acquired by the child or the source of social development of the child which is concluded in the process of actual interaction of «ideal» and present forms [13, p. 203].

We see that the concept of social environment refers to the source of development, whereas the concept of the interaction of ideal and real forms explains the moving force of development. Here again, two key concepts of the theory are connected to each other through their relation to development, bringing forth explanations of its aspects.

However, what are «ideal» and «real» forms? The following passage from Vygotsky gives an answer:

We have a child who has only just begun to speak and he pronounces single words... The child speaks in one word phrases, but his mother talks to him in language which is already grammatically and syntactically formed and which has a large vocabulary, even though it is being toned down for the child's benefit. All the same, she speaks using the fully perfected form of speech. Let us agree to call this developed form, which is supposed to make its appearance at the end of the child's development, the final or ideal form — ideal in the sense that it acts as a model for that which should be achieved at the end of the developmental period; and final in the sense that it represents what the child is supposed to attain at the end of his development. And let us call the child's form of speech the primary or rudimentary form [11, p. 348].

These two examples (the pointing gesture and speech development) show the entire logic of the developmental approach that cultural-historical theory explores. The grasping movement is a kind of primary

form which, from the beginning, interacts with the «ideal» form (the mother's comprehension of the movement as a pointing gesture) and this creates the moving force for grasping to transform into pointing. In both cases, social interaction exists as a process of interaction of the ideal and real forms. Speaking generally, every cultural form of behaviour might become an ideal form for the child. This statement reflects an important aspect of development, which Vygotsky presents in clear form:

In none of the types of development known to me does it ever happen that at the moment when the initial form is taking shape . . . the higher, ideal form, which appears at the end of development, should already be present and that it should interact directly with the first steps taken by the child along the path of development of this initial or primary form. Here lies the greatest peculiarity of child development in contrast to other types of development [15, pp. 112–113].

The development of any higher mental function in child is impossible without the interaction of the ideal and real form. The grasping movement never becomes the pointing gesture without an adult. We can say exactly the same about the development of speech, thinking, logical memory and voluntary attention.

The concept of sign and principle of mediation: developmental approach

The concept of sign and the principle of sign mediation is rightfully considered as one of the core ideas in cultural-historical theory. Even more, for many experts this concept is a kind of distinguishing feature of CHT. It is true that in Vygotsky's writings we could find various examples of sign mediations such as knots for memory, lots in case of two equal stimuli, and many others. He even listed a number of examples of systems of cultural signs: «language; various systems of counting; mnemonic techniques; algebraic symbol systems; works of art; writing; schemes, diagrams, maps and mechanical drawings; all sorts of conventional signs and so on» [6, p. 137]. However, signs and mediation were known and had been studied in psychology long before cultural-historical theory. They were used to describe a situation where one entity plays an intermediary causal role in the relation between two other entities. But Vygotsky's specific approach to sign and mediation was essentially new. For an adequate understanding of the place and role of the concept of sign and sign mediation within the cultural-historical theory, we need to make clear the links of this concept with the subject matter of the theory, i.e. to clarify its relation to the process of development. Let us take a look at the cultural sign from developmental perspective.

First, cultural signs and sign mediation are essential for the process of qualitative reorganisation of the psychological functions:

The sign as a tool reorganizes the whole structure of psychological functions. It forms a structural centre, which

determines the composition of the functions and the relative importance of each separate process. The inclusion in any process of a sign remodels the whole structure of psychological operations, just as the inclusion of a tool reorganizes the whole structure of a work process [4, p. 421].

Mediation is essential: every higher mental function is a mediated function. Every new structure of mental functioning is the result of its remodelling, the product of the sign inclusion. Using Vygotsky's terminology, we might say that a new structure is a «fruit of development». However, as has already been shown in this paper, Vygotsky's methodology is not focused on fruits; it is directed on the analysis of the process of development, i.e. the transition «from buds to fruits».

We need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established.... [5, p. 64–65].

On the other hand,

The sign arises as a result of a complex process of development — in the full sense of the word [14, p. 9].

