

**Thought, Word, Concept, Consciousness and Inner Speech**

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**Resumen**

Las instituciones educativas diariamente generan una gran cantidad de información y documentos, siendo absolutamente necesario disponer de un sistema que contribuya a mejorar y optimizar los procesos de control y administración de documentos digitales, convirtiéndolos en conocimiento y recursos valiosos para la institución. Se presenta el desarrollo del Sistema de Administración Web de Evidencias Documentales para Organismos Acreditadores, que permite no solo gestionar documentos digitales (en diferentes formatos), sino también, registrar la información referente a cada documento que se concentra en el sistema (metadatos); considerando distintos criterios de clasificación y diferentes perfiles de usuario, así como la opción de búsquedas o exploración de archivos, haciendo uso de un repositorio digital diseñado para tal fin. Para el desarrollo de la propuesta se llevaron a cabo las siguientes fases: revisión de literatura, evaluación del proceso, análisis de requerimientos, selección de la arquitectura, modelado y diseño, desarrollo y pruebas del sistema, puesta en marcha y obtención de resultados.

**Pensamiento, Palabra, Concepto, Conciencia, Discurso Interior, Vygostky**

**Abstract**

Thought, Word, Concept, Consciousness and Inner Speech concepts are intertwined in order to understand how the human thinking process is carried out so we can conceptualize and conduct our everyday social interactions. The goal for this paper is to present the general theoretical foundations about thought, word, concept, consciousness, inner speech, and symbolic interactionism. Then, this paper is presenting a set of statements that lead a better understanding of the subjects matter. Therefore this paper is set as an opportunity to discuss Vygostky's mind and social concepts posed in the early XX century in order to articulated a better understanding of their systemic relationships on how we acquire new concepts and how we do incorporate them by doing generalizations of such concepts as part of our everyday activities in order for better functioning as social humans. Finally, I hope the proposed insights posed in this paper are a valuable framework for future research works in this unexplored field whereas inner, oral and written speeches are intertwined.

**Thought, Word, Concept, Consciousness, Inner Speech, Vygostky**

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## Introduction

The inner speech as well as many other mental functions has remained almost entirely unexplored. So little has been done regarding this issue. Vygostky has stated “...*the issue of the relationship of thought to word remains the most confused and least developed aspect of the problem...* (page 43)” It seems to be that this statement is still valid nowadays. For Vygostky, in order to analyze the inner speech rather to be decomposed into its elements and must be analyzes of its units in order to make possible to see the relationship between the individual’s needs or inclinations and his thinking providing a more accurate and clear understanding about inner speech.

The study of the thought and word has different approaches such as Piaget’s and Vygostky’s approaches.

In this paper, Vygostky point of view will be reviewed. For Vygostky (1987), the generalization in word meaning is an act of thinking in the true sense of the word where its meaning is an inseparable part of the word. The author stated the need of meaning in a word because a word without meaning is not a word, but an empty sound. When sound is divorced from human thought it loses the characteristics that makes it unique as a sound of human speech; it is placed within the ranks of all other sounds existing in nature.

For Vygostky, the social interaction is impossible without signs and is also impossible without meaning. In addition, the social interaction presupposes generalization and the development of verbal meaning.

Only when we learn to see the unity of generalization and social interaction is it possible to begin to understand the actual connection that exists between the child’s cognitive and social development. Nevertheless, a unity of thinking and speech is a unity of generalization and social interaction, as well a unity of thinking and communication.

## Origin and Development of Concepts or Word Meanings

The concept is a complex and true act of thinking that cannot be mastered through simple memorization and the word is a generalization of the most elementary type. Thus, when the child first learns a new word, the development of its meaning is not completed but has only begun. Furthermore, scientific concepts are simply learned or received in completed form through the processes of understanding, learning, and comprehension.

Thus, as Vygostky (1999, page 49 and 171) has written “...*the word is almost always ready when the concept is ready...*”, but it is impossible to transfer word meaning mechanically from one head to another through other words. In addition, the direct instruction in concepts is impossible because the child will move from elementary generalizations to higher forms of generalization. This process will be completed with the formation of true concepts and the emergence of higher types of concepts will inevitably influence existing spontaneous concepts.

The development of concepts by any person represents the semantic aspect of speech development. In addition, the development of concepts and the development of word meaning are one and the same process. The development of word meanings will manifest the regularities that are characteristic of the process as a whole.

Furthermore, the developments of both spontaneous and scientific concepts are closely connected processes that continually influence one another.

