Russian federation Ministry of education and science

Russian State University of Humanities

L.S. Vygotsky Institute of Psychology

L.S. Vygotsky International Society

L.S. Vygotsky Fund

Dear colleagues!

This is an official call for papers and invitation to take part in the XIIth international conference in the memory of L.S. Vygotsky “Sign as a psychological tool: subjective reality of culture” that will take place November 14th-17th, 2011 at the L.S. Vygotsky Institute of Psychology Russian State University of Humanities, Moscow, Russia.

The idea of mediation is central to L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory. It is related to psychological transformation of natural, lower psychological functions into higher, cultural ones. When considering the idea of psychological functions and processes of mediation, L.S. Vygotsky quoted R. Bacon, G.V.F. Hegel, K. Marx, who argued for this ability to be essentially human.

L.S. Vygotsky names sign to be a universal psychological tool and argues for a word to have a special role and meaning among all signs. He distinguished signs from tools of labor. Tools are directed to the transformation and conquering the outer world to man's power and a sign as a psychological tool is directed to mastering a person’s own behavior and psyche. The distinguishing of tool and sign, which was reasonable on the stage of posing the problem statement, needs to be analyzed more deeply during the future stages of research. Thus, in A.N. Leontiev's words, “an axe generalizes too”. But generalization is the essential characteristic of psychological tools. In this respect tools of labor may be interpreted as psychological tools, but the criteria of abstraction of psychological tools here are still unclear and demand future study.

L.S. Vygotsky mentions that not every word in child's speech performs the function of generalization, and, therefore, not every word is a psychological tool. Many words, used by small children, are, for them, integral characteristics of objects named by these words. In this context a question of when and under what conditions a word becomes tool and acquires lexical meaning emerges.

The question of word as a tool acquires greater complexity with the fact that inner, psychological side of the word is not only meaning but also a sense. L.S.Vygotsky posed the problem of the relationship between sense and meaning. In his view, meaning is the fixed, generally accepted part of the multidimensional personal sense. Radical solution of the problem of sense and meaning is offered by A.N. Leontiev. In his theory, meanings are formations that are fixed in culture, while sense is always sense of action, which is defined by relations between action's goal and the motive of action. From this perspective, sense and meaning have different nature and origination. The problem of the relationship between sense and meaning requires further research.

The problem of mediation is connected with the fundamental questions of human beings. Only humans are able to create and use tools, as it was mentioned by K. Marx. Only humans live in the generalized world and generalization is one of the most important functions of psychological tools. This problem, formulated fully in L.S. Vygotsky’s psychology, includes such significant themes as tool and sign, sense and meaning, general and generalization, consciousness and sub-consciousness, internalization and many others. All this problem fields need special study, analysis and detailed discussion.

We invite your contributions to continue research on these important issues of cultural-historical psychology and look forward to the inspiring and meaningful discussions at Vygotskian conference in Moscow.

Conference's languages: **Russian, English.**

**Conference registration**

1. To register for the conference, please send your application to vygotskyreadings[@gmail.com.](mailto:vygconf@gmail.com) no later than **September 15th, 2011.** You can download application from the <http://eng.levb.org/readings/application.html>

2. Conference fees:

1. Educators, researchers, scholars - 200 EUR
2. Students - 75 EUR without presentation/publication and 125 EUR with the presentation/publication.

3. Presentations: Paper – Plan for 10-20 minutes for your presentation. Conference participants will have an option of publishing their papers in the conference publication. To do this, they should send their papers in electronic form to e-mail vygotskyreadings[@gmail.com](mailto:vygconf@gmail.com) no later than **September 20, 2011**. Paper submission requirements can be found at <http://eng.levb.org/readings/application.html>

4. Conference participants are offered to publish their paper in the Internet (<http://psypress.ru/>; [http://levb.org/](http://levb.org/articles.html)) Electronic publication will be made only after the publishing of collective articles. If you agree to publish your paper electronically, please mention it in your application.

6. The participation fee should be paid upon arriving at the conference, during the final registration. All participants will receive a certificate, acknowledging their participation and conference presentation.

7. Additional organizational information including meeting of participants, accommodation, and meals can be found at <http://eng.levb.org/readings/organization.html>

All actual information about the conference can be found at eng.levb.org.

Best Regards,

Organizational Committee

If you have any questions, please send them at the e-mail vygotskyreadings[@gmail.com](mailto:vygconf@gmail.com)