In other words, looking at it from a structural perspective, the sign is the product of development. But just a structural analysis of sign mediation is not enough; the genetic approach is needed. In Vygotsky's words, mental development consists in the «the transition from direct, innate, natural forms and methods of behaviour to mediated, artificial mental functions that develop in the process of cultural development» [13, p. 168]. Therefore, the second crucial point about sign and sign mediation in cultural-historical theory was not to investigate its place and role in the structure of matured reorganised functions (fruits of development) only, but to study it within the frames of developmental process, i. e., within the transition from the buds of development to its fruits. In cultural-historical theory, the sign is a mental tool (tool of mind) which does not simply exist, and does not only reorganise the structure of functions, but arises with necessity in the process of the cultural development of the higher mental functions.

Following this general methodological approach, CHT undertakes three important theoretical distinctions with respect to sign mediation. The first distinction it makes is between two branches (streams) in the process of cultural development.

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 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 [12, p. 14].

This means that sign mediation, viewed from the developmental perspective, is related to the first stream of development of higher mental functions, i.e. to the processes of mastering external materials of cultural development. The theoretical importance and significance of this distinction is it defines the cultural sign (the mediator) as a tool, which initially exists in external form as a certain kind of cultural material. By using signs the individual obtains the possibility of mastering his own behaviour. This distinction, therefore, brings strong emphasis to the transition from direct, non-mediated forms of behaviour to mediated ones.

The second distinction CHT makes is between mediated activity and mediating activity. I should accentuate the difference between **mediated** (oposredovannaya in Russian) **activity**, and **mediating** (oposreduyushaya in Russian) **activity**. Mediated activity is *already mediated* by mediators, which were given or established, i. e. are **created before**. Mediated activity is by definition mediated by signs, tools, artefacts, etc. It is therefore, related to the fruits of development. Mediating activity, in contrast, is an activity that is not mediated, but mediates the whole process; it is an activity of mediating, not of mediation. The processes of active searching and finding a sign, as well as transforming of the whole unit and *transition* from direct connection to indirect (mediated) connection were in the focus of Vygotsky's theoretical and experimental studies of origins of mediating activity. Later in this paper I will give an example of the experimental study of mediating activity, but before this it makes sense to take a look on the third distinction related to the concept of sign in cultural-historical theory.

A third theoretical distinction cultural-historical theory makes with regard to sign mediation is between two types of mediating activity. Figure 1 represents the famous diagram:

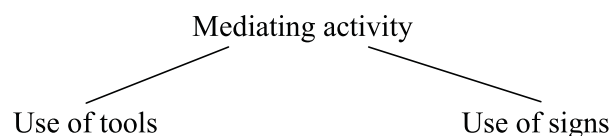


Figure 1. Vygotsky's model of mediating activities [12, p. 62]

And here are Vygotsky's comments:

... our diagram presents both types of devices as diverging lines of mediating activity ... A more substantial difference of the sign from the tool and the basis for the real divergence of the two lines is the different purpose of the one and the other. The tool serves for conveying man's activity to the object of his activity, it is directed outward, it must result in one change or another in the object, it is the means for man's external activity directed toward subjugating nature. The sign changes nothing in the object of the psychological operation, it is a means of psychological action on behaviour, one's own or another's, a means of internal activity directed toward mastering man himself; the sign is directed inward. These activities are so different that even the nature of the devices used cannot be one and the same in both cases [12, p. 62].

Thus, according to this distinction, the cultural sign is presented as a means of internal activity directed toward mastering man himself.

Due to these three theoretical distinctions, the concept of cultural sign in cultural-historical psychology is quite complicated. This concept does not simply reflect theoretically the entire fact of existence of the cultural sign as a mediator within a new structure, as a result or the product of development. CHT presents the sign from developmental perspective: the sign (or system of signs) originally exists as an external tool, as a kind of cultural material (first distinction) and later it becomes a tool of internal mediating activity (second and third distinction). Here again we see that sign mediation is presented in cultural-historical theory from the point of view of the transition from non-mediated to mediated action.

