Language for the Other: Constructing Cultural-Historical Psycholinguistics

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Cultural-historical psycholinguistics addresses language activity in its social as well as in its psychological function with corresponding verbal forms. Language is thus situated within the life activity of situated and positioned, mutually oriented societal individuals, it is not abstractable from these individuals, nor from their activity. This notion of language is at the core of the proposed 'psycholinguistics of alterity' (Bertau 2011), constructed firstly through a historical and conceptual analysis, secondly in a theoretical way involving empirical results from diverse fields of language investigation. The aim of our contribution is to introduce the main elements of this construction, we will hence follow the same rationale. In a first step, Humboldt's language philosophy and its reception by Russian linguists is addressed. Dialogicality of language and thought processes is the core notion which is taken up and developed in Russia and in the Soviet Union by several thinkers. Vygotsky's specific language psychology is seen within this context of ideas, constituting the framework for considering the relation between language and thought. Building on Humboldt's philosophy of language, Russian dialogical linguistics and cultural-historical psychology as formulated by Vygotsky, the theoretical system addressing language as activity of socially organized and self-other positioned individuals is presented in a second step.

1. Introduction

Psycholinguistics was founded as discipline in the USA in the early 1950s (Osgood & Sebeok 1954) at the crossroad of three different approaches to the language process: (1) a linguistic conception as a structure; (2) a psychological conception of language as system of habits; and (3) on the grounds of information theory, a con-

ception of language as means to transmit information.[1] The scholars agreed that "one of the central problems in psycholinguistics is to make as explicit as possible relations between message events and cognitive events, both on decoding and encoding sides" (Osgood & Sebeok 1954, p. 2).[2] Since this unusually explicit foundation and task formulation for a discipline, several changes in the leading paradigm occurred, forming psycholinguistics to a pronounced cognitive science, where language is seen as achievement of an individual cognitive processing system. In this regard, O'Connell and Kowal (2003) speak of the "monologistic epistemology" of mainstream psycholinguistics.[3] From the perspective of a cognitive processing system, language is basically looked at as an *object* of processing – be it in production or in perception. In this modern discipline of the language process, language has lost its function as *means* for the development and workings of the human psychological system with consequences for both communication and thinking. As it were, language is, in the psycholinguistic mainstream, set apart from thinking, i.e. is not supposed to have any *formative* but rather a *transmitting* function.

This view is in accordance with several basic notions of our Western culture. To be brief, the point of departure, or the taken-for-granted basic ideology, is that of the autonomous, self-contained subject who is in full power and control of himself or herself, especially of his or her cognition and thereout resulting actions, nonverbal as well as verbal ones. Further, this subject is culturally and historically 'indifferent', hence principally independent of any social, historical and cultural influences. We have to add that the subject is also bare of any influences by others: fellow human beings or consociates (Schütz 1967), who are sharing and co-constructing a common social space, an environment in Gibson's (1977) understanding. Language plays only a subordinate role for the self-contained subject, it is the vehicle to transmit ready-made thoughts, conceived along the notion of information. We could trace back this package of ideas to Enlightenment, and thereby acknowledge the emancipatory power the focus on the subject had for

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[1] See also the introduction to this volume.

[2] Note that the double quotation marks ("...") are used to signify words by others, whereas simple ones ('...') signify my own wording.

[3] For more details see Bertau (2011, chapter 2); Knobloch (2003).

our culture. Nonetheless, this focus has detached the subject in too deep a way from its conditions of life, to which language as transmitted and performed practice is to be counted. As such a practice, language comes from others and is for others, within social and public spaces which emerge by these very practices in specific ways. The detached subject is hence also an a-political subject, and this seems to be particularly important in the light of the current dominant politics in our globalized world, privileging precisely a detached and self-contained subject.

In the last decades, several critiques of the idea of the self-contained subject became accurately formulated within the humanities, especially by linguists and psychologists: Linell (1998, 2009) offers a linguistics based on a dialogic approach to language, thinking and cognition, following a line of thought one can find in Rommetveit (Rommetveit & Blakar 1979), and Markovà and Foppa (1990); the work by Hermans and his colleagues (Hermans, Kempen & van Loon 1992; Hermans & Dimaggio 2003; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010) approaches the issue of the self-contained subject from a psychological stance: the Dialogical Self Theory holds that the self is developed in and by dialogues, and is itself dialogically structured (Hermans & Gieser 2011). Interestingly, these new approaches refer to theories from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century viewing the subject as fundamentally social, in exchange, and in a constant dialogic process (William James, George Herbert Mead, Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Voloshinov). Remarkably, cultural-historical psychology developed around the same time, building on the notion of activity (Leont'ev), and stressing the sociality of consciousness, and the formative power of exchanged language for the developing individual psychological system (Vygotsky). Even more interestingly, one can link the Russian, then Soviet, notion of language and its workings back to a framework that was influential for some times, but rapidly passed over by subsequent modern sciences: Wilhelm von Humboldt's philosophy of language (Bertau in press).

Reclaiming the formative function of language for communicative and psychological processes within the perspective of a cultural-historical psycholinguistics, it is our aim in Bertau (2011) to construct a notion of language which is adequate for the framework of cultural-historical psychology as well as for the notion of a related subject. This is done in two steps. First, through a historical and conceptual analysis of the core terms needed, particularly 'language', 'thinking', and 'the oth-

er'. The second, theoretical, step comprises in the first place a theory of speaking-and-thinking built up in seven axioms, in the second place a set of four elements corresponding to concrete phenomena: addressivity and positioning, form, repetition and time, voice. Historical analysis and theoretical construction are here presented according to the same rationale: Humboldt's language notion will first be sketched, followed by its influence on Russian dialogic notion of language and thinking. Vygotsky's view of language will close the historical reflections. The proposed *psycholinguistics of alterity* will then be summarized by focusing its axioms, which are briefly commented.

2. Conceiving Language: Humboldt and Russian Scholars of the 1920s-30s

2.1 The 'Formative Organ of Thought': Humboldt's Language Notion

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) was a Prussian politician, besides an eager learner of especially non-European languages, a translator and a language philosopher. His philosophical roots can be found in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and Kant's criticism, but he rapidly went beyond this framework, orienting philosophy towards anthropology (Di Cesare 1996). Addressing human societies and cultures in their diversity, his philosophy accounted for language as a major dimension in human life. With this focus on language, Humboldt was in accordance with a new stance taken by intellectuals and artists of his time, identified as Romanticism.

Romanticism was quite a general movement in the arts and in literature which originated in the late 18th century as a reaction against the rationalism characterizing the Enlightenment, which in Germany was foremost associated with Kant's philosophy. A genuine Romantic notion of language cannot be found in the Romantic movement but rather dispersed reflections on language. Hence, there is no "Romantic language philosophy". In view of this fact, one can value Humboldt's philosophy as an impressive synthesis of traditional and new philosophical concepts, representing at the same time an independent and new philosophy (Gipper 1992). Three characteristic traits of Romantic language conception can nevertheless be singled out, all present in Humboldt, there elaborated to a conception of

speaking and thinking with the central notion of objectification. This notion, in turn, is a core one for cultural-historical language conception as found in Vygotsky (see Bertau in press).