Vygostky (1999) has posited that “...*The first concerns the potential for independent studies of the child’s nonspontaneous concepts and the fact that these concepts have roots deep in the child’s thought... (174)*”

Under Vygostky point of view, the development of scientific concepts must manifest the characteristics of the child’s thought and they are closely connected processes that continually influence one another. Thus, higher forms of thought characteristic of the formation of scientific concepts must be even more unique than those that are characteristic of the formation of spontaneous concepts. Nevertheless, learning of scientific concepts depends on the concepts developed through every child’s own experience.

### **Consciousness**

By definition, “...*conscious awareness is an act of consciousness whose object is the activity of consciousness itself...*” (Vygostky, 1999; p. 190).

The most demanding criterion of consciousness is a certain kind of social intelligence that is especially prominent in social mammals and is usually not found in herding creatures (Donald, 2001).

For Vygostky, consciousness always represents some piece of reality. People are consciously aware only to the extent that we are unable to accommodate or adapt. In other words, adaptation is a keyword for reality representation. Conscious capacity may be seen as an evolutionary adaptation in its own right, whose various functions have evolved to optimize or boost cognitive processing. Conscious capacity involves many brain subsystems, some of which evolved independently of one another (Donald, 2001). The conscious awareness of similarity will require the formation of a concept or generalization, which represents the objects between which the relationship exists. Conscious awareness of difference does not require the formation of such a concept; but it can arise in an entirely different way.

The meaningful perception leads the development of meaningful action. Vygostky (1999) has presented the foundation for the explanation of the later stages in the development of a given process is the principle of the repetition or reproduction of the events or laws characteristic of the earlier stages in the development of the same process. Under this scope, the very statement of the issue of how conscious awareness is realized depends on how we answer the question of why conscious awareness is absent.

Donald (2001) stated three level of awareness; the selective binding, short term control, and finally, the intermediate and long term governance. In the first level, binding is the theoretical basis of object perception or the neural means of attaining perceptual unity.

This mechanism is ultimately responsible for our ability to perceive complex things. Binding is possible to be unconscious and automatic. Simple binding is restricted in its application to the raw feeling of awareness but does not address the issues of governance and control. In the second level, short term working memory grants a species autonomy from the immediate environment. In this level, awareness became able to include one focus of sensation and a concurrent one for working memory. For this level, working memory is best regarded as the second functional level of conscious capacity because it follows logically from the first and introduces new functions that are modeled to binding itself. In the third level, the concern is on the intermediate and longer-term regulation of thought and behavior. In this level, capacity builds upon the first two, further expanding the range of experience with the addition of two new elements. First is the extension of awareness into the domain of voluntary movement. The second element is a supervisory or evaluative dimension, which in the previous level executive function itself can come under the scrutiny within a wider world. These two new elements are a straightforward evolutionary expansion of some powers of the previous level. Here, the key change is the extension of voluntary intentional control into the domain of action. This expansion of capacity may explain many things about the speed, inclusiveness, abstraction, and overall power of conscious processing.

Regarding the higher level of consciousness such as community awareness, the relationship between consciousness and culture is a reciprocal one. While culture emerges from the attempts of an expanded awareness to connect with others, it is immersion in culture rather than any feature of the brain that defines our truly human modes of consciousness.

In Piaget's view, conscious awareness is realized through the displacement of the remnants of verbal egocentrism by social or by later mature thought. Conscious awareness does not arise as a necessary higher stage in concept development. It is introduced from without. One mode of action simply supplants the other and the core functions of human consciousness cannot be properly isolated and described in the short term. But the consciousness is present as an active force in the world (Donald, 2001).

But development is not a sum of the changes occurring in each of the separate functions. Rather, the fate of each functional part of consciousness depends on changes as a whole.

Remembering presupposes the activity of attention, perception, and the attribution of meaning. Perception requires attention, recognition (or memory), and understanding. These interfunctional connections and relationships are neither constant nor inessential (Donald, 2001).

For humans, early childhood is characterized by the development and differentiation of perception. In this stage, perception is the dominating function of activity and of the development of consciousness as a whole. But in the case of preschool age, the development of memory is dominant.

For Vygostky (1999) every thought contains elements of both the conscious and the unconscious. He has established that there is a great difference between the concepts of "unconscious" and "lack of conscious awareness." Where the lack of conscious awareness is not simply part of the conscious or unconscious or it does not designate a level of consciousness.

Conscious awareness enters through the gate opened up by the scientific concept.

The generalization of the concept can lead us to its localization within a definite system of relationships of generality. These relationships are the foundation and the most natural and important connections among concepts. This generalization implies the conscious awareness and the systematization of concepts. It is well known that more general concepts arise in the child earlier than more specific ones where a broader concept acts as a substitute for the narrower one and the source of the lack of conscious awareness of concepts not in egocentrism but in the absence of system in the child's spontaneous concepts.

