

International Journal of Human Sciences Research

CONTRIBUTIONS OF VYGOTSKY'S CULTURAL HISTORICAL THEORY TO THINKING ABOUT AGING

Cinthia Lucia de Oliveira Siqueira

Universidade Estadual do Centro

Oeste do Paraná - Irati

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/2352604217505279>

João Batista Martins

Universidade Estadual de Londrina

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7587961858186588>

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



Abstract: This paper is part of a doctoral study whose context of observation was a group of elderly women participating in an Open University for the Third Age (UATI). Immersed in this experience we found contradictions between our perceptions, which revealed the dynamism and complexity of those elderly women and the scientific/academic discourse based on the perspective of a naturalized aging, with a certain predestination to sameness and to losses resulting from organic deterioration. It was in Vygotski's historical and cultural perspective that we found support to substantiate the perception that the aging process is part of the uninterrupted flow of humanization, because it is given over to what is lived, to relationships and affections, which are not a privilege of a specific age, but unfold throughout life. This way, the objective of this work was to establish approximations between the Vygotskian theory and aging. To this end, we separated the text into four units of meaning from which we made our considerations, namely: the issue of age; the social situation of development; the phenomenon of *perezhivanie* and the group context. We conclude that, when the look is for the construction of creative and potent forms of existence in old age, the cultural historical approach provides valuable contributions, for it makes it possible to think of aging in the uninterrupted course of human development and helps the understanding of groups of elderly people as privileged spaces for transformation.

Keywords: Aging; cultural-historical theory; old age; development; gerontology.

INTRODUCTION

This work is part of a doctoral study whose observation context was a group of elderly women participating in an Open University for the Elderly (UATI). At the beginning, the project intended to study the historicity of

school education in a given city based on the biographical memories of retired teachers. It so happened that, during the same period in which we were looking for the people who made up the research group, I received an invitation to take the literature and theater classes at UATI. Believing that I would find fertile ground for our observations there, I immediately accepted the invitation.

Once the process started, we worked around the work better. Not all of them had been professors, but they now assumed the role of students and it was in this meeting, between the doctoral student and the UATI students, that the purpose of the research was transformed. It was no longer the history of school education in the city that loomed large, but our own history... I judged at all times that we (me and them) were there. What was my role? What were your *papyri*? Sometimes I asked them what moved them to the UATI, to which they replied – the desire not to accommodate, to move their thoughts, to learn...

Learn! The desire for knowledge really seems incessant to human beings. And it was this image of the unfinished, or, in other words, the possibility of remaking and reinventing for a lifetime that moved us throughout the entire study.

The encounters experienced with them did not appear to be a simple gathering of ladies who got together to occupy their idle time, much less to have unpretentious fun; at each proposed interaction, the elderly women showed us that, when leaving home, they did not just move externally - from one place to another - but, mainly, internally - from one perspective to another.

On the contrary the idea that, in old age, there is a certain resistance to new actions and thoughts and that, due to the difficulty or decline of the psychological and physical condition of the elderly body, it is necessary

to invest in actions aimed at rescuing and/or maintaining certain weakened functions, what the UATI students signaled to us was the possibility (and desire) of facing challenging and destabilizing experiences.

However, alongside our perceptions, which revealed the dynamism and complexity of those elderly women, we came across a scientific/academic discourse based on the perspective of a naturalized aging, with a certain predestination to sameness, to losses (resulting from organic deterioration), where old age was presented “as a natural phase, whose analysis was detached from the process of social construction of development” (KINGS; FACCI, 2015, p. 100).

Thus, in view of the divergences between what was said and what was lived, we delved into this research, whose look, from the beginning, envisioned the imaginative and inventive potential of aging. For that, we needed a theory that would help us to think about the human constitution from a prospective horizon, not conditioned to the biological-maturational dimension, but open to the effects of the imbricated and complex relationship between the biological on the one hand and the social, the cultural and historical background of another. And it was from Vygotsky's perspective¹ that we found support to support the perception that the aging process is part of the uninterrupted flow of humanization, because it is delivered to what is lived, to relationships and affections, which are not a privilege of a specific age, but unfold throughout life.

We believe that the opportunity to understand aging through the lens of such an approach offers colorful landscapes to old age, since development theories, in general, do not

1 Taking into account the different ways of writing the name of the Russian scholar Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) - Vygotsky, Vigotsky, Vygotski, Vygotskii, Vygotski, among others - the usual form in this work will be Vygotski, as it is the spelling used in the main works consulted and referenced here.