The first trait of Romantic language thinking is affirming the relationship of language to knowledge and cognition, hence to confer language a psychological dimension. A *formative function* is attributed to language: the forms of knowledge human beings can build from their reality, including themselves, are in close relationship to language. Language has its part in the process of thinking, in the becoming of a thought. This stands in sharp contrast to a rationalistic view, where the function of language is restricted to giving already completed thought an adequate envelope in order to communicate it. With other Romantic thinkers, Humboldt turned away from Kant's rational stance, and this results in a shift of utmost importance: *from reason to language* (Di Cesare 1996). Another change in perspective took place in the Romantics, leading the philosophical discussion on language from the visible to the audible, that is, *from the eye to the ear.* In Romantic thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, language is conceived as an *auditive event,* bound to a sensible perception in time and happening in a concrete space, and is not viewed as a visible structure or as a product one can fix and contemplate. The "presence of the ear" is a truly characteristic trait of the German philosophical discussion of language in the 18th century (Trabant 1990).

The shift from reason to language leads thus to a *process oriented* understanding of language. This understanding grounds Humboldt's well-known axiom that language is not a work (*ergon*), but an activity (*energeia*), hence the privileging of the spoken, addressed and replied word.[4] This, in turn, brought in the individuals who are in exchange, and, particularly in Humboldt, the *other* as the listener of speaker's uttered word, the articulated and addressed speech. Indeed, Humboldt formulated a notion of language for which the processes of address and reply (*Anrede und Erwiderung*) are central. The addressed, listening other is the necessary condition to any speaking and also to any clear, articulated *thinking*. In his talk *On the Dual* from 1827, Humboldt refers to the "unchangeable dualism of language",

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[4]   See Humboldt, GS (Gesammelte Werke) VII, p. 45-46; in English: Humboldt 1999, § 8.

describing the fundamental movement of address and reply that connects thinking and speaking.

Following Humboldt (1827/ 1994), a concept is generated by tearing it off the "moving mass of ideas". By this movement, the concept torn off comes into a vis-à-vis position for the thinking subject. Thus, a *first separation* occurs, resulting in a first object the thinking subject can inwardly look at, or reflect. But this only leads to a "feigned object" (*Scheinobjekt*), an uncompleted object, not enough separated, not enough objectified – i.e. its objectification needs completion, and this will be found in the other. Thus, the concept formed by the first separation is exteriorized, uttered to another subject, a listening and replying one. By this second, exteriorizing movement, the thinking subject now perceives auditively his or her concept outwardly, and comes to an outward positioning with it. This corresponds to the *second separation*. Here, we can locate the socializing effect of speaking on thinking: to formulate one's thinking is to make it understandable, it is to make it social – for others as well as for ourself, because we could not understand the ever moving mass of our ideas until the clarifying process, including the two separations, is undergone. In this way, one can understand Humboldt's expression of language as "formative organ of thought"[5], where process and other-orientedness are the founding aspects of the "formative organ", and objectification is the resulting form.

A final, complementing trait is to be highlighted. Incorporating *spoken* language into the process of thinking and cognizing amounts to acknowledge *manifoldly spoken* language in its role in the processes of thinking and understanding. The plurality and manifoldness of language is also a theme of Romantic language thinking. Whilst a theme present since the 14th century (e.g. in Dante), it is treated in a new way by the Romanticists who see differences between languages lying more in their grammars – their inner architecture –, rather than in their lexicon.[6] Thus, the view on language as a genuine plural phenomenon whose manifoldness is irreducible, can be said to be a further important trait in Romantic as well as in Humboldtian language thinking.

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[5] "Die Sprache ist das bildende Organ des Gedanken", Humboldt in GS VII, p. 53; see Humboldt, 1999, § 9.

[6] See Trabant (1990), Bertau (2011; 2012).

2.2 Russian Imports: Objectifying Dialogue and the Functional Forms of Language Activity

Humboldt's major work *On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*[7], representing the sum of Humboldt's thinking about language (Böhler 2007), appeared in 1839, it was translated into Russian in 1859. Humboldt's complete work was firstly edited and commented in an adequate way by Heymann Steinthal in 1883-84. This edition rendered possible a scientific discussion of Humboldt's work on language (Trabant 1990). Particularly for the Russian language thinkers around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, Humboldt's philosophy of language had an important influence, it lead to a Russian Humboldtianism (Trautmann-Waller 2006). The most important role in transmitting and developing Humboldt's language philosophy to the East was played by the linguist Aleksandr Potebnia (1835-1891), hence the founder of the Russian Humboldt tradition.[8] Potebnia was able to read Humboldt's *On the Diversity* in the original, and his most important work, *Mysl' i jazyk* (*Thought and Language*, 1862, edited several times until 1922) is an "excellent adaptation" of Humboldt's *On the Diversity* (Bartschat 2006). Vygotsky's *Myšlenie i reč* (*Thinking and Speech*, 1934) is not the least in its title an echo of Potebnia's seminal book.[9] Actually, as it will become clear, there is more than the title linking Vygotsky's to Potebnia's book.

Potebnia's transmission and development of Humboldt's ideas met a particularly receptive context in Russia, where linguists, dialectologists and phonologists where preoccupied by the features of *spoken* Russian language, based on a functional approach.[10] Hence, Humboldt's language philosophy converges in a surpris-

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[7] In German: *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaus und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts, in GS, VI,1.*

[8] See Bartschat (2006, p. 16); Bartschat also describes how Humboldt's reception in the East differs from the one in the West. In short, the imbalance between general and historical-comparative linguistics, which rapidly developed in the West, was not present in the East. Bartschat (2006) attributes this to Potebnia's influence.

[9] See Bronckart & Friedrich (1999, p. 38); Seifrid (2005, p. 203).

[10] For more details see Bertau (2011, ch. 3); Romashko (2000); Comtet (1999).

ing and very fruitful way with Russian and then Soviet interest for language as oral and dialogic phenomenon scholars like Jakubinskij learned to listen to in the early 20th century. Two major, interrelated, notions can be followed from Humboldt to the Russian thinkers at the beginning of the 20th century: objectification of the thought in the word, and language as activity and plural phenomenon. These shall briefly be addressed, first through Potebnia's work, second through Jakubinskij's notion of verbal functional forms.

As visible from his book's title, Potebnia relates his own thinking to Humboldt's assertion that language and thought are essentially linked. Thus, "early in the work [Potebnia] declares Humboldt's key insight to have been that language is the 'organ which forms the thought' and asserts that only through words can concepts form" (Seifrid 2005, p. 32). Following the definition of language as *energeia*, Potebnia emphasizes the dynamic nature of linguistic phenomena, and his translation of this core term even intensifies Humboldt's sense of process: the Russian word *deiatel'nost* Potebnia uses means "the doing-ness of language", entailing more activity with respect to the workings of language (Seifrid 2005, p. 32). Further, Potebnia follows Humboldt "in seeing the essential workings of language taking place in the fluid cognitive moments that precede or attend the use of words without quite being identified with them", thus arguing for "a complex transmission of thought in words" (Seifrid 2005, p. 33). Hence, in Potebnia, as in Humboldt, one can see a "model of speech as cognitive interchange strongly [implying] the social basis of language" (Seifrid 2005, p. 33). The paraphrase of a passage from *Mysl' i jazyk* Seifrid then offers, seems to be conceived right in the spirit of Humboldt's *Dual*: "In being made available to others, one's own thought joins thought processes shared by the whole of humanity, the thought of an individual requiring supplementation by another if it is to avoid error and attain completion"; Seifrid ends by a citation of Potebnia, presenting him as even more radical than Humboldt: "only on the lips of another can the word become comprehensible to the speaker" (cited in Seifrid 2005, p. 33).

