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The Theory of Verbal Communication in the Works of M.M. Bakhtin and L.S. Vygotsky

No matter which of the sciences devoted to speech and language we consider—linguistics, semiotics, or developmental psycholinguistics—we find that the focus of interest has shifted from the syntax and semantics of the utterance to its pragmatics. We are concerned with the speaker as he relates to his listener—this is the new perspective from which the traditional issues of these disciplines are being reviewed nowadays.

Interest in the speech act as a whole, including the speech act as an act of expression, as well as the intention of the speaker and his effect on the listener, entail consideration of the speech act as an event of verbal communication, that is, as an active social interaction.

This approach, which was not clearly outlined in contemporary science until the last decade, was actively developed as early as the 1920s and 1930s by M.M. Bakhtin and L.S. Vygotsky. In their search for an adequate theory of verbal communication, contemporary Soviet and other researchers are increasingly returning to this legacy. They find in these older works well-developed methodology and principles (identification of elementary units, description of their universal properties), as well as striking examples of the application of these principles. Soviet psychologists’ interest in the ideas of Bakhtin is clearly illustrated by the recently published collection [The Problem of Communication in Psychology] (1981), in which Bakhtin is quoted at length in four of the fourteen articles, including the theoretical introduction by B.F. Lomov. The attention focused by foreign scholars on the theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin is evidenced by numerous publications devoted to their work.

The theories of speech that these two scholars developed have much in common, and in certain essential respects complement each other (Ivanov, 1973; Bibler, 1981; Wertsch, 1983, 1984). A comprehensive comparison of them is a task for the future, as is the broader task of a culturological analysis of their legacy. In the present article we will limit ourselves to a brief presentation of the major concepts in Bakhtin’s theory of verbal communication, pointing out the important areas where Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s ideas are similar to each other or intersect (we will not present Vygotsky’s theory because it is relatively thoroughly described elsewhere in the literature. See: Luria, 1959, 1975, 1979; Leontiev, 1969a; Akhutina, 1975; Zimniaia, 1978).

The theory of verbal communication or “metalinguistics,” as Bakhtin called it, was the focus of his work for decades. As early as the 1920s, his works—[The Problem of Content, Material
and Form in Verbal Arts] (1924/1979)¹ [Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry] (1926), [Marxism and the philosophy of language] (1929), [The construction of an utterance] (1930),² [Problems in the Work of Dostoevsky] (1929) — contain the kernels of ideas that could be used to form a fully complete and original theory. In later works, Bakhtin elaborates and adds to this theory. See [Discourse in the Novel] (1935/1975), [The Problem of Speech Genres] (1953/1979), the notes to [The Problem of Text] (1959–1961/1979), and unpublished notes. In all these works the essential nature of the theory is unchanged, which allows us to present it as a unified whole.

How can we isolate the ‘‘real object—the matter for research’’ from the stream of language--speech? What is the ‘‘real givenness’’ of linguistic phenomena? This is the first question Bakhtin asks. Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, Bakhtin hypothesizes that the ‘‘actual reality of language and speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, and not the isolated monologue, and not the psychological act of its expression, but the social event of speech interaction that is performed by the utterance and the utterances’’ (Voloshinov, 1929, p. 113).

What then is the minimum indivisible unit of speech interaction?³ According to Bakhtin, it is the utterance. As a social event, the utterance entails, first of all, active interaction between the speaker and the listener (the speaker’s activity entails and presupposes the activity of the listener). Bakhtin writes:

When I construct my utterance, I try to actively determine it [the possible answer of the listener—T.A.] and, on the other hand, I try to anticipate it. This anticipated answer, in turn, has an effect on my utterance (I parry the objection that I anticipate, resort to all kinds of hedges, etc.). When I speak, I also consider the apperceptive context in which the person I am addressing perceives my speech, the extent to which he is informed about the situation . . . his views and convictions, his prejudices (from our point of view), his sympathies and antipathies—after all, all this will affect his response of active understanding of my utterance. My consideration of these things also determines my selection of utterance genre, compositional devices, and finally, the selection of linguistic means, that is, the style⁵ of the utterance. (Bakhtin, 1953/1979, p. 276; see also 1935/1975, p. 95)

Second, the utterance functions to allow the speaker to interact with previous speakers.

