

Rukopisi ne goryat or do they?

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Somewhere around 1992 Jaan Valsiner and myself decided to edit the volume with previously unpublished writings by Lev Vygotsky that would subsequently appear as *The Vygotsky Reader* (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994). The volume was part of our project to show the “embeddedness of his thinking in the work of his contemporaries and predecessors” (ibid., p. v). This project was begun in the late 1980s and had already resulted in *Understanding Vygotsky: A quest for synthesis* (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). In that book as well, we tried to debunk the idea of Vygotsky as a lonely genius and emphasized the idea of what we termed ‘intellectual interdependency’ (ibid., p. 393).

The selection of the texts that were to be translated into English for the *Vygotsky Reader* was based on considerations of importance, representativeness, length, and so on. However, this is not to say that the final volume was the best possible volume, because the truth is that we could easily have compiled several more and equally interesting volumes with writings by Vygotsky unknown to the English readership. What is more, such volumes could still be compiled.

When Jaan Valsiner and me were making a ‘long list’ of potentially publishable writings, we realized that we already had a translated Vygotsky text in our possession. This was the now infamous text of *Tool and symbol in child development*. As we wrote in the introduction of *The Vygotsky Reader*: “In the early 1970s Luria, with Michael Cole’s help, tried to get this [text] published internationally, but without success. It is thanks to Michael Cole’s collaboration with our present project that the work is now published in the form overseen by Luria” (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994, p. 3). The *Tool and Symbol* text came with a story that we could partially verify.

The story was that the text was written by Vygotsky and Luria in 1930 and translated into English for publication in Murchison’s *Handbook of Child Psychology* (Murchison, 1931). For some reason the manuscript was not accepted and neither the Russian nor the English version were published during Vygotsky’s lifetime. Moreover, when in the 1960s the Russian editors of Vygotsky’s collected works wished to publish the text they found that the Russian version had been lost. They therefore ordered a back translation of the English version, which was published as *Orudie i znak v razvittii rebenka* in 1984 (Vygotskii, 1984). This is the story as we related it in *Understanding Vygotsky: A quest for synthesis* (p. 188).

It was, of course, a strange story and before we decided to publish the English version of *Tool and Symbol* in the *Vygotsky Reader* we attempted to verify its truthfulness. First, on p. 321 of the 1934 edition of *Myshlenie i rech* (Vygotskii, 1934), in the list of Vygotsky’s writings, we found under the heading of psychology books a reference to a manuscript, entitled *Orudie i znak* (sovместno s [together with] A. R. Luria), dated 1930 and on p. 323 to a manuscript, entitled *Tool and Symbol in the development of the child* (napravleno v [submitted to] “Handbook of Child-Psychology”, 1930). This seemed to suggest that Vygotsky and Luria together had written a book, which then subsequently was translated—fully or partially—into English and submitted to Murchison for publication. What I did not realize at the time was that the chapters in the *Handbook of Child Psychology* (e.g., Murchison, 1931), with few exceptions, tended to have some 30 to 50 pages in print and that Vygotsky’s and Luria’s type-written English manuscript contained no less than 139 pages. This is to say that *Tool and Symbol* in Murchison’s view may simply have been too long to include in his volume.

When we first heard the story about *Tool and Symbol* the name of one alleged translator was also mentioned. This name I subsequently forgot. It may have been Goldberg’s but it certainly was neither Puzyrej nor Tulviste, because I knew Puzyrej personally and Jaan Valsiner knew Tulviste

quite well and we would have checked the information immediately. Incidentally, at the time it was much more difficult to check such claims because, as I remember it, email was not yet widely used and the internet as we now know it did not yet exist. So we had to go by letters and telephone. For instance, one day I was called by an American who claimed his name was Vygodsky and who told me he had done some research into the origin of the Vygodsky and Vygotsky names. He claimed that the Vygotsky name derived from the Jewish quarter of some Belorussian town and mentioned its name. This name I also forgot. These persistent memory failures may explain why I do not even know from whom we first heard the story about the *Tool and Symbol* manuscript. Most likely, various persons (e.g., Michael Cole) told and/or confirmed it.

This brings me to the English manuscript as we received it from professor Cole. As mentioned above, it was a copy of a type-written manuscript of 139 pages with handwritten corrections in ink. The title page gives L.S. Vygotsky's name in capitals and then the title, *Tool and symbol in child development*, again in capitals. Handwritten on the same page is the name "Scribner" and the text, with a different pen, "Checked and O.K.d by A.L.". This suggests that the original of the typescript belonged to Sylvia Scribner, a psychologist who closely cooperated with Michael Cole in various projects, and that its text had been checked and approved by Alexander Luria. The first two pages contained the table of contents but were numbered 138 and 139, which shows that in copying the original someone moved the table of contents from its Russian location at the back of the manuscript to the beginning as in English publications. Interestingly enough, the manuscript followed the British spelling conventions (e.g., 'behaviour' instead of 'behavior').