The following example of Vygotsky's experimental study illustrates the approach to sign mediation. The aim of the experimental study was to observe *the process of transition* from direct operation to using a sign.

In our experimental studies, we placed the child in a situation in which he was presented with a problem of remembering, comparing, or selecting something. If the problem did not exceed the natural capacity of the child, he dealt with it directly or with the primitive method... But the situation in our experiments was almost never like that. The problem confronting the child usually exceeded his capacity and seemed too difficult to solve with this kind of primitive method. At the same time, beside the child, there usually were placed some objects which were completely neutral in relation to the whole situation (pieces of paper, wooden sticks, peas, shot, etc). In this case, under certain conditions, when the child was confronted by a problem he could not solve, experimenters could observe how the neutral stimuli stopped being neutral and were drawn into the behavioural process, *acquiring the function of sign* [12, p. 85; 11, p. 60].

Experimental results were concluded in a diagram (Figure 2).

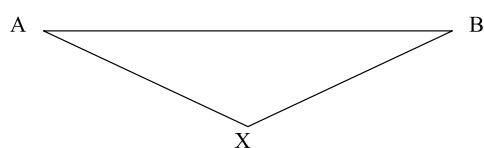


Figure 3. General scheme of mediating [12, p. 79]

Explanation of the diagram reveals its transitional, dynamical aspect, rather than the structural one:

In our diagram two arbitrary points, A and B are presented; a connection must be established between these points. The uniqueness of the experiment consists of the fact that there is no connection at present and we are investigating the nature of its formation. Stimulus A elicits a reaction that consists of finding stimulus X, which in turn acts on point B. Thus, the connection between points A and B is not direct, but mediated. This is what the uniqueness of all higher forms of behaviour consist of [12, p. 80].

The processes of active searching and finding a sign, as well as the transformation of the whole unit and the

transition from direct connections to indirect (mediated) connections, were the focus of Vygotsky's experimental studies of the origins of mediating activity. They were examples of the cultural-historical approach to the experimental investigation of sign and sign mediation; they were experimentally studied in the process of the genesis of the higher mental function.

General genetic law of cultural development

Since the subject matter of the theory is the process of development, correspondingly the general law was named «the general genetic law of cultural development of higher mental functions».

«... any function in the child's cultural development appears on stage twice, that is, on two planes. It firstly appears on the social plane and then on a psychological plane. Firstly it appears among people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts and the development of volition» [8, p. 145].

At first glance, this formulation emphasises the most important aspect — the social origins of mind, as fundamental in cultural-historical approach to human development. But the attentive and careful reader can easily see some discrepancies here. They might ask: if every function appears first in the social relations between people on the social level, and then inside (within) the child, then how did mental functions appear in the social relations in the first place? And in what form did they exist? If they do appear in social relations, how do they then change their location, moving from social relations to the individual? What is the transitional mechanism? Or do they disappear from the social level and then reappear by some mystical way again within the individual?

Internalisation can explain the transformation from the social level to individual, but it cannot explain the original appearance of the function on the social level, within the relations. So how do the mental functions first appear in the social relations?

The problem here is we are asking the question backwards. The crucial point is that the mental functions do not and cannot appear *in* the social relations.

«... every higher mental function, before becoming internal mental function was external because it was social before it became an internal, strictly mental function; it was formerly a social relation of two people» [12, p. 105].

Social relations are not the «area», not the field, and not the «level» where mental functions appear. It is the other way around — the social relations themselves become the human mental functions. There is the solution.

Second, if every higher mental function was a social relation between two or more people, does it mean that every social relation can become a mental function? There is a clear notion of what type of social relation can actually become a mental function. I refer here in particular to the word «category» that Vygotsky uses in the formulation. The term «category» (which is repeated

twice in the formulation of the general law) has definite meaning. In Russian pre-revolutionary theatre's vocabulary the word category meant «dramatic event, collision of characters on the stage». Vsevolod Meierhold (a famous Russian theatre director) wrote that category is the event which creates the whole drama [3].