Every specific utterance is a link in the chain of verbal communication in a definite sphere . . . the utterance occupies some definite position in this sphere of communication, on a particular issue, in a particular transaction, and so on. It is not possible to define one’s own position without relating it to other positions. For this reason each utterance is full of responses of different types to other utterances in the given sphere of communication . (Bakhtin, 1953/1979, p. 271)

Thus, according to Bakhtin, every utterance is internally dialogic: it not only expresses the particular position held by the speaker, communicates some particular objective content, but also always responds to the previous context and anticipates the listener’s response.

Bakhtin reveals the utterance, understood in this way, to be internally social. As a social microcosm, “an utterance, like Liebnitz’s monad, reflects the speech process, other people’s utterances, and especially the preceding links in the conversational chain (sometimes just the most recent ones, and sometimes—in cultured communication—very remote ones as well)” (1953/1979, p. 274; see also 1961/1979, p. 283; 1971/1979, p. 340).

The utterance as the unit of verbal communication has a number of other inherent characteristics. Each utterance is produced by a specific subject [i.e., speaker]; its boundaries are determined by the alternation of speakers (1953/1979, p. 249). The utterance has a special
type of "completeness." It is a complete semantic entity, so that it can be answered, that is, so that a position can be adopted in response to it. The utterance not only has "a direct relationship to alien utterances," it is also in direct contact with reality (i.e., the extraverbal situation) (1953/1979, p. 253).

This last feature is associated with the problem of implicit sense, which is currently the focus of active analysis in applied linguistics and linguistic psychology. Bakhtin treated this issue in greatest detail in a 1926 article in which he writes that a listener always assumes some particular attitude in response to an utterance, evaluating it as true, or false, bold or timid, and so on. But this is not a function merely of the word per se as a purely linguistic phenomenon. The listener's evaluation covers the linguistic and the extralinguistic context as a single whole. Thus, the utterance and the context comprise a single whole. When we speak of the content of an utterance, it is this whole that we mean. It follows that the context of the utterance is an essential component of it, the component that carries implicit sense. Such implicit sense is not arbitrary, but is based on the speaker's understanding of what the listener already knows. To use a metaphor, the word is a vector, a signpost specifying direction; the intersection of vectors defines the content space, and outside the context of the given situation such signposts are meaningless.

The contextual nature of the utterance (= the presence of an implicit sense) is a primary characteristic of the utterance, of the same sort as the fact that it is dialogic. This latter feature can be seen most clearly in the most natural and primary form of communication—that of the dialogue. The possibility of understanding words (speech) rests on the fact that the people conversing share a context. Developmentally, the word is first woven into the general context of actions, and is understood within this context; and only later does the ability to understand it in relative isolation appear (Voloshinov, 1929, p. 114 and following). (Cf. analogous ideas in Vygotsky and contemporary researchers studying children's speech.)

According to Bakhtin, the "extralinguistic context of an utterance is comprised of three aspects: (1) the same physical environment that is seen by both of the participants in a conversation (unity of what is seen—room, window, etc.); (2) knowledge and understanding of a positionsituation that they both have in common; and finally (3) their common evaluation of this positionsituation" (ibid., p. 250). Contemporary studies of conversational speech have paid little attention to this third aspect. Bakhtin, however, emphasized it.

