Problems with editions

Vygotsky had a large written production, from which only a small part consists of books: Psikhologuia Iskusstva (Psychology of Art), Pedagoguitcheskaia psikhologuia (Educational Psychology) and Michlenie i retch (Thinking and Speech) by the author in the Soviet Union, Russia and Brazil, including translations in order to identify alterations that may lead to misinterpretations of the ideas of Vygotsky and difficulties in understanding the historical trajectory of his thought. Therefore, we performed a comparison of different Russian editions and versions in other languages. It was possible to identify the omitting of important sections, inclusion of additional chapters not contained in the original book and mistranslations of terms from Russian to Portuguese. One example is the translation of concept zone blijaichego razvitia. In Brazil, this concept had two translations — zone of proximal development and immediate development zone. Because it is a fundamental concept of historical-cultural theory, the article analyzes how the translations lead to distortions in the interpretation and understanding. Based on different works of Vygotsky in which the concept is approached, we present a new proposal for a translation: zone of imminent development.

Keywords: Cultural Historical Psychology, Vygotsky, Translation.

According to some versions, there were reasons for the book’s not being published in the 20’s. In his preface to the first edition, Leontiev says that there were internal reasons that kept Vygostky from going back to discussing art (Leontiev, 1986). According to Vygodskaia and Lifanova (1996), Yarochevsky defends the version according to which Vygostky was not satisfied with the method of analysis, and felt the need of new starting points. This circumstance must be taken into consideration by those who look for answers to current questions of contemporary Psychology of creation and aesthetics. The answers did not match Vygostky’s own expectations and probably cannot match today’s researchers.

Based on documents from family files, Guita proves the unlikelihood of both versions. On December 9th, 1925, Vygostky and Publisher Leningradskoie Gosudarstvennoie Izdaltelstvo signed a contract for the publication of the book Psikhologuia Iskusstva (The Psychology of Art). In a post scriptum in a letter addressed to L.S. Sakharov, Vygostky comments: “With Psikhologuia Iskusstva everything got settled. I don’t know if this is the better thing. Guita also mentions the minutes of the meeting of the Experimental Psychology State Institute’s editorial council, which reports the debate on the authorization for publishing Vygostky’s thesis. Their decision was for publishing, but the book printing should be on his expense (Vygodskaia & Lifanova, 1996, p. 94).

Currently, there are many editions of the book, also available in digital versions in various Russian websites. The difference in the quantity of pages can be a conse-
quence of ulterior attachments: the tale Liokhoie dikhanie, by Bunin, and Vygostsky’s monograph Tragedia of Gamlete, printse Datkom.

One of the comments to the 1986 edition mentions that two different versions of the text Tragedia of Gamlete, printse Datkom, had been filed. The first one, a sketch, dated August 5th to September 12th, 1915, and points Gomel as the city where it was written. It doesn’t mention the number of pages. The second one, a fair copy, dated February 14th to March 28th, 1916, was written in Moscow and consists of 12 parts. This 1916 version seems to be a final one and served as a basis for the chapter with the same title in the book Psikhologuia Iskusstva (The Psychology of Art). The “Issuing of the Complete Works of Vygotsky” project, which is being carried out by his family, helps confirm this fact. In this project, Vygotsky’s monograph on Hamlet is considered as separate from the book Psikhologuia Iskusstva (The Psychology of Art).

It is known that the first edition of Psikhologuia Iskusstva (The Psychology of Art) was based on the author’s final typescript, but the editors removed some citations they considered unnecessary. For the second edition, they proceeded to a comparison with the text found by N.I. Kleiman in the library of Vygotsky’s friend Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein. This edition contains all the Vygotsky’s commentaries. Also, the monograph on Hamlet was compared with the author’s manuscripts (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 110, comment 46).

In Brazil, the book Psikhologuia Iskusstva (The Psychology of Art), translated by Paulo Bezerra, was issued for the first time by publisher Martins Fontes, in 2001. This important work aimed at establishing the theoretical basis of psychology of art, as well as discussing art as a human activity and the relations between the work of art and its spectator. According to Leontiev, the analysis of the structure of the work of art is the main point of the book. This book is highly recommended for those who study his theory or are interested in theoretical studies on art. It is evident that Vygotsky’s research involved understanding the function of art in society and in human life. He brilliantly states that “Art is the social in us” (Vygotsky, 1998a), because art has the function of overcoming the individual feelings and its creative aspect makes it possible to transfer a common experience. This term, “experience” (in Russian, perejivanie) has a great meaning for Vygotsky. Thus, it is very important that any translation of his work considers the meaning given to this word by Vygotsky. It is unacceptable that, in the same book (as in The Psychology of Art, in Portuguese), the term perejivanie was translated sometimes as emotion, sometimes as experience.