Vygotsky was familiar with the language of Russian theatre and arts and used the word «category» to emphasize the character of the social relation, which became the individual function. The social relation he meant was not an ordinary social relation between two individuals. He meant a social relation that appears as a category, i. e. as an emotionally coloured and experienced collision, a contradiction between two people, a dramatic event, a drama between two individuals. Being emotionally and mentally experienced as social drama (on the social plane) it later becomes an individual intra-psychological category.

Probably the best example here might be the case of a debate between two people. Imagine (or just remember) that one day you met a friend and had a debate, expressing opposite positions. Dramatic collision in a debate, experienced by the both participants, can lead to a sort of self-reflection. In the course of time, (for example, next morning) one of the participants remembers the event and thinks about what he said. He might say to himself «I was wrong saying that, I made a mistake... I should not say such sharp words... I was so aggressive and did not pay enough attention to what he tried to say... How stupid I was yesterday...» We see here that the individual now experiences the same «category» intra- psychologically. In this type of internal category, all the higher mental functions of the individual are involved (memory — «I said something rough», emotions — «How stupid my behaviour was, what a shame», thinking — «I have to think it over and never repeat such bad things», volition — «I must stop this. I must be more patient...»).

Such emotionally experienced collisions can bring radical changes to the individual's mind, and therefore can be a sort of act of development of mental functions — the individual becomes different, he becomes higher and above his own behaviour. Without internal drama, an internal category, such mental changes are hardly possible. So, the term «category» is a key word here. Dramatic character development, development through contradictory events (acts of development), category (dramatic collision) — this was Vygotsky's formulation and emphasis. On the same page where Vygotsky formulated the general genetic law of cultural development, he explained how the law is connected with the experimental method.

From here comes, that one of the central principles of our work is the experimental unfolding of higher mental process into the drama, which happened between the people [8, p. 145].

So, the requirement for experimental research is the necessity to reveal the original form of any mental function, the form of social relations named by Vygotsky clearly and openly — the drama. Every higher mental

function originally exists as an inter-psychological category (dramatic social event in the relations of the two people) and after that it appears as an intra-psychological category. If the only objective analysis of the higher mental function is experimental reconstruction of the history of its development, we have to start from the experimental reconstruction of its original form — the drama between the people. But this is not the only requirement for the organisation and the conducting of the experimental study which follows from the cultural-historical theory. CHT also provides the system of principles of experimental study which might be defined as «genetic research methodology».

Developmental research methodology and its principles

In this section of the paper I present a brief description of the main principles of the genetic research methodology which follow from the requirements of cultural-historical theory. It is true that these principles differ from those in classical experimental studies. The methodological difference between a Vygotskian experiment and a «classical» one is obvious when we take into account the subject matter of cultural-historical theory. Genetic research methodology is a methodology of the experimental study of the very process of development, i.e. artificial reconstruction of the process from the very beginning, from the «buds» of development to its «fruits». Such a task obviously requires a different approach.

«The method we use may be called an experimental-genetical method in the sense that it artificially elicits and creates a genetic process of mental development ... the principal task of analysis is restoring the process to its initial stage, or, in other words, converting a thing into a process. ... This kind of experiment attempts to dissolve every congealed and petrified psychological form and convert it into a mowing flowing flood of separate instances that replace one another. In short, the problem of such an analysis can be reduced to taking each higher form of behaviour not as a thing, but as a process and putting it in motion so as to proceed not from a thing and its parts, but from a process to its separate instances» [12, p. 68].

The principle of buds of development. Child development is not a linear, homogenous process. Simultaneously, there are different levels of development of different functions in the child. At each age there are functions which are already matured (developed) and there are functions that are in a process of maturation. So there are «functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the «buds» or «flowers» of development rather than the «fruits» of development» [12, p. 226]. The principle of «buds of development» means that at the beginning the experimental study should detect the function (or functions) which are in their «bud» (embryonic) stages, and are not yet developed.