As I said before, the manuscript is full of handwritten corrections, some of them in capital block letters (e.g., **HERE**), others in connected handwriting (e.g., **earlier**). It is difficult to say whether these different scripts belonged to different authors, because both tried to improve the style and readability of the manuscript. Erroneous typed words were more or less thoroughly crossed out and the corrections were written in between the lines or in the margin. Up to page 115 someone wrote "T&S" on top of each page as if to show that he or she had seen and approved the text on that page.

One category of corrections regarded factual errors, e.g., the word 'titanical' was rightly changed into 'botanical'. Or, the spelling of the name was improved from "Levin" to "Lewin". These corrections were mostly accurate, although in one case "K. Bühler" was incorrectly changed into "C. Bühler" (p. 4 of the manuscript).

But by far the most common were corrections of style and grammar, e.g., the word 'secondary' was replaced by 'subordinate'. The word 'he', used to refer to a child, was systematically changed into 'it' by someone using block letters. However, on page 36 someone writing in connected script wrote in the margin: "change all child its into his". The name Köhler was systematically changed into Koehler. "Optic field" was replaced by "visual field" in many cases. "The psychology of child-age" became "the psychology of childhood". And so on and so forth. Taken together, all these corrections suggested that one or more persons tried to polish the translation of a foreign text.

That this source text was Russian is evident from certain stylistic features. For example, the translated text referred to researchers using their initials (e.g., "the psychologist K. Koffka") where an English text would use just the surname ("Koffka") or the full name ("Kurt Koffka"). Also, throughout the text, the use of definite and indefinite articles (e.g., "the" or "a") was corrected—either adding or deleting them—, which is understandable when we realize that Russian hardly uses definite or indefinite articles. Finally, on pages 107 and 108, when referring to figures 1 and 2, the text explicitly said: "see Russian original". And, of course, the manuscript was handed to us by professor Cole, whose reliability is beyond doubt, who collaborated for years with Luria, and who most probably is one of the chief authors of the story as we related it above. So, all in all, we had no

reason to doubt that *Tool and Symbol* was the translation of a Russian text authored by Vygotsky and Luria and we decided to include it into the *Vygotsky Reader*.

However, because of its curious origin we decided to compare the English text with the Russian version that came out in 1984 and which we presumed was a re-translation from the English (Vygotskii, 1984). It was then that we found many peculiar differences between the two versions of the text and, most importantly, very curious repetitions in the Russian text. In footnote 20 (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994, p. 171), for example, we noted: “The English original text continues directly to the next sub-part, while the Russian version of 1984 includes a number of pages that are word-for-word repetitions of parts of text that occurs later. Most probably these repetitions were a result of editorial manipulation of the Russian text in the 1970s/1980s, since the following exact repetitions occur (references to the published Russian version): pp. 14-15 are a repetition of pp. 69—70; pp. 15-16 of pp. 74-5 and pp. 16-17 of pp. 71-2”. It would take the careful work of Kellogg and Yasnitsky (Kellogg & Yasnitsky, 2011; Yasnitsky, 2011a, 2011b, 2012) to show that this “editorial manipulation” was connected to the fact that different translators worked on the same text.

Let me end this story on a positive note. For years I have pleaded for reliable republications of Vygotsky’s texts and deplored the fact that many existing republications, including the Russian edition of the collected works, and translations into English were marred by gross errors and falsifications. Now, for the first time, and thanks to the work of Zavershneva, Osipov, Kellogg, Mecacci, and Yasnitsky (Kellogg & Yasnitsky, 2011; Mecacci & Yasnitsky, 2011; Yasnitsky, 2011a, 2011b, 2012; Zavershneva, 2009; Zavershneva & Osipov, 2010), reliable texts have become available and the previous fraudulent manipulations can be recognized as such. This implies that a serious investigation of Vygotsky’s writings and their context is now more than ever within reach and that we may hope to give Vygotsky the place in the history of psychology that he deserves. And, of course, it is entirely possible that Bulgakov was right and that manuscripts which were long believed to be lost can suddenly turn up in someone’s drawer or attic and were never burnt. Or Voland retrieves the manuscript from its ashes. After all, one never knows in Russia.