The book Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia was handled by Vygotsky to be published right after it was presented in a meeting in Petrograd, in 1924. According to Iarochevski (2007), the first version of the book was prepared in Gomel. This fact is proved by the form he filled in when he enrolled Narcompros. This form presents the book as a published work: “Brief course on pedagogical psychology. Can be found in GIZ (Gossudarstvennoie Izdatelstvo — Governmental Publisher)” (Iarochevski, 2007). The book was published in 1926. For decades, it was not re-edited. It only reappeared in Soviet bookstores in the late 1980’s. According to Vygodskaya and Lifanova (1996), Vygotsky analyzed, in that book, the situation of Psychology and related sciences around the world by that time. The book, still according to them, is a clear demonstration of how he intended to use Psychology in favor of education in the new socialist society.

In Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia, the dialectic approach of human development can be observed. In that book, Vygotsky starts reflecting on the role of the social environment, and on the relation between instruction and development. The 19-chaptered book presents fundamental concepts of Pedagogy and Psychology.

In Brazil, there were two editions of Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia, in 2001, it was published by Martins Fontes with translation from Russian by Paulo Bezerra. In the copyright page, there is no information on the Russian edition used to translate to Portuguese; there is only the title in Russian. It is possible that it was translated from a more recent version. However, what called our attention is the fact that this Brazilian edition added to the book two chapters which didn’t exist in the original version: chapter XX (The problem of teaching and of mental development in school years) and chapter XXI (The dynamics of mental development of school students as a function of learning). The two texts that are presented as chapters XX and XXI are not part of the original Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia. The first was a paper written in 1933/1934 and the second one was a lecture presented by Vygotsky in Bukhov Pedagog Institute on December 23rd, 1933. There are Russian editions that added more texts to their editions, but not as chapters of the work on Pedagogical Psychology.

For example, the version issued by AST Publisher, Astrel Links, in 2005, titled Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia, is divided in three parts. The first one comprehends the 19 chapters of Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia; the second part gathers 4 texts of the author under the title Umstvennoie razvitie detei v protsesse obuchenia; and the third part brings the important work Orudie I znak v razvitii reboinki. That information is important, since the Brazilian version by Martins Fontes publisher leads the reader into believing that the book Pedagoguitcheskaia Psikhologuia originally contains 21 chapters, since no comment on the added parts is made whatsoever.

Also, we can notice that the Russian edition used for the translation to Portuguese by Bezerra was the one altered. An example is that, in the original text from 1926, there is a citation of the book Literature and Revolution, by Lev Davidovich Trotsky, in the end of chapter XIX. In the Brazilian edition issued y Martins Fontes, Trotsky’s name is not even mentioned and the long citation is merged to the body of the text, as if it had been written by Vygotsky. In the Brazilian version issued by Artmed Publisher and translated by Claudia Schilling from the Argentinian version, Trotsky’s name was not omitted and the long citation of one of his texts is properly quoted. Besides that, the organizer, Guillermo Blanc, in the 11th note to chapter XIX, mentions that this omission exists also in North American versions (Blanc, 2003a, p. 305—306).

Michlenie i retch (Thinking and speech) was Vygostsky’s last book. While systematizing and organizing the
last chapters, he lived the last days of his life. Because of the author's bad health condition, some chapters were dictated to a stenographer and then corrected by the author (Blanck, 2003b, p. 23).

According to the bibliography of Vygotsky’s works (Vygodskaya & Lifanova, 1996), Michlenie i retch was published by the end of 1934, six months after the author’s death. That was the first Russian edition, with 323 pages, issued by Sotselkiz Publisher. However, two years later, with the decree of July 4th, 1936, the book was considered forbidden, without being reviewed by specialists (Vygodskaya & Lifanova, 1996).

A very important moment for Soviet Psychology was the publication, in 1956, of the second edition in Izbrannie psikhologitcheskie issledovania (a collection of Vygotsky’s works that, besides Michlenie i retch, included other important works of the author). The third Soviet edition was published in volume 2 of Sobranie sochinenii, in the early 80’s. Later, the book had many editions.

Except for the first edition of 1934 and a few recent ones, Michlenie i retch was the most adulterated of Vygotsky’s books. Guita tells that she managed, with Luria, to keep the second chapter (“The genetical origins of thought”) in 1956 edition and that Luria, after much talking to the censor, congratulated Guita for defending her father’s working, telling her: “It will be fully published” (Vygodskaya & Lifanova, 1996, p. 349—350). However, that was not what happened.