Process and other-orientedness as Humboldtian central aspects of language are thus clearly took over and accentuated by Potebnia, together with the model of speech leading and forming thinking. This process is precisely addressed by Poteb-

nia, asking in a book from 1910, why a human being needs the word.[11] Potebnia's answer is that a human being "*objectifies his thoughts*" by the word; the sound becomes "*a sign of the past thought. In this sense, the word objectifies the thought*".[12] Hence, the word is not "a means to express a completed thought […]. No, the word is a means of transformation of the impression occurring in the genesis of a new thought".[13] The idea that language is a means to generate thought is repeated throughout Potebnia's work, becoming an often cited formula (Naumova 2004). Vygotsky's own often cited statement "Thought is not expressed but completed in the word" (1934/1987, p. 250) is a clear reminder of this line of idea going back to Humboldt.

Considering that thought is generated through language, Potebnia argues against the (then, and still) widespread idea of understanding as transmission: "There exists the widespread opinion that the word *is there in order* to express a thought and *to transmit it to another*. But, is it possible to transmit another human being a thought? How should this be possible?"[14] Understanding is for Potebnia an individual, constructive act, hence implying "always not understanding" – referring thereby again to Humboldt.[15] According to Naumova (2004), Potebnia was the first in Russian linguistics to raise the question about the role of the word with respect to is objectification of the acts of consciousness in the uttering process; and Vygotsky's concept of speaking-thinking-process (*rečemyslitel'naja dejatel'nost'*) is to be seen as the new scientific direction in which Potebnia's ideas found full sense and were further developed.

In the work of the phonetician and linguist Lev Jakubinskij one can clearly see how Humboldtian language thinking so vividly present in Russia converges with Russian/ Soviet interest in oral and dialogic language. *On Dialogic Speech* (1923) was a

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[11] See Naumova (2004, p. 212), refering to *Psichologija poetičeskogo i prosaičeskogo myšlenja.*

[12] Potebnia in *Mysl' i jazyk*, cited in Naumova (2004, p. 212), emphasizes there; my translation from German into English.

[13] Potebnia in *Psichologija poetičeskogo i prosaičeskogo myšlenja,* cited in Naumova (2004, p. 212), emphasizes there; my translation from German into English.

[14] Poetbnia in *Mysl' i jazyk*, cited in Naumova (2004, p. 212-213), emphasizes there; my translation from German into English.

[15] See Humboldt, GS VII, p. 64: "Alles Verstehen ist daher immer zugleich ein Nicht-Verstehen;" Humboldt (1999, § 9).

seminal work for language reflection in the East, an outline of a non-Saussurian approach to the study of language (Eskin 1997; Friedrich 2005a).[16] The notions of dialogue and of functional form, the last one with explicit reference to Humboldt, are the leading ideas of Jakubinskij's essay. The functional forms of language arise from "mutual interactions" which can be immediate or mediate, dialogical or monological. The immediate and dialogic form is for Jakubinskij the "universally valid" one. Quoting his teacher, the linguist Ščerba, Jakubinskij underscores this universality: "language reveals its true essence only in dialogue" (1923/ 1979, p. 329), and hence gives dialogue the status of a paradigm for the understanding of language. Thus, *On Dialogic Speech* is not just a study of a peculiar language activity, it is a study addressing language as such.

Privileging dialogue as the basic form of language, Jakubinskij from the start involves the other, the speaker's listener and his or her activities. Further, it is the 'vivid materiality of language' which is the leading notion, so that language viewed as a perceived, seen and listened to phenomenon (Jakubinskij 1923, §§17, 18, 20, 21), always shows a certain form. Here, four specific forms of mutual activities open up the possibilities of formations and per-formance: spoken (immediate) or written (mediate) dialogic forms; spoken or written monologic forms. Hence, the language activity is a 'pluri-form phenomenon' (Jakubinskij 1923, §1), and this diversity is consequently kept in Jakubinskij: language has not, and cannot have, one unifying form standing above all usages, which would then be secondary phenomena. With this idea connecting form and usage in a functional way, Jakubinskij laid the path for Vygotsky's theory of inner speech, being for Vygotsky one of the particular functional forms of language activity (see Friedrich 2005b; Bertau 2008a). Particularly, Vygotsky uses Jakubinskij's reflections on the processes of abbreviations observable in dialogues to describe the features of inner speech.[17]

Language as a dialogic activity occurring in different, specific functional forms is hence the leading notion in Russian language conceptions of the 1920s and 1930s. That this activity is fundamentally related to the thinking process is a further core

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[16] See the complete translation into English by Knox and Barner: Jakubinskij (1923/ 1979), and the fragmentary one by Eskin: Yakubinsky (1923/ 1997). The German translation (Jakubinskij 1923/ 2004) is also complete.

[17] For more details on the topic of predicativity and abbreviation, see Lyra and Bertau (2008).

idea of the language notion of the Russians, where the formative power of addressed language is acknowledged, understood via the process of objectification. Activity, form and formation, objectification: These dimensions of language are related to Humboldt's *energeia* and to his concept of addressed exteriorization as clarification of thoughts as expressed in the *Dual*.

2.3 Vygotsky's Development Towards Meaning: (Re)Discovering the Dynamics of Language

It is well known that Vygotsky's point of entry into psychology was art, particularly literature and theatre (van der Veer & Valsiner 1991). *The Psychology of Art* (1925/ 1971) is one of his first works, dating from the same year as an article about consciousness (1925/ 1999). Hence, we can see in Vygotsky, as in Humboldt, a primary aesthetic interest, shaping his perspective on language and its workings. Further, language is from early on linked to consciousness, to psychological functions and structures. In the following years, Vygotsky's research and writings focussed on psychological and pedagogical issues, giving language a central role for the development and workings of social and psychological forms of activity. Vygotsky lends language an instrumental function, underscoring its functioning as a tool within the semiotic mediation process taking place interpsychologically and intrapsychologically. Vygotsky developed the idea of the psychological tool in the years 1927-1929, leading, on the grounds of experiments, to the account of the development of higher psychological functions from lower ones through the mediation of psychological tools (Vygotsky 1930/ 1997; Vygotskij 1931/ 1992). The mediational process itself was thus Vygotsky's first interest, not yet the *means* of this process. At the core was a fascination for the reversible aspect of verbal mediation, allowing human beings a control over themselves, over their own thinking and activity via the verbal tool. Self-regulation is thus in the first instance conceived as self-control, and control is mastering others and oneself, and language is the master's tool.[18]

Remarkably, Vygotsky formulates self-control differently from the 1930s on. This crystallizes in giving up the tool metaphor for language, and it coincides with Vy-

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[18] On Vygotsky's conception of mediation and on the development and transformation of the self-control topic see Bertau (2011, pp. 141-147).

gotsky's increasing interest for the means of mediation, for the "meaning volume" of the word. Vygotsky realized that the psychological tool, i.e. the word, has an inner side, leading him to the basic assumption of the *developing* relationship between a sign and its meaning.[19] It was this very relationship that preoccupied Vygotsky since his experiments on concept formation (1927-1929), and these reflections culminated in the chapter seven of *Thinking and Speech*, written in 1934 (Friedrich 1993). Giving up the conception of the word as tool, derived from its solely exterior consideration, and looking at its inner side, Vygotsky formulates now interiorization in a social way, no more as accomplishment of the child himself or herself, but as a social, even a dialogical, exchange between the child and his or her mother (Bertau 2011, pp. 360-368; Bertau 2008b; Keiler 2002). Thus, at the end of his life, Vygotsky turned to language in a non-instrumental way, acknowledging the social character of language in its dialogic and affective dimensions.