The dependence of scientific concepts on spontaneous concepts and their influence on them is stems from the unique relationship that exists between the scientific concept and its object. The scientific concept necessarily presupposes a different relationship to the object, one that it is possible only for a concept.

Vygostky (1999) had found that conscious awareness is realized through the formation of such a system, a system, which is based on specific relations of generality among concepts. He also found that conscious awareness of concepts leads to their volitional control. By its nature, the scientific concept presupposes a system.

### **Role of the instruction on the development of consciousness**

Vygostky had stated “...*Instruction depends on development while development may or may not be influenced by instruction...* (p. 195)” but a single step in instruction can represent a hundred steps in development.

By learning new methods of thinking or new types of structures it produces a great deal more than the capacity to perform the narrow activity that was the object of instruction. Instruction is only useful when it moves ahead of development. When it does, it impels or wakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the zone of proximal development.

### **Differences from oral and written speech**

Some statements that show the differences between oral and written speech are: (a) written speech is more than the translation of oral speech into the written sign where written speech is an entirely unique speech function. (b) On one hand, through oral speech, the child has achieved a rather high level of abstraction with respect to the object world. On the other hand, with written speech, the child is presented with a new task. This means that written speech cannot repeat the developmental stages of oral speech. The abstract nature of written speech represents one of the greatest difficulties encountered by any child in order to master the writing. (3) Written speech is more abstract than oral speech in other respects as well. (4) Written speech is speech-monologue. And finally (5) written speech requires a dual abstraction from the child. It requires an abstraction from the auditory aspects of speech and an abstraction from the interlocutor.

The oral speech is regulated by the dynamics of the situation. It flows entirely from the situation in accordance with this type of situational-motivational and situational-conditioning process. In the case of written speech, a child must act with more volition with written speech than with oral speech.

Thus, by saying a new word, a child is not conscious of how he pronounces the sound and he does not intentionally pronounce each separate sound. In the case of written speech, however, he or she must become consciously aware of the word's structure. He or she must partition it and voluntarily recreate it in written signs and due the semantic aspect of written speech also requires voluntary work on word meanings. These facts reflect on how written speech stands in a different relationship to inner speech than does oral speech while the development of external speech precedes the development of inner speech, written speech emerges only after the development of the latter.

### **The connection between written and inner speech**

Written speech presupposes the existence of inner speech and it is possible to state that written speech is the key to inner speech. The transition from inner to written speech requires what it had called voluntary semantics, which is associated with the voluntary phonetics of written speech. But it is important to keep in mind that meaningful syntax of inner speech is completely different from that of either oral or written speech. In a certain way, the syntax of inner speech is the polar opposite of that of written speech. It is possible to say that inner speech is maximally contracted, abbreviated, and telegraphic while written speech is maximally expanded and formal, even more so than oral speech. Written speech does not contain ellipses while inner speech is filled with them.

Also, inner speech is almost entirely predicative and is completely idiomatic because with inner speech, the individual who is thinking knows the subject. While written speech requires the situation to be established in full detail so the interlocutor can understand it. Written speech is the most expanded form of speech. Even things that can be omitted in oral speech must be made explicit in written speech. Written speech must be maximally comprehensible to the other.

### **Relationships between learning a foreign language, generalization and inner speech**

To start, it is possible to states that "*the meaning of the word is a generalization*". Learning foreign and native languages have certain similarities to the development of scientific and everyday concepts, but both two sets of processes also differ profoundly in many respects such as: (1) in learning the foreign language, the child does not develop the semantic aspect of speech anew. He does not form new word meanings or learn new concepts of objects; (2) the essence of the concept or generalization lies not in the impoverishment but in the enrichment of the reality that it represents and each concept presupposes the presence of a certain system of concepts; (3) concepts of different levels of generality are possible within any given structure of generalization; (4) concepts with the same level of generality may be present within different structures of generalization.

**Word Meaning**

The word meaning is a unity of both processes, thinking and speech, that cannot be further decomposed. Meaning is a necessary, constituting feature of the word itself. It is the word viewed from the inside. Word meaning is nothing other than a generalization, that is, a concept. For Vygostky (1999) word meaning is a phenomenon of thinking only to the extent that thought is connected with the word and embodied in it. The author posited that the connection between word and meaning is only associative and since the associative connection that unites the word and its meaning constitutes the foundation not only for meaningful speech but for processes.