Only in 2001 the second full edition of Michlenie i retch was issued in Russia by Labirint Publisher, without cuts or alterations. Despite not mentioning that the publication was based on 1934 edition, that version presents, at the end, a part of editor V.N. Kolbanovsky’s comment on Michlenie i retch, and also lists the corrections he had done. After that, a comment made by the editors confirms that, unfortunately, 1956 edition and 1982 edition were not faithful to the author’s style, and that even the version from the second volume of Sobranie sochinenii there are many omissions and style corrections.

In Portuguese, the book was issued for the first time in Portugal, in 1979, by Antidoto Publisher, without the English version. Another Portuguese edition was issued in 2001 by publisher Estratégias Criativas and the copyright page mentions that the text was translated from the Russian version, which is in the second volume of Sobranie sochinenii. In Brazil, the first edition of that work was published in 1987 by Martins Fontes and received the title Pensamento e Linguagem (Thinking and Language). The book was translated by Jefferson Luiz Camargo from the edition, in English, of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Since then, that version has been reedited many times, being right now in its third edition.

In 2001, in Brazil, the same publisher, Martins Fontes, issued the complete version of Michlenie i retch under the title A construção do pensamento e da linguagem (The building of thinking and language), translated directly from Russian by Paulo Bezerra. The copyright page does not indicate the Russian edition used for the translation, but if we compare it to the full Russian version from 2001, we can say that the text is complete, for it contains all the parts that had been suppressed in the shredded edition of 1956. What is inadmissible is that the same publisher issued two versions of the same work as if they were different books. Actually, we could say they are different books, but only because the shortened version does not belong to the thinker, but to his editors, who adulterated it and accredited it to Vygotsky. Recently, in 2007, Michlenie i retch was published in Argentina with the title Pensamiento e habla by Colihue Clásica Publisher.

Problems of translations

In this work, translation is considered to be a creation process and the translator is considered a server of truth and a support for the author's otherness. The translator draws back in order to give way to the author's thoughts and annuls himself so that the words of the original work continue to enlighten the reader. That is the ethical principle that guided the following analysis.

The concepts of retch, perejivanie, zona blijaichego razvitiia and obatchenie have been selected because of their theoretical importance in Vygotsky’s work.

Retch

The difficulty in translating the Russian word retch is not exclusive to Portuguese. In Japanese, for example, the Russian terms iazik, retch and slovo, which are very different from each other, can be all translated into one single word — kotoba. However, since a differentiation of those words is necessary to translate Vygotsky’s works, Japanese scholar Nakamura suggests the terms gengo, tango and kotoba for iazik, slovo and retch, respectively. Nonetheless, another Japanese scholar says that the words slovo and retch can be translated into the word kotoba, but retch should be written according to hiragana alphabet, in which each character represents a syllable (Palkin, 2004, p. 6). Thus, we see that translating the word retch is not a simple task and deserves a thorough analysis because of the implications it has on Vygotsky’s ideas.

Michlenie i retch was translated in Brazil with two different titles: Pensamento e linguagem (Thinking and Language) (Vygotsky, 2005b; 2001a) and Construção do Pensamento e da Linguagem (The Construction of Thinking and Language). Those translations arise questions about the use of the word “language”, in the title, to designate the Russian word retch. We could say, based only on dictionaries, that the word retch is much more related to speech than to language. But, when carrying out a deeper study of Vygotsky’s works, we found out that Vygotsky refers to the relation between thinking and speech, that is, something that is expressed, either in oral form or in written form. To Vygotsky, speech and thinking are two distinct, singular psychic processes. In a certain moment of development (ontogenesis), those processes couple, giving way to the unity thinking-speech, which is verbal thinking.
When discussing the history of word development in each language and the transfer of meaning of words, Vygotsky points out that, although it seems weird, the word, in the historical process of its development, changes its meaning, in the same way it happens with children, whose words can sometimes match the adult’s words in the reference to an object, but may have different meanings (Vygotsky, 2001b, p. 153). Vygotsky presents some examples of Russian words and quotes Chor, who says: “Anyone who, for the first time, starts studying etymology, becomes impressed with the lack of content in expressions used for naming objects” (Vygotsky, 2001b, p. 154).

Grammar also doesn’t explain one’s option for the naming of a concept. And, as Vygotsky says, many times the study of etymology leads us through wrong paths, since the meaning of words develops (Vygotsky, 2001b, p. 176). So, it is difficult to agree with Bezerra, who explains his choice for the word language to designate retch, saying that the word he chose means “speaking, speech, language, conversation, capacity of speaking” (Bezerra, 2001, p. IX—X).