Addressing the development of word meaning, it is important for Vygotsky to consider what is specific for speech and for the word, what is "the unique character of the word" (Vygotsky 1934/ 1987, p. 247). For Vygotsky, "what makes the word a word" is "the generalization that is inherent in the word, this unique mode of reflecting reality in consciousness", and it is only that adequate conception that lead to the understanding "of the possibilities that exist for the development of the word and its meaning" (Vygotsky 1934/ 1987, p. 249). This development is considered by Vygotsky from an ontogenetic and from a microgenetic ("functional") perspective in chapter seven of *Thinking and Speech*, leading to the analysis of the *inner dynamics* of the word meaning. Vygotsky concludes: "the fact that the internal nature of word meaning changes implies that the relationship of thought to word changes as well" (Vygotsky 1934/ 1987, p. 249). Hence, a dynamic, processual relationship between word and meaning is to be assumed: "The relationship of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a movement from thought to word and from word to thought", so that the "movement […] is a developmental process" itself (Vygotsky 1934/ 1987, p. 250). The changeability of the word meaning is the sign of its labor in thinking, it is the sign of the "inner movement", of the

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[19] This comes to clear light by notes taken by Leont'ev during a meeting with Vygotsky and Luria in 1933, see Leont'ev (2002).

course of thinking itself. This "labor of language in thinking" relates in our opinion Vygotsky's account of the thinking process to Humboldt's view of the thinking process as generated by an addressed, communicative act.[20] Hence, the uttered word – external speech in Vygotsky's terminology – is the "materialization and objectivization" (Vygotsky, 1934/ 1987, p. 280) of thought, of that directed, addressed "labor of language in thinking". Thinking is an interchange performed in language activity by a speaker/thinker and his or her replyer/ thinker. It is at least at this point that the tool metaphor, owned by a self-contained subject, is no more usefully used.

Actually, Seifrid (2005) establishes explicit ties between Vygotsky, Potebnia and Humboldt. There is first the title of Vygotsky's book, an "intentional echo of Potebnia's *Mysl' i iazyk*" (*Thought and Language*). Further, in *Thinking and Speech* Vygotsky "invokes the authority of Potebnia more than once, such as when he approvingly cites Potebnia's assertion (borrowed from Humboldt) that 'language is a means to understand oneself', or when he repeats the Humboldtian emphasis on process ("the relation of thought to the word is not a thing but a process") together with its rejection of a purely instrumental view of language ('thought is not expressed in a word, it completes itself in a word')" (Seifrid 2005, p. 203; see Vygotsky 1934/ 1987, p. 250). Hence, the rejection of the tool view is coupled with a Humboldtian approach to language, echoing Romantic aspects, as explained. Again, Seifrid highlights the line relating Vygotsky to Russian Humboldtianism with respect to the core of Vygotsky's reflection, namely the issue of thinking and speech: "[Vygotsky] also uses a largely Potebnian vocabulary to discuss the mental structure of the word, such as when he says that 'the meaning is the word itself, viewed form its inner side,' or speaks of the word as having an inner, sense-possessing side, and an outer, audible side" (2005, p. 203).

Thus, what can be said to be at the core of Vygotsky's empirical research and theoretical reflections – the issue of thinking and speech – is formulated in terms echoing Humboldt and Romantic language thinking. It is at least the context to which Vygotsky came more closely in touch at the end of his life. That this is paired with a perspective acknowledging the irreducible otherness of any language act can be

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[20] By the expression "the labor of the language (in thinking)" we allude to a formula by Humboldt (e.g. 1999, §§ 3, 8).

seen in the fact that Vygotsky ends his book with a citation by Ludwig Feuerbach: "In consciousness the word is what – in Feuerbach's words – is absolutely impossible for one person but possible for two" (Vygotsky 1934/ 1987, p. 285).[21] In sum, Vygotsky's rejection of the tool metaphor for language, his accentuation of the social moment in interiorization together with the questioning of the self-controlling subject, and finally the view on the work of the socially derived word in thinking – all this makes it possible to develop Vygotsky's fundamental notions to a cultural-historical psycholinguistics based on the notion of alterity.

3. Psycholinguistics of Alterity

As previously described, psycholinguistics is in its mainstream formulation a cognitive science, language is basically looked at as an object of processing by an individual cognitive system. On the contrary, *cultural-historical psycholinguistics*, building on the framework of cultural-historical theory, addresses language activity in its social as well as in its psychological function with corresponding verbal forms. Language is at the core of the questioning, with respect to its acquisition in ontogeny, to its functioning in communication, and to its formative function for socio-psychological processes as thinking (e.g., problem solving, memorizing, volitional processes), self, and consciousness.

With language at its centre, this kind of psycholinguistic inquiry addresses the relationships of self to other, to itself, to reality, and to language as the primary mediational means to all relations the individual must necessarily undergo. Two key concepts must then be theorized and put in adequate relation to each other: *language*, and the *individual's self*. The historical analysis served this goal, elaborating thereby historical-conceptual links and kinships between the thinkers of the 1920s and 1930s – hence also contextualizing Vygotsky's leading ideas and his framework.

Indeed, we see in the Humboldtian tradition and in the linguistics and language philosophy contemporary to Vygotsky (Jakubinskij, Vološinov, Bakhtin) major contributions to the question of language in a psychological perspective, and thus to

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[21] To the fact that Vygotsky developed a strong affinity to Feuerbach at the end of his life, see Keiler (1999).

the construction of a cultural-historical psycholinguistics. The Soviet context of ideas and investigations is in our view further fruitfully extended by the work of an important language psychologist of the same epoch: Karl Bühler. Bühler's *Krise der Psychologie* (*The Crisis of Psychology*, 1927) and *Sprachtheorie* (*Theory of Language*, 1934/1990) are rich reflections on language in communicational and psychological perspectives, leading to an axiomatic system (1934/ 1990). What makes Bühler's theory of language particularly interesting for our aim is the consequently kept "system of two" (Bühler 1927). Any account of language has to start with this system, hence we see in Bühler a clear rejection of the self-contained 'I', that accords with his truly pragmatic view of language.[22]

Regarding the view of the individual, this has to be adequate to a cultural-historical and dialogic notion of language. Again, as noted, one can find important contributions to an interdependent notion of the individual in the 1920s and 1930s, as e.g. in Mead, and also in the Bakhtin-Medvedev-Vološinov Circle. In recent times, these non-Cartesian approaches to the individual are took up and developed in psychology within the framework of Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans & Gieser 2011). Language is thus situated within the life activity of situated and positioned, mutually oriented societal individuals, it is not abstractable from these individuals, nor from their activity.

This notion of language is at the core of the proposed *psycholinguistics of alterity* elaborated on the historical-conceptual bases of cultural-historical psychology (Vygotsky), dialogic linguistics (Jakubinskij, Vološinov, Bakhtin), language psychology (Bühler), and language philosophy (Humboldt, Vološinov, Bakhtin). Hence, the psycholinguistics of alterity is embedded in cultural-historical psycholinguistics and belongs to this more general attempt to reformulate psycholinguistics in terms of a contextualized individual. A slight, nevertheless important, difference can be seen in that the psycholinguistics of alterity emphasizes the *dialogic* dimension of human being's sociality and culture. This dimension is related to the grounding notion of alterity, as will become clear subsequently.

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[22] See Bühler's organ-model (Bühler 1934/ 1990), actually, the model to which Bühler is commonly reduced in language and communication studies. To Bühler and his theory see the excellent overview by Innis (1992).

The theory of the proposed psycholinguistics is formulated in the form of axioms, however, these are not supposed to be fixed dogmas explaining definitely the whole of language-and-thinking. Rather, the axioms are to be understood as a step in the construction of cultural-historical psycholinguistics. The explicitness axioms have to display is seen as a useful heuristic device for the clarification of notions – with the possibility of discussing, rejecting, developing them.