Let us discuss the semantic completeness of the utterance in more detail. According to Bakhtin, this characteristic is a function of three factors: "(1) objective-semantic exhaustivity; (2) the speech intention, or volition, of the speaker; and (3) standard compositional and genre forms signaling completion" (1953/1979, p. 255). Explaining further, Bakhtin writes: "the intention—the subjective aspect of the utterance - merges with the objective-semantic aspect and forms an indissoluble whole, limiting the latter by linking it to the specific (unique) context of the verbal communication, with all its individual circumstances, with the people participating in it, and with their preceding speeches—utterances (1953/1979, p. 256). The intention also determines selection of the genre form that will be used in constructing the utterance.

The concept of genre is very important to Bakhtin—he addressed the issue of speech genres more than once and wanted to devote a special book to it. The genre is a standard form for structuring an entire utterance. In Bakhtin's view,

the speaker has available to him not only the obligatory forms of his language (the vocabulary and grammatical system) but also the obligatory forms for utterances, that is, speech genres. The latter are just as necessary for mutual understanding as the forms of language. Speech genres, as opposed to language forms, are vastly more changeable, flexible, plastic, but to a speaker they have normative
significance. He does not create them; rather they are givens. Thus, a unique utterance, despite its individuality and creative nature absolutely cannot be considered to be a free combination of the forms of a language. (Bakhtin, 1953/1979, pp. 259–60)

Bakhtin believed that the genre, that is, the mental representation of the form of the whole utterance, guides the speaker in the speech process: the genre selected dictates the type of sentences used and the links that combine them. He asserts that without mastery of speech genres, verbal communication is virtually impossible. This assertion is confirmed by research on speech pathologies. In one form of speech disorder—dynamic aphasia—there is loss of the text schemata, which are equivalent to Bakhtin’s genres. In such cases, the programming of integrated elaborated utterances becomes impossible (Luria and Tsvetkova, 1968; Akhutina, 1975).

All the characteristics of the utterance that have been listed—internal social nature, dialogism, the constraints imposed by alternation of speakers, its special kind of completeness—are interrelated and mutually determined. Thus, the “completeness of the utterance—is a sort of internal correlate of alternation of speakers. A change of speakers can occur because the previous speaker has said (or written) all he wanted to say at the given moment or under the given conditions” (Bakhtin, 1953/1979, p. 255). The main test of an utterance’s completeness, of the fullness of its meaning, is whether it expresses a certain position of the speaker and thus is able to “affect the positions adopted by the other participants in the conversation in response” (ibid., p. 261). But this aspect is closely associated with such utterance features as its dialogism. The utterance expresses the speaker’s position, which is expressed by Me, but addressed to You (connection to the preceding and following links in the conversational chain). Any of these characteristics can be elaborated in more detail. Thus, we can distinguish two aspects of the position expressed by the speaker: selection of the objective semantic content and the “subjective emotional evaluative attitude of the speaker” to this content. Bakhtin repeatedly emphasized the importance of the second, expressive aspect. Let us discuss it in more detail.

According to Bakhtin, an absolutely neutral utterance is impossible. The speaker’s emotional attitude to the objective content, his “evaluation” determines his selection of the lexical, grammatical, and compositional forms for the utterance. However, the most significant way to express evaluation is through intonation. Intonation provides the general meaning of the whole utterance.

Intonation establishes the close connection between the word and the extralinguistic context. Living intonation is virtually able to release the word from its verbal limits. . . . Intonation is always at the boundary of the verbal and the nonverbal, the spoken and the unspoken . . . Intonation is oriented in two directions: toward the listener . . . and toward the object of the utterance as if to a third living participant. (Voloshinov, 1926, pp. 252, 254)

The polyphony of intonation, its close linkage to the extralinguistic context—all this testifies to the special role of intonation in communication. It has an independent role, not merely an auxiliary one, with respect to verbal expression. This can be clearly seen also from the results of studies on lateralization of speech functions (Balonov and Deglin, 1976).