The entire process of development is reduced to changes in the associative connections between words and objects and the development of the meaningful aspect of speech is reduced to the changes that occur in the object content of words. Thus, the understanding of speech is conceptualized as a chain of associations that arise in the mind under the influence of familiar word forms and the relationship of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a movement from thought to word and from word to thought.

**Speech and inner speech**

The term "inner speech" or "*endophasia*" appears that the term "*inner speech*" referred to verbal memory where the word can be replaced by a mental representation or image in memory and the memory is one feature that defines the nature of inner speech. Inner speech is called unpronounced, silent, or mute speech, is speech minus sound. Inner speech is speech for oneself. External speech is speech for others. Inner speech is mute, silent speech.

Inner speech is a psychological formation that has its own unique nature, inner speech is a unique form of speech activity that has unique characteristics and stands in complex relationships to other speech forms. Inner speech is not merely what precedes or reproduces external speech. Inner speech moves in the reverse direction, from without to within. It is a process that involves the evaporation of speech in thought. Inner speech is among the most difficult domains of psychological research.

But the structure of speech is not a simple mirror image of the structure of thought nor does speech not merely serve as the expression of developed thought because the development of the semantic and external aspects of speech moves in opposite directions.

The inner speech differs from external speech in the same way that a representation of an object differs from the object itself.

The second meaning commonly attributed to the term "inner speech" implies an abbreviation of the normal speech act where inner speech is precisely the same as external speech with the exception that it is not completed.

Goldstein (Vygostky, 1999) breaks down the entire internal aspect of speech into two components. The first is the linguist's inner speech form. The second is an experience specific to speech.

Goldstein (Vygostky, 1999) places inner speech at the center the whole speech process but the center of the entire speech process cannot be identified with an experience consecrated only in intuition.

It is equally wrong to identify this experience with inner speech. The identification of inner speech with this experience dissolves the structural planes that have been distinguished through psychological analysis.

The presence or absence of vocalization is not a cause that explains the nature of inner speech.

The structure of egocentric speech is similar to that of inner speech. Egocentric speech atrophies in the school-age child with several facts that forced us to associate this event with the initial development of inner speech. In this way it is possible to consider that egocentric speech atrophies is transformed into inner speech because egocentric speech is an early form of inner speech. For Vygotsky, egocentric speech is the key to the study of inner speech. Egocentric speech is still vocal and audible. Though internal in function and structure, egocentric speech is external in manifestation and is accessible to direct observation and experimentation, which is part of the development of egocentric speech toward inner speech. The fundamental difference between inner and external speech is the absence of vocalization in the former.

One of the biggest problems in the study of the inner speech is the fact that the development of inner speech does not have its roots in the external weakening of the vocal aspect of speech; it does not move from speech to whisper and from whisper to mute speech. It indicates that the development of inner speech begins with its functional and structural differentiation from external speech, that it moves from external to egocentric speech, and then from egocentric to inner speech. Thus, the drop in the coefficient of egocentric speech is a symptom of the development of a basic characteristic of inner speech, its abstraction from the vocal aspects of speech.

### **Differences between written and inner speech**

Written speech is speech without the interlocutor and when the interlocutors share knowledge of the subject as well the direct transfer of thought through intonation.

In the case of written speech, because of the separateness of the interlocutors, understanding through hints and predicative expressions is rarely possible. When compared with oral speech, written speech is maximally expanded as well as syntactically complex (Donald, 2001).

In written speech, the use of words to transmit what is transmitted in oral speech through intonation and the immediate perception of the situation is needed. In contrast from the monologue and written speech in particular, dialogic social interaction implies immediate expression. In monologue, the speech relationships become the determinants or sources of the experiences that appear in consciousness. It is no a surprise that written speech is the polar opposite of oral speech because the written speech facilitates speech as a complex activity.

In the case of oral speech, the tendency for predicativity arises frequently and regularly in particular types of situations. On the other hand, in written speech never arises because in inner speech, is always present. Inner speech consists entirely of psychological predicates. In contrast, written speech consists of expanded subjects and predicates but in the case of inner speech, however, the subject is always dropped. Thus, written and oral speech, are polar opposites because the former is maximally expanded, because inner and oral speech are also polar opposites, with absolute and constant predicativity governing inner speech.

The predicativity of inner speech is not the only phenomenon that lies hidden behind its obvious abbreviation. When the abbreviation of inner speech is analyzed it is possible to find an entire series of structural characteristics reflected in it.

In inner speech, it is always known what our speech is about as well our internal situation, the theme of our inner dialogue. In other words, in inner speech, it is possible to know what kind of situation that arises from time to time in oral dialogue. Furthermore, inner speech always occurs in a situation comparable to that where the speaker expressed an entire thought at the tram stop through the single predicate. In inner speech, the predicate is always sufficient.

