



RESEARCH PAPER

A Unity of Obucheniye and Vospitaniye: An Unexplored Unity in
Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development

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ABSTRACT

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The most acknowledged throughout practical and theoretical educational settings across the globe, the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggested by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, is not typically recognized for its individual integral components. As Russian educational practices suggest, for an educator to prompt their students' comprehensive and pragmatic mastery of the studied content, an educational process has to include *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye*. *Obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* are interpermeating processes, quintessential to any guided teaching-learning. As a result, it is through their joint impact that a student is able to comprehensively develop, master the studied content, and develop situationally adequate proficiency of a skill or discipline. The goal of this paper is to introduce international academic community to both concepts integral to any Vygotskian teaching on education and development. These concepts can be traced in the original (Russian) used in alternation and consequently, are often mistranslated or overgeneralized in English impacting the overall understanding of Vygotskian theories. Additionally, this article advocates for the beneficial joint effect of *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* synthesis in the process of mentor's guided interference into the student's Zone of Proximal Development.

Introduction

The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) extensively employed by the educators on a global scale was introduced by the Russian educational psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978). It is typically viewed as the difference between what a learner can do without educator's or caregiver's assistance and what such learners can achieve with the guidance (Mahn, 2015; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2000; Vygotsky, 1966, 1978). What the formal definition overlooks is a complexity of the educational process occurring in the Zone of Proximal Development. As a mentor not only promotes the development or memorization of conceptual content sequences, through educating they shape in learners a complex unity of social, psychological,

and pragmatic components required for the comprehensive application of the acquired knowledge. A skill modeled by an educator is not solely limited by a more technical comprehension component of it, yet it also suggests socially recognized practical application of it. With the subject or skill awareness and drilling the educator projects specific approaches to implementation along with behavioral patterns associated with practicing this specific new skill (Robinson, 1971; Sequeira, 2012). This way a skill or knowledge acquired by the learner from an educator in the ZPD could be characterized by the multimodality of content awareness as well as pragmatic understanding of its implementation.

Those who are native or professionally fluent in Russian language and are familiar with Soviet and post-Soviet educational setting and its scholars, such as Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, view the processes taking place in ZPD and as a result and end product of educational process as a unity of two quintessential components - *obucheniye* (Russian, literally two-directional process of teaching and learning), and *vospitaniye* (Russian, fostering of contextually appropriate social behavioral practices) (Mylnikova, 2017). It is only this unity that the proximal realization of all the goals of the education process can be guaranteed (Sarkisyan, 2014). For this reason, when Vygotsky (1966, 1978, 1987) talks about *education* in the Zone of Proximal Development, he subliminally presupposes the unity of both *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* lying at the very base of any teaching-learning process as well as his theoretical educational philosophy as a whole. The interconnected and interpenetrating nature of the two components of education can easily be traced in the original texts of Vygotsky in which depending on the context the scholar either alternates *obucheniye* and/or *vospitaniye* or uses both for clarity and/or emphasis of a specific educational process at play. The rest of the academic community worldwide who only have a linguistic access to translated works of Vygotsky typically do not recognize the complexity of the educational processes in their entity discussed by Vygotsky. In English translation both *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* will be most commonly either overgeneralized as *education* or a rather narrow teaching or learning. This paper is intended to shed light onto the intricate amalgamation of *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* taking place simultaneously in the ZPD.

Literature Review

As in order to demonstrate our argument we are referring to the notions that originate from Russian language, we suggest a brief clarification of the pedagogical terms of *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* as they are understood by the Russian speaking educators of past and present. *Obucheniye* literally can be translated from Russian as educating, training, teaching, mentoring, learning, or study/studying depending on the discourse context and is morphologically rooted in the duo-directionality of the educational process in which indeed one side of the process is teaching and another one is learning from them. This way, *obucheniye* can be conceptualized as a guided or supervised process of acquiring knowledge, abilities, and skills through which learner actualizes their individual intellectual and physical potential simultaneously evolving their emotional perception of social reality (Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 2002). As it can be seen from the definition, *obucheniye* being an educational experience is primarily targeted at content memorization and its practicality achieved through formation of new or reconsidered mental, conceptual, or physical models. As in the process of learning (*obucheniye*), more knowledgeable individuals – teachers,

caregivers, mentors, trainers, and even peers introduce learners to certain content, *obucheniye* becomes a process of intellectual transformation. In other words, in this process learners learn from teachers and teachers learn from learners as different socio-cultural occurrences affect lifelong development of both students and educators. Consequently, *obucheniye* leads to intellectual and physical refinement of both sides participating in the teaching-learning process (process of *obucheniye*) which enhances further development of the society (Dal, 1880).