In our presentation of Bakhtin’s theory of verbal communication, we have primarily adopted the speaker’s point of view. Only at the very beginning, did we mention the listener’s active role in verbal interaction. However, the problem of understanding deserves closer attention.
In Bakhtin’s opinion, the process of understanding should be divided into a series of acts that are merged into a unified process, but have “ideal, semantic (content-related) independence.” These acts are:

1. the psychophysiological perception of a physical sign (word, color, spatial form);
2. its recognition (as familiar or unfamiliar). Understanding of its replicable (general) meaning in the language;
3. understanding of its meaning in the given context (immediate and more remote);

In his further explanation of the active-dialogic orientation of understanding, Bakhtin shows that all understanding involves relating the given text to other texts and reevaluation of it in the unified context of what preceded it and what is anticipated. He writes,

Text lives only by making contact with another text (context). Only at this point of contact does the text produce light, illuminating both backwards and forwards and including the given text in the dialogue. . . . This contact fundamentally involves the contact between personalities not between objects (in the extreme case). If we transform a dialogue into a single unbroken text, that is, eliminate the separation between voices (the alternation of speakers), which in the extreme case can be done (cf. the monologic dialectics of Hegel), then the deep (endless) meaning would disappear (we would hit the bottom, be deadlocked). (1974/1979, p. 364)

As we can see, Bakhtin has integrated the dialogic orientation of understanding, the role of personality, and the infinity (theoretical incompleteness) of personal meaning (=sense) into a single context. This concept is based on the idea that there are two forms of cognition: the “monologic”—cognition of objects or of anything else that can be known (including, another human being) as if they were objects and the dialogic—cognition of another human as a subject (ibid., p. 363 and elsewhere).

Monologism denies the existence of another equal consciousness outside oneself, one that is equally empowered to respond, of another equal I (You). In the monologic approach (in its limited or pure form) the other remains solely the object of one’s own consciousness and does not exist as another consciousness. I do not expect an object to provide a response that could alter the world of my own consciousness. The monologue claims to be the last word. (1961/1979, p. 318)

Dialogism, in Bakhtin’s view, is inherent in the nature of consciousness, the nature of human life itself.

The sole appropriate form of verbal expression of authentic human life is the unfinishable dialogue. The very nature of life is dialogic . . . there is neither a first word or a last word. The contexts of dialogue are without limit. They extend into the deepest past and the most distant future. Even meanings born in dialogues of the remotest past will never be finally grasped once and for all, for they will always be renewed in later dialogue. At any present moment of the dialogue there are great masses of forgotten meanings, but these will be recalled again at a given moment in the dialogue’s later course when it will be given new life. For nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will some day have its homecoming festival (1979, pp. 318, 373).

We have presented Bakhtin’s opinions on verbal communication in the most general terms, however, we have intentionally omitted one essential aspect of his theory. We are referring to
the concept of the sense (smysl) of an utterance. It seems to us that it is better to consider this topic in the context of discussing points of similarity and intersection in the theories of Vygotsky and Bakhtin.

As was noted above, comparison of the works of Vygotsky and Bakhtin is a real challenge, to meet it we would have to enlist the efforts of many specialists—philosophers, psychologists, cultural historians, and literary theorists. Today, this work is just starting—a series of reports by the eminent philosopher, V.S. Bibler, devoted to this topic has been presented at the Psychological Institute of the USSR Academy of Psychological Sciences. In the present work we will limit ourselves to pointing out the main points of similarity between Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s ideas relating to the structure of the speech act, the processes of speaking and understanding.

The similarity of Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s views on speech stem from the similarity of their general theoretical frameworks. Both start with ideas about the social nature of the human psyche and how it is mediated by signs. For this reason, it is not surprising that both theorists believed that the only way to approach the study of consciousness was through semiotic analysis. In their research on how meaning functions in individual consciousness, they derived similar solutions to the problem of how the social is assimilated by the individual and becomes the internal social. Let us consider this solution in greater detail.