Of course, it is here not possible to render the theoretical construction in detail. Nevertheless, basic ideas and their formulations shall be given. To start with, the understanding of alterity as the founding concept is developed, followed by the axioms of the theory underlying what we call psycholinguistics of alterity (Bertau 2011).

3.1 Alterity

Taking alterity as founding notion to a psycholinguistic approach has conse-quences for language, and for the individual. This twofold-ness corresponds to the simultaneous view of psycholinguistics, embracing language as well as the individ-ual, be it as "mind", "cognition", "consciousness", or "self". With respect to lan-guage, the consequence is to explicitly reject the view of language-as-such, e.g., as inde-pendent phenomenon, principally existing apart from subjects, from histori-cal, social and cultural contexts, and outside of time and space. Language-as-such is seen as the precondition and prerequisite to any language use, i.e. to speech which is language "put to use" in a second step.

With respect to the individual, the alterity grounded approach requires an essen-tial shift in perspective: from the Archimedian, absolute vantage point of the "I" to the other. It is from the other's performed activities (verbal and non-verbal ones) that the self is defined as a self, and gets access to the self-defining and developing activities, particularly to language. Hence, language as well as human beings are grounded in relatedness, they are determined by relational processes. Insisting on relational processes amounts to turn away from reifications, or "entifications" (Gergen 2009) of all sorts, but particularly of language, self, identity, and culture. This is valid for alterity, too.

Alterity is to be conceived as developmental and relational movement (Bertau 2011a). This movement follows the socio-historical development of individual self,

which sets very clearly the origin of individual psyche and consciousness in the other. Alterity is thus a movement, constituting related positions and negating a primeval, self-contained "I" by setting a clear direction, a starting point which is not located in the "I" but in the other *as related to self*. This amounts to saying that the other is in no sense the powerful one determining helpless self. But, because of the reciprocity of their positions, other and self are interdependent. Each is the giving one for the other, her/ his starting point, and at the same time a recipient of the given. This simultaneity reflects the specificity of human activity as "logical medium between activity and passivity" (Schürmann 2008), so no pure and self-controlled activity, and not possible for a sole "I", but only for two, for a relationship – this echoes Feuerbach as cited in Vygotsky (1943/ 1987, p. 280). Hence, alterity is *performed*, it is not a possession, although human beings seem to be innately disposed to otherness (Trevarthen 2011). This performance happens in observable forms, i.e., in vividly experienced dynamics; specific, sensible forms in time, giving shape to the relationship and constructing positions: you to me and me to you within a space-time we jointly mould through the performance of a common means – spoken language. The jointly moulded space-time is a "space of language" (*Sprachraum*, Bertau 2011).

Hence, the basic position of the subject can be thought of as addressed and affected by the other. At the moment of birth (even with conception) the subject enters a world of others. It enters a world constituted in language and constituted by the language of others, performed again and again, presented, and made meaningful in these performances (Bertau 2011b).

Taking alterity as founding concept corresponds to our conviction that the formulation of an alternative framework to "individualist (behaviorist, cognitivist, or physiology-driven) and reductionist notions" has to go further than to turn to "contextual and cultural facets of human development" (Arievitch 2008, p. 38). Involving culture, context, or dialogue as aspects surpassing the individual does not automatically lead to a non-individualistic psychology, linguistics or psycholinguistics. It is perfectly possible to stay with the self-contained individual who, from time to time, and according to its own and private choice, enters dialogue, constructs contexts, and transmits culture. The decisive point is in our opinion a shift in the view of the individual as 'active actor', so to speak. The shift introduces the

other *in the first place*, in ontogenetic as well as existential respects (Bertau, 2011a); and it introduces passivity into activity (Schürmann 2008). Thus, alterity is the necessary notion to a genuine shift from an individualistic framework based in the ideology of the self-made, self-controlled rational/cognitive individual.

3.2 Axioms

Axiom 1 Language is seen as an activity performed by socially organized, self-other related individuals.

Axiom 2 The language activity is the medium of the individuals' sociality and self-other-relatedness, hence there is no outside standpoint to language, and the possibility of an actual instrumental relationship to it is not possible. Rather, an instrumental usage of language activity is the result of specific socio-cultural practices.

Axiom 3 The language activity generates the irreducible plurality of the phenomenon: manifoldly shaped verbal forms, which are embedded in, or refer to, non-verbal activities.

Axiom 4 The actual performance of the verbal forms leads to the emergence of a language space.

Corollary 4.1 Because the socially organized, self-other related individuals are individuals, they realize their language space not as a simple reproduction of the socioculturally scheduled and expected forms. This is impossible because the individuals are not "human beings as such". Hence, the language space is formed by the situation as well as simultaneously forming it. The relationship of forming and being formed can take several specifications.

Corollary 4.2 Since the verbal forms exist in language spaces – that is, not apart from contexts and situations, forming these as well as being formed by them – they are ideologically bound: they entail always evaluative accents.

Corollary 4.3 The evaluative accents are manifested by the formal aspects of the verbal forms. The phenomenonality of language is thus composed of linguistic aspects in material as well as in structural regards.

Axiom 5 The linguistic signs of the language activity exist as addressed words (the word coming from the other, the word addressed to the other).

Corollary 5.1 The signs are located within interindividual reality, they are positioned within interaction processes.

Corollary 5.2 The signs are socially reversible: they realize the movement between other and self in communication, and achieve the reversionary movement leading from the communicative activity into the activity of the mind.

The reversibility of the words indexes their medium-ness as well as their instrumentality, where they are used as means (see axiom 2). As means, the words correspond to a functional specific forming, and hence, as stated in axiom 2, there is no outside standpoint to the language activity. Nevertheless, there is the possibility to employ language in a systematic and purposeful way.

Corollary 5.3 On the grounds of corollary 5.1, linguistic signs are experienced aesthetically-sensuously as *forms*, and as sense making, intelligible social *meanings*.

Corollary 5.4 Also on the grounds of corollary 5.1, signs are not neutral, because they exist only in the societal usage of self and other. Hence, their sensuous as well as their sense-full (meaningful) side manifest always evaluations and positions to which any further usage takes a stance, thereby adding further evaluations and positions to the linguistic sign.

Corollary 5.5 Linguistic signs relate form and meaning, where the relation is not a fixed one, but dynamic with regard to the ontogeny of language and to the specific function of an actual language activity. For this reason, signs have a peculiar volume, which is characterized by flexibility and potentiality of meaning.

This volume is a function of the conditions of receptions by an audience and of the situation: In actual, addressed performances the completion of a meaning is achieved with a specific form. This completion is constrained, it can only take place with respect to certain forms.

Corollary 5.6 The relation of form and meaning (corollary 5.5) is a psychological process entailing a mediational aspect: The thought is mediated and arrives to what is meant and what is said. The mediating instance is the inner word, which has its own meaning, it is realized towards a specific form. The inner word does not coincide with the thought, nor does it signify the thought. Its meaning is not marked in social speech; its forming obeys its directedness onto the social lan-

guage space and manifests thus always an interference with another perspective. Without social, shared (understandable) language, the inner word is not realizable.

Axiom 6 On the grounds of the simultaneously social and reversible character of the linguistic sign, two fundamental types of performance are possible, corresponding to two life situations of socially organized, self-other related individuals.

Corollary 6.1 In the first situation, different individuals are actually present, they are mutually oriented by their self-other relatedness, together they perform the language activity in a perceivable way. In the second situation, it is an individual on its own who performs the language activity, the external orientation towards an actual other is suspended by an act of interiorization.

Corollary 6.2 These two situations and their corresponding types of performances are developmentally related, they hence show certain similarities within their differences.