Vygotsky, in his “Structural Psychology” (1930), referring to *obucheniye* emphasizes the fact that it is only in complex knowledge exchange that the psychical development of an individual is enabled, and comprehensive comprehension of new content is possible. What’s more, in original Vygotsky’s works (1930c, 1934, 1966, 1978), the scholar himself accentuates the fact that the educational processes or the process of *obucheniye* is not just a retention of the taught content, it is a unification of all delivered knowledge units into more or less complex internalized structures. Such knowledge units may represent every day or academic content, socially accepted behavioral principles, etiquette and conversational patterns, non-verbal conventions of situational discourse, among others. As a result, strategically organized *obucheniye* leads not only to acquisition of knowledge but also further self-guided and self-motivated educational development by those who are learning (Vygotsky, 1935).

Another component of the multimodal process of education taking place in Zone of Proximal Development as viewed by Russian speaking community is *vospitaniye*. Standing in English for fostering, upbringing, nurturing, mentoring, mental training, or cultivation of personality, *vospitaniye* is often generalized as a form of mentoring in the American and international academic context. It is typically viewed as a “multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing, and supporting” (Koki, 1997), or a voluntary collaboration of mentor and mentee in which academic development of the mentee is encouraged for the sake of further professional or intellectual benefits of the later (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985; Rhodes, 2005). Even though most of the modern definitions of mentoring predominantly have voluntary and exceedingly academic nature of coaching, it is Johnson (2015) and Mullen (2011) who emphasize the shaping of “a professional identity of a mentee” which the mentor achieves through the relationship of fostering. It is in their clarification that mentoring in the US and international academic context becomes characterized as a socio-cultural process of cultivation of personality. Indeed, social component of *vospitaniye* particularly stands out when considering its Russian morphological structure. The verb *vospitivat’* presupposes social appropriation, fostering and nurturing social behavioral competence, and educating younger generations about the principles of social being (Ozhegov, 2007). In order to enable *vospitaniye* and promote individual’s personal and professional development, a systematic and purposeful influence on individual’s consciousness and behavior through a transfer of socio-historical experience to next generations (Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 2002) is required.

Vygotsky (1997) himself accentuates that to shape social entities it is “the responsibility of general pedagogics, and of social ethics, to pinpoint and map out the goals of education (in Russian text *vospitaniye*)” (p. 55). He adds that “the development of an indivisible and harmonious personality, or of an educated and civilized person” (p. 55) is possible only with clearly determined goals of *vospitaniye* which are targeted at shaping new forms of behavior, new conditioned response, and

new conditioned reflex in a mentee (Vygotsky, 1929). In such a way, interference with genetically hard-wired instincts of anger, fear revenge, rivalry, envy (Maslow, 1954, 1962; Yankelovich, & Barrett, 1970) and overriding them into a formalized socially-anticipated and socially-appropriated behavioral mannerisms (Buss, 2008; Skinner, 1978; Spink, 2010; Vygotsky, 1930a) becomes one of the main objectives of *vospitaniye*.

This way *vospitaniye* becomes a dialectical process, a continuous dynamic battle of 'wild' in a person and their adaptation to the social environment for a 'civilized' and socially-integrated existence (Vygotsky, 1997). With that in mind, the priority of educational process is to transform a biotype of an individual into a sociotype, "a matured wholesome socio-cultural personality entity to achieve through holistic *vospitaniye* of social, labor, moral, aesthetic, and emotional principles of a given society" (Mylnikova, 2017). For the fostering powers of *vospitaniye* to smoothly customize new intellectual, behavioral, and psychological properties in an individual, that are originally, "by nature" are alien to them, an educator or mentor needs to stimulate the existing behavioral and ideologic mechanisms in a minimally intrusive way (Vygotsky, 1967).