Discussion of the internalization of social forms of behavior typically focuses on Vygotsky’s idea that the human psyche takes form through the transformation of interpsychic functions (i.e., those involving interaction between two people) into intrapsychic, internal functions (cf. Voloshinov, 1929, p. 50). Vygotsky, however, did not stop here. In his view, the psychological development of an individual entails “growing into” the culture. It is important that this process is not the simple consequence of natural development, it entails a struggle between the natural and the cultural, a struggle that results in old forms of psychological development being crowded out and overlaid by new ones in a process similar to geological stratification. At the same time, the very culture that the individual is growing into—is always in a stage of becoming and is full of internal contradictions. For this reason, the cultural development of an individual, the formation of his personality, the development of his consciousness is not simply the acquisition of stereotyped forms of behavior, but exactly the opposite, the unfolding of heterogeneous, internally contradictory forces, including the struggle between the natural and the cultural and the struggle between various developmental stages within the individual, and, most important, the conflict among cultures themselves clashing within human consciousness (cf. Vygotsky, vol. 3, pp. 291–302, 314–28).

What concepts make it possible in principle to capture the problematic nature, the polyphony of human consciousness? We have already noted that both scholars consider semiotic analysis to be the only approach to the analysis of consciousness. The independent development by Vygotsky and Bakhtin of the concepts of “meaning” and “sense” (as was already noted, previous to 1934–35, in Bakhtin’s works instead of the term “sense,” he used two terms: “theme” (tema) for the substantive aspect, and “evaluation” (otsenka) for the expressive aspect of “sense”)

The sense of a word is the primary reality both to the speaker and to the listener. It is unique (i.e., belongs to a particular individual and a particular set of circumstances) and inexhaustible, since underlying it is the individual’s whole understanding of the world and the internal structure of his whole personality. At the same time, it is socially oriented and socially reinforced—a sense has sense, it signifies something when it is socially shared (e.g., the mother’s understanding of a child’s first words). This sharing of sense (the possibility of being
understood by another) may be actual or potential, but it is obligatory. The socially reinforced "portion" of the sense, which has been laid down during social linguistic experience in the "collective memory," constitutes its linguistic meaning. Thus, the meaning of a word (linguistic meaning)9 is an abstraction from all the various senses of a given word used by various people in various contexts and, at the same time, represents the social standard of meaning, the "technical apparatus" for constructing sense10 (Vygotsky, 1934/1982, pp. 346–49; Bakhtin, 1935/1975, p. 94 and others; 1979, pp. 265, 395; cf. Voloshinov, 1929, pp. 81–83, 95–96, 119–27; 1930).

Vygotsky borrowed the concepts of "meaning" and "sense" from Paulhan,11 but he incorporated them into his own theoretical framework system. For Vygotsky differentiating between "meaning" and "sense" and the reconstruction of the development of meaning in ontogeny were the key to his discovery of transformation of sense in an act of verbal thought (the developmental and functional development of meaning is the primary topic of his last book [Thought and Language]). Thus, Vygotsky succeeded in creating an integrated theory of how meaning functions in verbal thinking. This theory includes ideas about the meaning of the word as the indivisible unit of thinking and speech, about the development of meaning in childhood, the functional transformation of meaning in an act of verbal thought, and the special role of internal speech in this process.

In Bakhtin’s works the opposition of "meaning and sense" has additional features. While Vygotsky, following Paulhan, speaks of sense as the sense of a word, Bakhtin speaks of the sense of an utterance and of the sense of the word as an abbreviation of an utterance. Bakhtin writes that the utterance, as the unit of verbal communication, as opposed to the linguistic unit, "possesses not meaning, but sense (i.e., holistic sense, pertaining to values—truth, beauty, etc.), which requires responsive understanding that includes an evaluative component)" (Vygotsky, 1979, p. 305). "The utterance as a "semantic whole" is a living trinity, in which one’s attitude to the utterances of the person addressed cannot be divorced from attitude to the object . . . or from the attitude to the speaker himself" (1979, p. 301). But the living word belonging to a particular individual also has these characteristics; the word becomes a compressed form of the utterance, its abbreviation (1979, pp. 268, 286), it becomes a "polyphonic" word. Thus, for Bakhtin sense is not only personal, it is dialogic.