In inner speech, it is possible to find the ultimate syntactic simplification, as well the absolute condensation of thought, and finally, an entirely new syntactic structure. Thus, the abbreviation of inner speech includes a reduction in its phonetic aspect. In inner speech, we are always guessing the meaning of the complex phrase through nothing more than the initial letters of the words. In inner speech, this reduction in the phonetic aspect of speech is pervasive and consistent. Inner speech is speech carried out almost without words. The meaning of the word inner speech, is an individual meaning, a meaning understandable only in the plane of inner speech and it is because of this idiomatic nature of the semantics of inner speech that it is so difficult to comprehend and translate inner speech into normal language.

In the case of the inner speech, it is possible to always express all thoughts and sensations through a single word.

Inner speech is an internal plane of verbal thinking which mediates the dynamic relationship between thought and word. Inner speech is a unique function that can be considered the polar opposite of external speech.

Where external speech involves the embodiment of thought in the word, in inner speech the word dies away and gives birth to thought. Inner speech is a dynamic, unstable, fluid phenomenon that appears momentarily between the more clearly formed and stable poles of verbal thinking, that is, between word and thought. Inner speech is thinking in pure meanings.

### **Signs, Symbols and Human Interactionism**

Human beings always see reality through perspectives. Perspectives are made up of words and the observer to make sense out of situations by using these words. In this way, the best definition of perspective is a conceptual framework (Charon, 2004).

Reality does in fact exist. In others words, there is something actually happening out there in the world but it is impossible to know or understand it completely or in any perfectly accurate way which may be because filters (perspectives) are used. It is important to make clear that perspectives are not perceptions but are guides to our perceptions that influence what is seen and how it must be interpreted. It is clear that a perspective by its very nature is a bias. Perspectives are also different from attitudes.

Socially talking, groups and roles are what give most of us the filters through which the reality is seeing it. Most of us, believe in our perspective, but it is important to recognize that we can be too easily fooled to use perspectives that lead us far from reality as, in fact, it really is. In other words, "my perspective is better than yours" (Charon, 2004).

The symbolic interactionism has five basic roles: the role of social interaction, the role of thinking, the role of definition, the role of the present and the role of the active human being. In the first role, instead of focusing on the individual and its personality characteristics, the symbolic interactionism is focusing on the nature of social interaction, the dynamic and social activities taking place among social members. In the second role, there is an agreement that humans act according to how they think in the specific situation, although that thinking may be influenced to some extent by our interaction, and our own thinking taking place within ourselves matters. In this way, thinking is almost central about what humans do.

In the third role, humans do not sense their environment directly; instead, they define their situation as action unfolds. In other words, humans act according to our definitions. In the fourth role our resulting actions are due to what is occurring in our current situation. This role causes unfolds in the present interaction, thinking, and definition. Finally, in the fifth role, human being is described in the perspective that implies an individual who takes an active role rather than a passive one.

The symbolic interactionism perspective takes the use of symbols and relates it to all that is human. The symbol is the central concept of the whole perspective. Human society highly depends on the nature of the individual.

The nature of the symbol makes this dependency most clear because each individual depends on society for symbols, without other people, each individual would be without a symbolic life and all the things that symbols make possible. It is clear, that due to the complexity of human society, the demands and dependency on human symbolic life because human beings have the ability to create a reality in interaction with the society as well to our self (Deacon, 1997).

Some characteristics of the symbols are: symbols are meaningful, symbols are social, symbols are significant and finally, symbols are arbitrarily. It is important to mention that word is a symbol too (Charon, 2004). Very often, symbols are distinguished from signs because the organism does not give meaning to signs and does not reflect on them but instead habitually respond to them. Humans do not often respond to signs. We can be sure that human are highly symbolic, and furthermore humans use symbols on almost every daily activity.

### **Conclusions**

We are discussed five different concepts that are intertwined in the human mind. It is clear that this epistemological discussion is not finished and a lot of research work in this field is ahead of us. Some conclusions it might be obtained out of this paper. First, these concepts are interrelated and work together in the single human mind. Second, all the concepts are highly elusive to understand, mostly due the fact that process is conducted in the mind and there is not available methodology, besides indirect research methods, for this kind of studies that allows to create valuable data that support any statements that might explain this phenomena.

Third, future research works might be conducted on the characterization of these concepts relationships in order to study the bridges among the three; inner, oral and written speeches and also, on how we can design human development and learning methodologies to increase its efficiency, and/or increase its wideness of those bridges and/or, if it is the case, to create new bridges among them.

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