When read in the original, it becomes evident that the psychologically-pedagogical research of Vygotsky (1930), strongly emphasized dominance of *vospitaniye* over *obucheniye* even though both educational and nurturing of social and behavioral components of education signified a holistic comprehensive educational process. *Vospitaniye* over *obucheniye* were never antitheses. Modern Russian educators consider the pedagogy of collaboration, "personality transformation through child's mastering of humanity's historical experience" (Mylnikova, 2017) a quintessential component of education of any age group at any educational level.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

In modern education, developmental psychology, and other relevant disciplines discussing human development Vygotskian concept of Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD is perhaps one of the most renowned ones. The definition of ZPD suggested by its author in 1978 is common and extensively exploited by educational and developmental scholars and practitioners around the globe states: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). The other work of the scholar - "*Obucheniye* and Development in the Preschool Age" (1980) further explains that ZPD determines learner's skills and capabilities that are in the process of maturation and this way determine the intellectual development that the individual will have tomorrow. With a goal of shaping the knowledge of tomorrow, mentors initially need to detect their students' Zone of Actual Development (ZAD) (Vygotsky, 1980) to understand what and how these students already do independently. In other words, what knowledge and skills these learners have obtained in the past and what behavioral principles guide their current knowledge application. Such awareness will allow educators to further capitalize on actual or present level of intellectual, physical, and social development of mentees. Only after establishing ZAD, understanding the areas of the unknown, an educator will be able to personalize and strategically calibrate guidance strategies and methodology for the experience and knowledge transfer in ZPD (Vygotsky, 1980) and

for prompting their mentees' further intellectual formation. What's more, for this mentor's *intrusion* to become smooth and effective, educators should consider targeting ZAD through both *obucheniye* and *vospitaniye* in order to shape the true knowledge of tomorrow.

Correlation of *Obucheniye* and *Vospitaniye* with ZPD.

Since individual's learning and as a result intellectual development is driven by social forces of formal or informal learning settings, knowledge obtained in this process should not be solely characterized by acquired skills and knowledge -subject, information, and facts comprehension. However, refined socio-behavioral practices obtained through theoretical and practical learning and external influences occurring in the process of education (Vygotsky, & Varshava, 1931) also distinguish acquired knowledge. This way educational training of an individual due to the specific external socio-cultural influence occurs on two planes: content familiarization - *obucheniye* and psychological and behavioral maturation - *vospitaniye*. Under the collaborative and transformative effects of *obucheniye* taking place in the ZPD, learners will be able to not only obtaining new or expanded factual knowledge and mechanical skills, but they will also enhance their internalization of new academic and/or psychical proficiencies. On top of that, through *vospitaniye* educators will be able to prompt development of refined socio-cultural behavioral mechanisms to assist their learners in becoming mature integrated individuals in their socio-cultural communities. Through further guided and then independent practice, new intellectual, physical, and behavioral proficiencies convert into wholesome integral intellectual assets of learners (Vygotsky, 1991).

Interesting enough, American academia typically mentions all three components of educational process: teaching, learning, and mentoring in isolation from one another. Some research emphasizes significance of teaching practices seemingly disconnected from students' learning and from mentoring them (Hammerness and Kennedy, 2019). Other research will be covering student's learning mechanisms and assessing their content memorization but will be overlooking instructor's mode of academic (teaching) and personal (mentoring, nurturing, guiding) involvement (Ames & Archer, 1988; Huang et al., 2019). The third type of publications would be advocating for the significance of mentorship standing separately from teaching and learning and taking place only outside the classroom for administrative purposes and professional development of teachers (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Lechuga, 2011). Yet, in fact it is all of those processes coming together in the holistic and comprehensive effect and impact on an individual that this individual receives through the shaping process of *vospitaniye* and *obucheniye* acquired in the Zone of Proximal Development.

Conclusion

The educational process is a synthesis of *vospitaniye* and *obucheniye*. It is only through their interconnection that the educative training targeted at a learner can comprehensively shape this learner's knowledge and mastery of the content. The amalgamation of the two components also plays a critical role in educator's smooth and strategic interference into the Zone of Proximal Development of a learner. Therefore, it is the instructor's responsibility to assist a learner in shaping their outlook, forming moral and ethical principles of conduct, socially valued aspirations,

motives, stimulate, skills and social conduct mechanisms, awareness of the social and psychological mechanisms that are at play in the environment in which an individual is developing (Sarkisyan, 2014; Vygotsky, 1925b, 1930a). When the educational process is properly organized, a learner becomes eager not only to learn effectively and be motivated but also becomes eager to self-develop, strive for self-actualization through fulfilling intellectual, cultural, and biological potential (Maslow, 1954,1962).

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