However, this definition of sense does not fully exhaust Bakhtin’s thinking. He emphasizes that sense is always responsive (1979, p. 350), that the “theme is the response of the emerging consciousness to the emergence of being" (Voloshinov, 1929, p. 120), which corresponds completely to Vygotsky’s ideas of the dramatic nature and the constant development of consciousness.

Nevertheless, the reader may feel that Bakhtin’s understanding of sense is too far from Vygotsky’s understanding and that, in general, the two authors use the identical term “sense” to signify different things. However, as we are trying to show, this is not the case; their understandings of sense share a foundation and thus are mutually complementary.

Vygotsky writes that in living speech there is a tendency for "sense to be dominant over meaning"; in inner speech this dominance is extreme, absolute (1982, p. 348). We thus have to demonstrate that Vygotsky’s understanding of the concept “sense” is compatible with those characteristics that Bakhtin attributes to this concept, that is, to show that the internal word is dialogic.

Vygotsky writes: “Thought is not expressed, but fulfilled in the word. For this reason we can speak of the formation (unity of existence and nonexistence) of thought in the word” (1982, pg. 305). This idea presupposes that a unit participates in the actualization of thought
that has the mutually exclusive characteristics of being thought and not-thought, word and not-word. As is well known, according to Vygotsky, these are the characteristics of the word in inner speech. Its two components: what is expressed (delimited by the word) and what is implicit (conveyed) cannot be converted into each other without residue; each has its own special context, and expresses the “I” differently. This is essentially the same as what Bakhtin means when he says the word is dialogic.

Thus, the word of internal speech is dialogic. This point of intersection (mutual complementation) of Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s ideas is profoundly significant and may be elaborated in all sorts of ways (V.S. Bibler has provided a philosophical, logical analysis in the article cited above). We will limit ourselves here to showing how this understanding “works” in the analysis of the processes of speaking and speech understanding.

Given their common framework, it is not surprising that both Vygotsky and Bakhtin believed that the construction of speech does not simply involve the coding of readymade content, readymade thought in readymade forms. In full accord with Vygotsky’s opinion that the “thought fulfilled in the word,” Bakhtin is against the understanding of speech production process as coding, he writes, “A code presupposes some kind of already available content and the ability to choose among given codes . . . Semiotics is primarily concerned with transmitting readymade messages using a readymade code. In living speech, on the other hand, the message, strictly speaking, is created only in the process of transmission, and, in essence, there is no code” (1979, pp. 339, 352).

Both scholars attach great significance to the role of inner speech in the process of speech production and believe that it differs qualitatively from external speech. In the book [Marxism and the Philosophy of Language] (Voloshinov, 1929) we read:

From the very beginning it was clear that, without exception, all categories developed by linguistics to analyze the forms of external language—speech (lexicological, grammatical, phonetic) cannot be applied to analyzing the forms of inner speech, and if they could be so applied, then only after a substantial, radical transformation. A more careful analysis would show that the units of internal speech are wholes, somewhat reminiscent of the paragraphs of monologic speech, or whole utterances. But most of all they resemble the individual speeches in a dialogue. It is no accident that the ancient thinker conceived of inner speech as an internal dialogue. These wholes cannot be decomposed to grammatical elements (or only with major reservations), and like the individual speeches in a dialogue they cannot be linked by grammatical connections, but require connections of a different sort. These units of inner internal speech seem to be the total impressions, of the utterances, which are connected to one another and alternate, not according to the rules of grammar or logic, but according to the laws of evaluative (emotional) correspondence, dialogic succession, and so forth in ways that are highly dependent on the historical conditions of the social situation and the overall pragmatics of life. Only elucidation of the forms of whole utterances and especially the forms of dialogic speech can cast light on the forms of inner internal speech and the idiosyncratic logic of their succession in the stream of inner life. (pp. 49–50)

In his later works, Bakhtin stresses this last thought, as well as the role of genre. “When we construct our speech, we always start with a picture of the whole utterance, both in the form of a certain genre schema, and in the form of an individual speech intention. We do not string words together, we do not move from word to word, but instead we seem to fill in the whole with the requisite words” (1979, p. 266).