The editors of The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky, Robert W. Rieber and Aaron S. Carton, also justify, with property, the use of the word “speech” in the translation of Michlenie I retch to English. In the ninth note, on page 338 of the first volume, they say that Vygotsky uses the word speech and not language, because he ingeniously examined the relation between thinking and speech:

The term “speech” is used here in the sense discussed in our Preface. Speech for the structuralist linguist and, obviously for Vygotsky, was the primary form of language. As the passages continue it becomes quite clear that it is the special characteristics of speech as a method of thought and communication which Vygotsky has in mind and not the more circumscribed definition of which other might ascribe to; namely the motor acts of the vocal tract which accompany linguistic communication.

The use of the word speech in the sense described leads to certain surprising results. Later in the present text it yields the expression “written speech”, which is a literal rendering of pis’meny retch: Vygotsky seems intentionally not to have used the word “writing”, possibly because to him and to the early structuralist linguists, writing was regarded only as a form of notation for speech; not a form of communication in its own right. The concept of “written speech” which is developed in Chapter 7 as a special kind of mental formulation occurring when situational and expressive supports are lacking, i.e., the kind verbal thinking which is responsive to the pragmatic constraints imposed by the writing process is, clearly, to be distinguished from “writing” in the sense of notation for speech. Further, Vygotsky’s understanding of the term “speech” leads to the suggestion that the function of speech can be assumed by other forms of communication. Thus Vygotsky in the present chapter clearly antecipates a series of experiments which followed some forty years later. In those studies, after Liberman’s demonstration that the vocal tract of chimpanzees was not suited to the production of complex speech sounds, Gardner, Premak, Terrace, and others then attempted to discern and demonstrate that the functions of speech could be taken up by other organs (such as the hands using American Sign Language) or other devices (such as “joy sticks” or abstract tokens to which significanda were assigned) for communication. The reference, later in the chapter, to the sign language of the deaf follows the same vein and is equally contemporary in its outlook (Rieber & Carton, 1987, p. 388, v. 1, nota 9).

The Portuguese edition of Michlenie I retch, issued by Estrategias Criativas (Vygotski, 2001), also tried to explain the translation of the word retch into Portuguese. In the preface, we can read the following justification for the choice of the word language:

The dictionary meaning for the Russian word is “speech”, but that translation is imprecise, because although the semantic fields of retch and “speech” have affinities, they do not totally coincide. For example, a school book of Russian language and literature is named Russkaya Retch, which literally means “Russian Speech”, but what is intended to designate is clearly “language”, and not “speech”. That, and many other difficulties, imposed the choice of semantic equivalents that most approach the global idea of the author, and, as far as possible, the original formulation was preserved, respecting the terminology adopted by that time, which is slightly different from the one used nowadays (Dias, 2001, p. 9).

The Argentinian translator of the most recent translation to Spanish considers it differently. He presents an entry from the Russian-Spanish dictionary for the translation of retch and he concludes that the word refers to the use of language, to its inter-subjective renovation and realization. So, the word comprehends the pragmatic dimension of language; for that reason, it may mean talking, speech or conversation. It designates the process of verbal or discursive activity, more than its result (Gonzalez, 2007, p. CXLV).

As we tried to find answers to that question, we resorted to Luria’s book (2006) Lektsii po obchei psikholoogii, in which he discusses speech and thinking. The part of the book named Retch i michlenie — Intelectualnoe povedenie discusses the structure of conscientious activity of the human being and the structure of complex forms of intellectual human activity.

With retch we understand the process of transmitting information through the language. While iazik (language) is objective, a system of codes formed in social history and the subject of a special science — iazikoznanie (linguistic), — retch is a psychological process of formulation and transmission of thought through language, and so it is the subject of psychology and is called psycholinguistics. In fact, retch comes in two forms of activity.

One of them is the transmission of information or communication and requires the participation of two people: one who speaks and one who listens. The second form of retch joins the speaker and listener in a person, in this case retch is not a means of communication, but a tool of thought (Luria, 2006, p. 277).

Next, Luria presents his ideas about verbal allocation and says that this process may have the character of oral retch or written retch and that the difference...
between them are the different media used to express *retch*, as well as the different psychological structures; at the same time, each one has its variations. So, Luria considers as oral *retch* the affective *retch*, the dialogue and the monologue. In written *retch*, Luria mentions the monologue and says that it must start from a reason and present a very clear and precise idea, because thought, in this kind of *retch*, never presents itself ready, and forms itself through a live dialogue (Luria, p. 283). To Luria, the word *retch* refers much more to speech than to language. He says that language is much more related to the Russian term *iazik* than to *retch*.