The principle of category (collision, dramatic event). The principle follows from the general law of cultural development of higher mental functions. The «category» here means a dramatic collision, an event that happened between two individuals. The principle of category means that the experiment should begin with the category (dramatic event, collision) the child should experience. This collision should be artificially created. The dramatic event is the form in which the higher mental function appears first as a social relation before it becomes an internal higher mental function.

The principle of interaction of real (natural) and ideal (cultural) forms. There is no development if there is no interaction between the ideal and real forms. The principle of interaction of real (natural) and ideal (cultural) forms means that in the course of experimental study both forms should be detected. It also means that the higher «ideal form» must be present in the beginning of the experiment. And, finally, tools and means of interaction between these forms should be specially created and involved in the experimental procedure.

The principle of developmental tools. Sign mediation, the use of sign as a mental tool, is one of the fundamental ideas in cultural-historical theory. The cultural sign (or system of signs) is seen as the developmental tool. The principle of developmental tools means that during the experiment, cultural tools should not be given to the child directly; they have to be discovered (found) by the child (in cooperation with an adult or more competent peer). The experimenter should have a set of tools that the child is able to find and master in the course of experimental study.

The principle of sustainable qualitative changes as an outcome of the experiment. According to cultural-historical theory, new psychological formations (neo-formations) are the results of development. Neo-formations are not just new functions that appeared as the results or outcomes of development. They are, rather, a new type of construction and organisation of the psychological system as a new nexus of elementary and higher functions. In cultural-historical theory «by new psychological formations we must understand that new type of the construction of the personality and of its activity and those mental and social changes that first arise at a given age level and that in the main determine the consciousness of the child» [9, p. 248]. The principle of sustainable qualitative changes means that the results of the experimental study must not simply be statistically valid changes, but a new quality

of the structure and the construction of child's consciousness as a result of its re-organization. These new qualitative levels of organization should be experimentally detected and described.

These five principles are significant aspects of the genetic cultural-historical methodology for organizing, designing and conducting the experimental study of the process of development in different settings and activity systems. It is easy to see that they strictly flow from the theoretical requirements, concepts and principles of cultural-historical activity theory.

One could say that these principles are so general that they could hardly be suitable for concrete experimental research settings. It is true that these principles only describe the overall methodology and outline the general framework of Vygotsky's approach. At the same time, they could be useful as indicators of the degree to which a certain experimental study might be considered as being carried out within the framework of the requirements of cultural-historical theory.

Some concluding remarks

CHT is a «non-classical» psychological theory that aims toward theoretical explanation and experimental investigation of the very processes of mental development of the human being. It constitutes the system of interconnected concepts and principles constructed so that they completely theoretically reflect the whole process of development in its main aspects. The place and role of each separate concept and principle becomes clear when they are seen through their relations to the subject matter of the theory — the process of cultural development of higher mental functions. This paper discusses some of them as theoretical instruments for the analysis of the very process of development. The limited space of this paper does not allow me to present some other important concepts of CHT, such as the social situation of development, zone of proximal development, psychological neo-formations, and perezhivaniye (experiencing). However, the reader could easily recognise their connections and interrelations with respect to development. An important trait of cultural-historical theory is that together with a system of theoretical instruments for the analysis of development it also provides a new «non-classical» experimental methodology, the genetic-experimental method for the investigation of the development of higher mental functions.

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Представляя культурно-историческую теорию: основные понятия и принципы генетической методологии исследования

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В данной статье рассмотрены две основные темы. Во-первых, представлены основные понятия и принципы культурно-исторической теории (КИТ) относительно развития. Во-вторых, описаны принципы генетической методологии исследования, которые вытекают из КИТ. Другими словами, я постараюсь обеспечить системный обзор психологической теории Л. С. Выготского, чтобы ответить на два вопроса: (1) о чем культурно-историческая теория и (2) что это значит, провести экспериментально-психологическое исследование, которое соответствует требованиям культурно-исторической теории*.

Ключевые слова: культурно-историческая теория, методология генетических исследований.

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