Unlike Bakhtin, Vygotsky elaborates on the functional structure of the transition from thought to word and the role of inner speech in this transition. He describes this progression with the formula: “from the motive that engenders a thought, to the formulation of that thought, its mediation by the inner word, then by the meanings of external words, and finally,
by words themselves” (1956, pp. 380–81). This hypothesis has been broadly elucidated and discussed in the Soviet literature (see, for example, Luria, 1975, 1979; A.A. Leontiev, 1967, 1969a, A.A. Leontiev and Ryabova, 1970; Akhutina [Ryabova], 1975; Zimniaia, 1978; Bibler, 1981, and others) and thus we do not feel the need to present it in detail.

In conclusion: What is the basic unit of speech, of verbal communication? According to Bakhtin, it is the utterance; Vygotsky calls the unit of speech, of verbal thought, the word. Are these two views contradictory?

To resolve this question, let us try to construct a general picture that includes the positions of both scholars without giving rise to contradictions.

The minimal holistic unit of conversation is the utterance. An utterance, unlike a sentence, is complete in itself. The utterance always carries within it the marks and features of who is speaking to whom, for what reason and in what situation; it is polyphonic. An utterance develops from a motivation, “a volitional objective” and progresses through inner speech to external speech. The prime mover of the semantic progression (from the inner word that is comprehensible to me alone to the external speech that he, the listener, will understand) is the comparison of my subjective, evanescent sense, which I attribute to the given word, and its objective (constant for both me and my listener) meaning. Thus, the major building material for speech production is the living two-voice word. But polyphony is a feature of the utterance as expressed in the word; the word carrying personal sense is an abbreviation of the utterance. Thus the utterance and the word, as a compressed version of the utterance, are the units of speech acts, communication, and consciousness.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the comprehensive study of the works of L.S. Vygotsky and M.M. Bakhtin is still ahead of us. There is no doubt that along the way a fuller and richer picture of the speech processes and verbal communication will be discovered.

**Notes**

1. Where the dates of writing and publication are significantly different, we will indicate date of writing first and date of publication second (separated by a slash).

2. The three last works and also the book [Freudianism] (1927), were published under the name of Bakhtin’s student V.N. Voloshinov. There are other known works by Bakhtin published under the names of members of his circle. These include, in particular, the book by P.N. Medvedev [The Formalist Method and Literary Study] (1928). The major portions of these works were written by Bakhtin, as has been confirmed by textual analysis and the testimony of witnesses (Bakhtin, 1979, notes to pp. 399, 403; Ivanov, 1973, p. 44; from History . . ., note 1, p. 707).

3. In Bakhtin’s opinion, ignoring the “active role of the other person in the process of verbal communication” is a typical shortcoming of linguistic models, in which the “real integrity of verbal communication” is lost (Bakhtin, 1953/1979, p. 246). This concern for retaining the integrity of the units of analysis is reminiscent of Vygotsky’s methodological demand for “analysis based on units,” and not on “elements” (Vygotsky, 1934/1982, vol. 2, pp. 13–15).

4. The concept of “the apperceptive context of speech perception” was introduced in 1923 by L.P. Iakubinskii and was used actively by Vygotsky as well as Bakhtin.

5. Italics in a citation are used to indicate emphasis by the author quoted, boldface indicates emphasis by the author of the present article.