Corollary 6.3 Form and specification of the two situations of 6.1 are socioculturally defined. Further, for the reason that language performing individuals are co-present to each others in different ways, there are transitional forms as variances of the two basic type of performing the language activity.

Axiom 7 The language activity is realized by the correlative acts of speaking and listening. By virtue of the sign's (the other's words) sociality and reversibility, the correlative acts are directed and addressed acts of communication and understanding. Performing language is thus always a communicative act and an act of thinking, by which the individuals navigate (*steuern*) each other and themselves, thereby coming to an understanding. Then, language can be a means to get along with consociates (*Mitmenschen*), with oneself, and with the world (Bertau 2011, pp. 202-204).

3.3 Commentaries to the Axioms

In the following, we will briefly comment the axioms and their corollaries.[23] It has to borne in mind that the proposed axiomatic system in Bertau (2011) is not only developed through the commentaries. Rather, and importantly, the theoretic sys-

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[23] This is a summary of the extended commentaries in Bertau (2011).

tem must be supplied by the four elements as central terms emerging from this theoretic frame: (1) addressivity and positioning, (2) form, (3) repetition and time, and (4) voice. These elements correspond to the second dimension in the construction of the psycholinguistics of alterity, transferring the first one – the axiomatic system itself – to concrete phenomena of language activity as given for instance in language acquisition and dialogic exchanges.

Axiom 1 *Language is seen as an activity performed by socially organized, self-other related individuals.*

The first axiom follows clearly Humboldt's so-called energetic principle, saying that language is not abstractable from the activity generating it: language is a process, a becoming (cf. section 1.1). Language is a commonly, in the course of time performed activity and exists as that reciprocally shaped dynamic. This means that language cannot be produced by an individual alone, but is necessarily produced in a dialogic way. Importantly, starting with dialogic performance leads to a specific understanding of activity itself. Following Schürmann (2008), tracing the specificity of activity theory, human activity is characterized by its medium status between activity and passivity. This is a clear rejection of the 'doer', the self-contained, fully active, controlling and controlled I. It is an acknowledgement of the 'richness of the realized activity' that is ever beyond the individual's intention.[24] Axiom 1 further underlines the necessity to understand language from the perspective of socially organized individuals (Bühler 1934/ 1990; Vološinov 1929/ 1986); address and reply, the dialogue with its exchange of positions and turns, can hence be seen as the grounding form of language activity (Jakubinskij 1923/ 1979).

Axiom 2 *The language activity is the medium of the individuals' sociality and self-other-relatedness, hence there is no outside standpoint to language, and the possibility of an actual instrumental relationship to it is not possible. Rather, an instrumental usage of language activity is the result of specific socio-cultural practices.*

This axiom supplies a decisive distinction to the understanding of language, that between medium and means. Viewing language as medium introduces a differ-

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[24] An allusion to Leont'ev's (1978) words that the realized activity is more rich and more true than consciousness preceding it.

ence in the widespread notion of language as mediational means, thereby stating clearly that language is more than an optional tool for the self. It is also a critique of the tool-ness view of language, which is to my opinion a reductionism that is particularly misleading in the context of a dialogical point of view. It belongs, I assume, to a monological view of the self. In this view, language is a tool used and put away optionally by an individual – which is in this case not a self-other related individual. Hence, the starting point for the difference between medium and means is the basic notion of the individual.

In social theories it is beyond dispute that human beings need other human beings as consociates (*Mitmenschen*). But there is a relevant distinction with regard to the conception of this need: is the other *optional*, or *obligatory* for the self (Schürmann 2010). The notion of the optional other corresponds to a setting where an individual moves towards another individual in order to construct sociality. In this model, sociality is thus *the result* of individuals relating to each other in an explicit (and thus optional) act – making a clear step. Further, individuals are conceived as atomistic entities, that is, as independent elementary components undertaking relations: these are hence resulting as secondary.

An alternative model conceives relatedness not departing from atomistic individuals, but from an in-between (*Zwischen*). It is within and by virtue of this in-between that individuals are always and already related, that they are consociates to each other. The in-between is the medium of their expressive possibilities: insofar it permits these specific expressive possibilities and insofar it always puts itself between the individual and his/her world (self, other). The medium thus gives access to the world and at the same time it constrains this access to a certain form. Thus, relations can build up at all *as* social relations by virtue of this medium, and individuals can construct each other and themselves as individualized and as positioned selves.[25] This conception shifts the defining weight from the independent selves to what exists between them. Individuals cannot be self-contained and atomistic, and the other is obligatory for self to be self. There is thus no choice and no free step towards the other. In this sense, the medium is necessary to the individuals insofar they are social (or socialized, or societal) individuals.

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[25] This corresponds to the thinking of, for instance, Rousseau, Hegel and Plessner, see Schürmann (2010).

The notion of medium-as-necessary is distinct from the notion of medium as tool, that mediates a relationship between two entities – as is the case of artefacts. Artefacts are *made use* of in order to reach a specific aim, and afterwards they are put aside. This kind of means is thus optional, under control of the individual – this is indicated by his/her taking them at hand and putting them aside. Finally, the individual has an outer and distanced relationship to these mediational means. Thus, controllable means, or tools, as mediators to the world belong to the model of the optional other and thus to the notion of self-contained, autonomous individual.

In contrast to this, the alternative model I advocate, views the medium as a necessary element of living and activity, defining individuals *as individuals to each other*. The relational power of the necessary medium is crystallized in language activity. Language activity constitutes the necessary medium for human beings to be individuals in the sense put forth here, that is: positioned within a movement from self to other, from other to self. Further, tool-ness of language is the result of particular societal language practices, by which the individuals can construct an outside position to their language and use it *as* a means.[26] The language activity is the element of human beings in the sense of a life element (like water for water beings). As such it is not suspendable, it cannot be subtracted without the individuals dissociating into a-social atoms: neither socially organized, nor being self-other positioned and related. This also means that one cannot choose to step out of and back into language, language cannot freely be taken and put away. As human beings we are in language.[27]

Axiom 3 *The language activity generates the irreducible plurality of the phenomenon: manifoldly shaped verbal forms, which are embedded in, or refer to, non-verbal activities.*

This axiom follows Jakubinskij's notion of the functional verbal forms (1923/ 1979). These forms are manifold because they are conditioned by the "intricate diversity" of the "psychological and sociological factors" characteristic for human life form

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[26] Specific language activities are related to the tool-use: writing, reading, metalinguistic analysis. This may lead to the so-called Written Language Bias: Linell (1998).

[27] See for a similar approach in linguistics the model formulated by Weigand (2009, p. 79). The tool-ness view of language is criticized form a philosophical stance by Gadamer (1966/ 1986).

(Jakubinskij 1923/ 1979, p. 321). With Jakubinskij, the plurality of language is kept and not dissolved into a unifying *langue*; the plurality of language activity belongs to the human plurality as manifested in different kinds of cultures (at micro and macro levels). Language activity of socially organized individuals is thus bound to and embedded in social activities; it is functional with regard to these activities, its actors, and its situation (in the broadest sense). Nevertheless, within plurality there are recognizable forms, patterns, habits of usages, genres of language activity (Bakhtin 1986) which can be observed. All these forms show different degrees of fixedness and flexibility, they also allow the refracting of an individual style and stance in different ways (Bakhtin 1986). These forms belong to the way a community of speakers functionally solve communicative problems within activity.