The difference between language and speech is also present in Linguistics. Speech is a language category, so language and speech are not the same. Anything that is related to speech is also related to language, but we cannot say that anything that is related to language is related to speech. According to Vygotsky, speech is related to the main neoformation of infancy, and thanks to speech children change their relation with their social environment. It is important to point out that the assuredness that Vygotsky refers to speech and not to language is grounded on his own works, when we get to know his ideas on the meaning of the words, which is consummated in the live speech. Initially, says Vygotsky, speech is just a means of communication; it appears with a social function. Gradually, children learn to use it for their internal processes and transform it into an instrument of their thought; mastering speech leads to the restructuring consciousness. (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 156).

**Perejivanie**

The concept of *perejivanie* is attached to another one: social development situation. In his work The crisis at age seven, Vygotsky (1988b) develops ideas about the concept of *perejivanie*. According to him, in order to understand and study human development, it is necessary to know the relations of the environment with the specificities of each person. Social environment is a reality that involves the internal relationship of the child as a person with some aspect of reality (Vigotski, 2004, p. 188).

Zona blijaichego razvitiya

Apparently, the term *blijaichego* was translated into Portuguese from the English translation (proximal). Later, in the translation by Paulo Bezerra, *blijaichego* was translated as immediate. However, the words proximal and immediate do not convey the idea of possibility contained in the Russian concept. The word proximal leads us to think that it is the next stage or level to be reached by the person, or something that is close and will compulsorily happen. The word immediate also approaches the idea of something that will develop contiguously. Since it does not refer to something that will necessarily happen, the word imminent is the best translation for *blijaichego*.

Obutchenie

While consulting many dictionaries and Russian grammar books in order to analyze the verbs that derive from this very singular Russian noun, we became sure that *obutchenie* could never be translated as learning. The word instruction has acquired a negative connotation in Brazil. But what can we do when we can’t find in our language a proper word for what is originally said? The same dilemma was faced by the translators of Vygotsky’s works into English. They make a point of admitting that they have translated *obutchenie* as instruction and that, in other texts, the same word was translated as learning. They say:

Neither of these English glosses is an entirely adequate translation of the Russian term. *Obutchenie* is the nominal form associated with the active verb *uchit’*, (“to teach”) and the reflexive verb *uchit’sia* (“to be taught”, “to learn through instruction”, “to study”). Thus the term *obutchenie* 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 *obutchenie*, it implies an intentional transmission of knowledge while the term “learning” does not seem to (Rieber e Carton, 1987, p. 388).

*Obutchenie* consists of an activity that involves the content and the concrete relations of the person with the world. To Vygotsky, *obutchenie* is an activity that implies the active participation of the child by appropriating the products of human culture and experience. Thus, it is an autonomous activity, even though it is guided by adults or mates. And since Portuguese does not have a word that conveys precisely what Vygotsky says in Russian, maybe including the word *obutchenie* in our vocabulary will make us closer to the actual idea of historical-cultural theory.
Работы Выготского и их переводы: к вопросу о некоторых понятиях

Зоя Престес
dоктор педагогических наук, профессор Федерального университета Флуминенсе города Нитерой (Бразилия)

Элизабет Тунес
dоктор психологических наук, профессор в Университете Бразилиа (Бразилия)

Работы Выготского много раз искажались при издании по всему миру, включая Россию. В данной статье мы проследили историю издания в СССР, России и Бразилии трех книг Выготского: «Психология искусства», «Психология и педагогика» и «Мышление и речь». Мы рассмотрели различные варианты переводов этих книг и выявили различия, которые, возможно, могли привести к неверному истолкованию идей Выготского и непониманию того, как развивалась его позиция на протяжении жизни. Нам удалось сопоставить разные издания с оригинальными книгами и установить, какие важные фрагменты текста были опущены, а какие, наоборот, добавлены, какие понятия оказались переведены с русского языка на португальский не совсем точно. В частности, примером может служить понятие "зоны ближайшего развития", получившее в бразильских изданиях Выготского сразу два варианта перевода ("zone of proximal development" и "zone of imminent development"). Учитывая основополагающее место этого понятия в культурно-исторической концепции, в статье показывается, как трудности перевода привели к искажению понимания сущности зоны ближайшего развития, а предлагается новый вариант перевода, максимально учитывающий всё, что было сказано Выготским: "zone of imminent development".

Ключевые слова: культурно-историческая психология, Выготский, перевод.

References