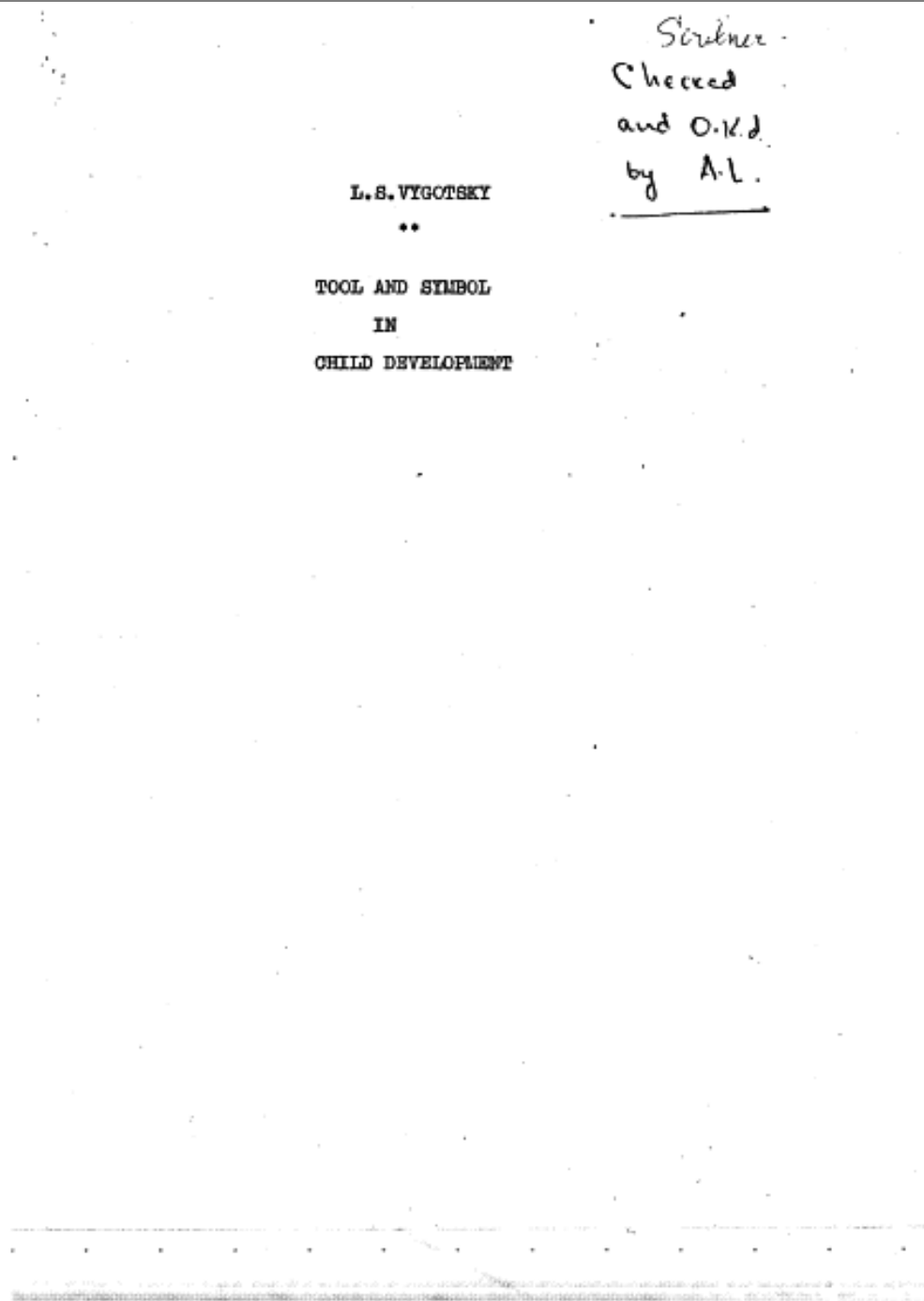


Figure 1. The front page of the English manuscript

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✓ ~~From the moment the child begins to master the situation, with~~
~~the help of speech, prior to that master^{MASTERS} his own behavior,~~ a
radically new organisation of behavior appears, as well as new
relations with the environment. We are witnessing the birth of
these specifically human forms of behavior, that, ~~and~~ breaking
away from animal forms of behavior, later create intellect and
go on to become the basis of labour: the specifically human form
of the use of tools.

✓ This unification appears with the greatest clarity in ~~the~~^{our}
experimental genetic example ~~shown~~^{EXACT} from our research.

The very first observations of a child in an experimental
situation similar to that in which Koehler observed the practical
use of tools by apes, show that the child does not only act ~~in an~~
~~endeavouring~~ to achieve its goal, but at the same time also speaks.
This speech as a rule arises spontaneously in the child and
continues almost without interruption throughout the experiment.
It increases and is of a more persistent character every time
the situation becomes more difficult and the goal more difficult
to attain. Attempts to block it (as the experiments of our
collaborator, E.E. LeVins, have shown) are either futile or lead
to the termination of all action, "freezing" as it were the
child's behavior, something quite apparent and easily observed
in the experiment.

In this situation, it thus seems both natural and necessary
for the child to speak while it acts, and experimenters are under
the impression that speech does not simply follow in the ~~wake~~
~~{wake}~~ of practical activity, but plays some kind of specific
role of no little importance. The impressions we were left with
✓ as the result of similar experiments, ~~place~~^{bring} the observer face to
✓ face with the two following facts, both of ~~a~~ capital importance:

Figure 2. A sample page of the manuscript showing the character and extent of editing of the typed text.

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