6. Cognition of things can only conditionally, to a certain degree, be called monologic. Bakhtin more than once emphasized that the researcher is not “alone” with his object. Each object is “talked over”—the researcher objects, anticipates objections, and so forth. Thus, cognition of things is a dialogue about a third party. However, this dialogue is directed at ending dispute, at the “ultimate truth,” that is, it strives to become a monologue, although it never fully succeeds. Evidently, only in this sense can cognition of objects be monologic.

7. The contents of these reports, in part, can be found in V.S. Bibler’s article: [L.S. Vygotsky’s Understanding of Inner Speech and the Logic of the Dialogue] (1981).
8. It is not known whether Vygotsky and Bakhtin were personally acquainted; however, there is reason to believe that they knew each other’s work. That Bakhtin had read Vygotsky is demonstrated not only by his reference to Vygotsky’s article in the book [Freudianism] (Voloshinov, 1927, p. 32), but by the change he introduced into his own terminology. While in the works of the 1920s, the term “meaning” is set in opposition to the terms “topic” and “evaluation,” in works published after 1934, it is opposed to “sense” and it may be that this shift was influenced by Vygotsky’s [Thought and Language]. In turn Vygotsky, in his early career as a literary theorist, could scarcely have avoided knowing Bakhtin’s [Problems in the Work of Dostoevsky] (1929) and other works by his circle.

9. Vygotsky and Bakhtin use the term “meaning” in two senses: meaning is, first of all, a generic term pertaining to both meaning and sense within a language; second, it is a specific term, which stands in opposition to “sense.” In our further discussion, we will use the term “meaning” in the first sense, and the term “language meaning” in the second. 2003 Addition: Here we follow the tradition, set up in translations of these terms in Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s works. See also “Glossary: alternative translations of key words” in “Bakhtin and Cultural Theory” ed. by K. Hirschkopf and D. Shepherd, 1989. Manchester Un-ty Press.


11. Although Vygotsky mentions Paulhan, he does not provide a reference. All the note says is Paulhan, Frederic (1856–1931)—French psychologist. A.A. Leontiev (1969b) provides a reference to F. Paulhan, La double fonction du langage (Paris, 1929). Careful examination of this book has failed to turn up the quotation Vygotsky cited. 2003 Addition: Prof. Alex Kozulin has helped me to find the cited work: Frederic Paulhan, Qu’est-ce que le sens des mots. J. de Psychologie, v. 15,1928.

12. In this article, which has already been mentioned, V.S. Bibler profoundly and persuasively thinks through Vygotsky’s understanding of inner speech. However, one assertion in the article does not seem to us completely accurate. Bibler disputes Vygotsky’s description of the relationship among motivation, thought, and inner speech. “The motivational sphere of thinking in the spirit of Vygotsky’s ideas (which is sharply inconsistent with the “letter” of the presentation) must and may occur and operate only in the context of inner speech itself, and not along with it, outside of it. Thought, which is born in the “context of inner speech” already is—if one thinks through the situation described by Vygotsky—in itself—the motivation for the thought, and the will to think” (1981, p. 133). We can agree with Bibler that in the types of speech to which he refers—philosophical and poetical speech—this is indeed the case. These are the most perfect and compressed forms of thinking in words. Everyday speech requires an external pretext (external with respect to inner speech) and has a more elaborate structure of verbal thought. Given this approach, Bibler’s quarrel with Vygotsky is resolved insofar as the latter wrote that the progression he described from motivation to external word was not the only one, and that “it is also possible to break off at any point in this complex chain,” and among these possibilities, he cites the route from inner speech to external, which Bibler had in mind (see Vygotsky, 1982, p. 358).

13. The understanding of mechanisms of the transition from inner speech senses to language meanings as a process of comparison of subjective senses and objective language meanings is presented in more details in the chapter 2 in Akhutina (Ryabova), 1975. This chapter was published in English: T.V. Akhutina. The role of inner speech in the construction of utterance. Soviet Psychology, vol.16, no. 3, 1978.

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