Axiom 4 *The actual performance of the verbal forms leads to the emergence of a language space.*

The term 'language space' designates the forming of the in-between of mutually oriented individuals in language activity. This space is a dynamic evolving across time, its forms are hence perceived as performances under several aspects: as linguistic forms (specific words, word order, intonations), with their chronotopology (locus and direction of utterance within physical space, moment, tempo, rhythmicity, dynamic structures of addressivity), and the roles and positionings of the performers (self as-whom to other as-whom).

With respect to the linguistic forms as language specific aspects, the specificity of language functioning for the actors is described by Bühler's (1934/ 1990) term of displacement (*Versetzung*). This term allows to link indexing (showing) and representing as forms of presentation (to make present) and to assume that it is not the (representing) symbol alone that has the privilege to build up a language space: this is already possible by simple indexing means as a fully situated "I am there!". The effect of displacement explains its functioning: generating sharedness for the interacting individuals that goes beyond the actual, sensitive contact of for instance a touching hand. The individuals share a common affective and cognitive world – more precisely: they *assume* that they share common meanings and con-

cepts, common feelings and evaluations, common intentions.[28] Clearly then, displacement does not automatically occur and function by language activity, rather, it can well fail when interactors are not able to generate and hold affective and cognitive relations or attachments.

Following and expanding Bühler, a system of displacement is constructed involving deictic, anaphoric, symbolic, and so-called lectic displacement. The *deictic* mode displaces within the interactors' common here-and-now, as "she is here!"; *anaphoric* displacement orients and navigates within the order of language itself, i.e. within the uttered text, as in "as mentioned above, this concept..."; *symbolic* displacement introduces a new quality, for its basis is no more physical space and time (no matter if actual or imagined), but a conceptual world. Finally, with the so-called *lectic* displacement it is no more the world which is presented (made present), but speakers present themselves or others as speakers.[29] This is done in "constructed dialogues" and reported talk (Tannen 1989; Holt & Clift 2007).

Axiom 5 *The linguistic signs of the language activity exist as addressed words (the word coming from the other, the word addressed to the other).*

The linguistic signs are viewed as uttered words, which are independent wholes that can function as own utterances ("tomorrow") or as part of utterances ("he will come tomorrow"), they are performed in the language space. The fact that these signs can be combined to complex wholes is an important condition to the generation of functional verbal forms and genres. Hence, linguistic signs are inherent to the language space, they belong to this space in a *material way*;[30] they occur in different linguistic environments, in which they are formed by grammatical and syntactical techniques. They are the formed and forming aspects of the language space with its specific partners as well as its situatedness in time, space, and

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[28] The grounds of this kind of assumptions is given by two kinds of "idealizations" (Schütz 1971): the idealization of the exchangeability of the individual stand points, and the idealization of the congruence of the individual's systems of relevance.

[29] The term "lectic" is derived from Greek *lexis*, meaning in rhetorical contexts the way of speaking, the expression (see e.g. Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*, 1408b).

[30] The notion of the material sign is build with Vološinov (1929/ 1986); in Bertau (2007) we develop the notion of "vivid" or dynamic materiality in regard to the couple of form and substance following Aristotle's concept of *hylemorphism*.

culture: the linguistic forming happens within the framing of speech and voice formations. Hence, linguistic signs are *experienced*. Further, linguistic signs, as they are performed – addressed and replied to – in the language space between self and other, are positioned within the interaction process (with Vygotsky 1925/ 1999; Papadopoulos 1998).

A feature of utmost importance in the linguistic sign is its ability to be reversed (Vygotsky 1925/1999). In this movement, the sign is no more directed to the actual other, but to oneself: its other-directedness is conversed into a self-directedness, and this is precisely used for cognitive operations (e.g. remembering, problem-solving). Through the reversion, the linguistic sign becomes a "psychic tool" (Vygotsky 1930/ 1997) in one's own psychological functions, the uttered word becomes an inner word. In Bertau (2008b), we labeled the reversion a *deviation* in order to signify the kind of abstraction from the other-oriented verbal communication that is done in reversing the linguistic sign, as well as to highlight its specificity: the reversion takes its way to self *through* other. This way owes thus a specific quality to the resulting self-orientedness, and to the workings of the mind and of the self – processes which are constructed onto the other as an *absent* one. It is by this very abstraction from actual other that an outside position to language and the usage of language as tool becomes possible for self, accessible as socio-cultural tool for specific genres of activities (e.g. writing a diary or a scientific article, solving problems of different kinds, working through one's emotional and self processes).

Starting with a language space and locating the linguistic sign as experienced, "vivid materiality" (Vološinov 1927/ 1986) within the interaction of the partners, the sign-words are understood with regard to form and meaning. Form is the realized, sensorily perceivable forming of the words, hence no static and neutral envelope for a meaning to be transmitted; rather, form is indissociable from meaning, and has a part in the construction of the actual meaning in its specific way. Further, the meaning construction is to be viewed in regard to the listening-replying other. Several strands of ideas which cannot be developed here (foremost Humboldt 1990, 1994; Friedrich 1993) are bound together in order to surpass a referential notion of the sign: only then it is possible for the word-sign to become a formative, generating means of thoughts – thus linking Humboldt's *Dual* (1827/ 1994) to

Vygotsky's *Thinking and Speech* (1934/ 1987). Again, a dynamic notion of form is the basic condition to this theory of the relationship between articulated words and thoughts; this is mainly constructed with Aristotle's so-called Hylemorphism (*hyle* meaning matter, *morphe* meaning form; see Bertau 2007).

A last point to be mentioned in regard to the sign and its linking of form and meaning is the fact that it is not understood as fixed unity of form and meaning. On the contrary, form and meaning, although indissociable, are in a dynamic, transformable relationship, developing in the course of ontogeny as well as in actual thinking and communicative processes. Hence, meaning is foremost a potentiality, it is mobile and functionally related to the conditions of the language space. Its concrete completion through the performance of sensory forms is not arbitrary, but constrained by usages and habits giving validity and adequacy to certain meaning-forms. Finally, the relationship of meaning and form is seen as a psychological activity which is mediated by the so-called inner word. The inner word is seen as an independent (not belonging to thinking, nor to social speaking), structurally mixed element (oscillating between conceptual and sensory processes).

Axiom 6 *On the grounds of the simultaneously social and reversible character of the linguistic sign, two fundamental types of performance are possible, corresponding to two life situations of socially organized, self-other related individuals.*

This axiom formulates and develops the relationship of thinking and speech as stated by Vygotsky (1934, p. 987), and thus underscores the *psycholinguistic* under-standing of the language activity. The axiom avoids container terms ("in" and "inner", "out" and "outer") by purpose, because they are assumed to be misleading in understanding how language functions for the individual.[31] Rather, we try to formulate the types of language usages according to their functionality for self-other related socialized individuals, and in regard to the other as the starting point for any conception of language and its workings. Hence, we speak of two fundamental types of performance, corresponding to two life situations. The basic difference of these performances and situations lies in the presence *versus* absence

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[31] The most negative effect of locating verbal processes *in* psyche or *in* communication is the resulting opposition between individual and social, paving the way for the a-social, self-contained I.

of the other. As briefly mentioned in the commentary to axiom 5, a different function emerges with the sign being reversed to oneself, a movement that is deepened and further developed in the absence of the other. Here, different stages in the capacity of handling the word-sign as psychological tool can be observed, for instance in children's symbolic play, in egocentric or private speech, in specific writing genres. What happens here is a transposition of an actual language space to an imagined one: from the child's actual room to a castle with fighting chevaliers, from a laboratory room to a problem space made out of pictures and rules to discover (as given by Raven's Matrices, see Werani 2011), or from one's own room and desk to the remembered spaces of activities with others and to the imagined space of a reading other (generic or significant) with his/her quality of reply (as in Karsten, this volume; Surd-Büchele, this volume).

Axiom 7 *The language activity is realized by the correlative acts of speaking and listening. By virtue of the sign's (the other's words) sociality and reversibility, the correlative acts are directed and addressed acts of communication and understanding. Performing language is thus always a communicative act and an act of thinking, by which the individuals navigate (*steuern*) each other and themselves, thereby coming to an understanding. Then, language can be a means to get along with consociates (*Mitmenschen*), with oneself, and with the world.*

The final axiom states once again the mutuality of language performance, as manifested by the partners' acts of speaking and listening within the language space. These acts are correlative because they are necessarily referred to each other, hence forming each other. Any language performance by an individual is to be understood as a correlative act calling for the corresponding act, and as being itself already called for by a previous act. The acts correspond to positions of the partners, they are prototypically labelled "address" and "reply". Hence, each utterance is a reply and seeks for a reply, how distant in space and time it may be.

The correlativity of speaking and listening is understood along the line of arguments found in Jakubinskij (1923/ 1979), Bakhtin (1986), and Vološinov (1929/ 1986): Jakubinskij is the one who first stated the interdependence of utterances, a notion taken up and developed by Bakhtin and Vološinov. Putting the focus of interdependence *not* on the related individuals performing language acts, but on the utterances themselves – as the Russians do – is important, because it shows

the functioning of the language activity in clear light: it is in detaching, in emancipating the utterance from a speaking body that the spoken and listened-to word gets its communicative-cognitive power; it is by this detachment that different voices can interfere and merge in one speaker, hence, that the polyphony of speaking and thinking is possible – a play of communicative voices and positions, of cognitive and metacognitive perspectives (Bertau 2011a).

Further, the correlativity of the acts is not only related to the interdependence of utterances but also to the reversibility of the verbal sign. It is by the reversion to oneself that the other's utterance can have a part in one's thinking and speaking. This reversion also guarantees that individual acts of speaking are indeed individual ones and not mere echoes or 'parrot utterances' of previously heard words. As a consequence, understanding cannot be conceived in symmetry to the said.[32] Rather, understanding is autonomous, it is directed and oriented by the said, but it does not duplicate the said. Thus, verbal communication is the performance of difference, and this difference is the base of and the reason for a reply, of an answer called for.[33] Because of this, speaking can serve self-understanding (as for Linell 1998), where the speaker works in his/her thinking with the two different positions and perspectives given by address and reply. Viewing speaking as self-understanding relates closely to Humboldt's *Dual* (1827/ 1994) and to the concept of objectification: performing language amounts to a possibility of thinking which is determined on the one hand by the displacements – foremost by the symbolic one –, and on the other hand by the orientation to an other who *is* different: who is another.

On these grounds it is stated that the performance of language activity is a communicative act and an act of thinking. The function of this performance is given by the term 'navigation' (*Steuerung*) which is seen as a mutual act as well as an act oriented towards oneself, because any language performance is assumed to affect the speakers themselves, too. Importantly, the notion of navigation is not modelled according to an instrumental understanding of the sign serving information

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[32] See also Hörmann (1976, 1983) from the standpoint of language psychology.

[33] "[The speaker] does not expect passive understanding, that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth" (Bakhtin 1986, p. 69).

transmission and the regulation of a system. Rather, it is Bühler's (1927) notion that is taken as starting point because it explicitly involves *and keeps* the intersubjective activity of a "system of two" (*Zweiersystem*). This notion thus entails *mutual* navigation, and – again – allows the possibility of self-navigation as happening in self-understanding; the speaker is not the powerful manipulator of the listener, nor is he/she exempt from the navigating activity. Given the activity of mutual navigating, the workings of the sign lies beyond reference, it lies in representing as presenting. Hence, the sign always involves an evaluative positioning towards the presented content, the addressee of the presentation, and oneself as presenter of this certain content for this certain other. Here lies the potency of language, closer to interested ravishment than to neutral, un-positioned information.[34] In language spaces, individuals create by linguistic displacements specific forms of relatedness to each other, to themselves, and to their world, thus coming to an understanding and getting along with their fellows, with themselves, and with the world.

4. Conclusion

From a viewpoint explicity devoted to the "work of language" in mind and activity, developing a cultural-historical psycholinguistics within the framework of activity theory is viewed as a need. Basic ideas and concepts are seen in the works of Humboldt and of the Russian scholars of the 1920s and 1930s who are related to Humboldt and further develop his ideas in linguistics and psychology. It is the *dynamics of language* as communicative as well as psychological means that can be said to be at the centre of Humboldt's and the Russian's interest – and it is the basic notion for a cultural-historical psycholinguistics. On this ground, a specific version of cultural-historical psycholinguistics is here proposed: the psycholinguistics of alterity.

The theory of this psycholinguistics is constructed at the crossroad of a historical and conceptual reflection of the notion of language, and of the basic notion of

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[34] With the notion of ravishment we link our language notion to the logos notion of the Sophists, particularly to Gorgias from Leontini and his concept of *apate*, meaning an artful deceit. For us, language, with respect to its power on other and self, is indeed ambivalent: it can have positive as well as negative effects. Principally, language activity oscillates between regulation and ravishment (see Bertau 2010a).

activity (Leont'ev). As is worth noting, both these roads pave the way to a non-Cartesian view of human beings as self-other related individuals, a view which is seen as grounding paradigm. Linking itself to a tradition interested in the power of language (Gorgias), in its formative function for communicative and psychological processes (Humboldt, Potebnia, Vygotsky) the theoretical framework constructs a notion of language and of the individual self where what we call the *phenomenon-ality* of the individuals' verbal activity is at the centre.[35] Hence, how *forms* of activity appear and develop, how they are conditioned in terms of environment as common social space and positioned-positioning partners, are relevant questions for the proposed framework. There is one aspect here to mention, which is for us of utmost importance, although not yet elaborated.[36] This aspect is given by the term of the third, pointing to the fact that self-other related individuals necessarily need a third component to be related at all. This component can be associated to the aforementioned language-as-medium, its concrete manifestation can be seen in the audience, understood as a necessary witness for any language activity. The point is that "two is not enough", that two individuals do not make a dialogic theory, even not three or more individuals. For a dialogic theory, a multitude turning into a community where audiences and solo speakers-and-listeners are discernible positions is necessary and sufficient. The qualitatively different third term is in our view the necessary condition for a genuine non-Cartesian view of language, of activity, and of the individuals as passive-active performers.

The proposed psycholinguistics of alterity, which integrates itself in other similar approaches in linguistics (e.g. Linell 1998, 2009; Weigand 2009) and psychology (e.g. Hermans & Gieser 2011; Fuchs, Sattel & Henningsen 2010), can hence be seen as a plea for a change in perspective in the human sciences. This change would lead from a notion of the individual grounding in its self-contained 'I-ness' (*Ichigkeit*) – a notion corresponding to Western conventions about the subject – to the notion of a relational individual, determined by alterity. This change corre-

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[35] "Phenomenality" refers to the actual unfolding, the presence and the givenness of the individual's language activity. The term echoes the notion of language space and refers to the complex sensitive experience we have of language activity. A quite interesting crosslink regarding phenomenality as term and notion is to be seen in Fuchs, Sattel & Henningsen (2010).

[36] A first formulation is given in Bertau (2010b), a paper presented at the 6th International Conference on the Dialogical Self, Athens, October 2010.

sponds to a shift from an isolated and a-historical individual to a related one who lives together with fellows in common spaces and times. This alternative notion is assumed to be a promising way to investigate and understand the complex dynamics of human life.

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