2 It is worth noting that, for Vygotsky, the concept of development is understood as movement, transformation. Thus, when using this term in our work, we are not referring to the idea of steps, levels or linear evolution, but we consider the perspective of change, displacement – advances and setbacks.

contemplate old age or, when they do, they do so from a biomedical perspective. whose decline, loss, and limitation are inexorable.

For Vygotsky, culture is constituted in the coexistence between people, in the course of human history, so that, at the same time that we appropriate culture, we recreate it; that is, in a dialectical process of transformation, we are objectified and subjectivated in and by culture, which makes it possible for us to understand the aging process not as a separate season, nor as a period of stagnation or decrease, but as continuity, a new beginning - invention.

It is important to say that Vygotsky focuses his studies on the development² childhood and adolescence, without delving into adult life, much less contemplating old age. However, we conceive that his perspective offers a rich substrate for us to think about aging in constant becoming and, in this sense, the objective of this work is to make some approximations between Vygotski's perspective and the aging process, especially with regard to new/other ways to act and think. Such commitment will happen through a writing that intertwines our experience with the group of elderly women from the UATI to some concepts formulated by the author, so that the theoretical reflections will always be in the coming and going of the affective memories of our meetings.

In an effort to present aging in the light of Vygotski's cultural historical theory, we separated the text into four units of meaning from which we weave our considerations, namely: the question of age; the social situation of development; the phenomenon of perezhivanie and the group context. And we believe that this work can favor the understanding that aging is an uninterrupted process of development and that groups of

elderly people are privileged spaces for internal transformation - not from the perspective of leisure, collaboration or occupation of time; but as a context of conflict and dispute with other people and with themselves – these, yes, displacement drivers.

This research was submitted to the Ethics and Research Committee of “Universidade Estadual de São Paulo” and approved under number 1.870.288, which certifies the knowledge and written consent of each of the participants and ensures care with risks, physical, emotional or moral discomforts, immediate or late.

AGING IN THE LIGHT OF VYGOTSKY'S THEORY

THE QUESTION OF AGE

We will take as an initial reflection the issue of age discussed by Vygotsky in a specific chapter of his work in which he discusses child development associated with the changes that occur in each age period. As our focus of study is the most advanced age, we will make the exercise of taking this cut as inspiration and encouragement to think about possible transformations experienced by the elderly.

For Vygotsky (1932-1934/1996a)³, age is not related to the elapsed time, but to the signs of internal transformations that occur throughout development and that reveal specific characteristics in certain periods of life. According to the author, the periodization of ages must be based on the turning points that occur in the course of existence, better said, on the new (psychic) formations that define the essence of each age and not on the number of years lived.

What his study suggests is the study of crises – the look at the changes that occur entirely in the person's personality and cause ruptures in it, in a short period of time, in a sudden, impetuous and fundamental way. The

author comments that, in the psychology of his time, crises were generally associated with a negative dimension, being understood as a more destructive period than a creative one, as if the construction that took place in stable periods had a temporary interruption or a provisional extinction, decomposition and disintegration. Thus, it was understood that nothing new was built, on the contrary, the crisis was understood as a phase marked by rebelliousness and obstinacy.

Vygotski (1932-1934/1996a) makes a counterpoint to this thought and says that, despite the constitution of new ways of acting and thinking implying the softening of old forms, development never interrupts its creative work and moments of crisis also mean moments creative processes, in which constructive processes occur.

Even emphasizing the crises as privileged moments of change, Vygotski (1932-1934/1996a) recognizes that, both in the crisis and in stability, displacements occur, however, in moments of crisis the transformations are radical, in those of stability, milder.

When referring to child development, the author considers that, during crises, in a relatively short space of time, sweeping and fundamental personality changes occur, involving modifications and ruptures that impetuously make the child change for the better. whole. Turning points that sometimes take the form of acute crises and take on the characteristic of a catastrophe similar to the course of revolutionary events, “both by the pace of changes and by their meaning” (VYGOTSKI, 1932-1934/1996a, page 256).

In moments of stability, the author explains, development follows a slow and evolutionary course, where changes happen imperceptibly, internally, and, over a relatively long period of time, “no sudden changes or important deviations capable of restructure the child's entire personality. The more or

³ The reference notation indicates the period in which the manuscript was written followed by the publication date.

less notable changes result from a broad and hidden molecular process” (Vygotski, 1932-1934/1996a, pp. 255-256).

Anchored in these assumptions, in our experiences with the elderly women of the UATI we tried to observe situations that suggested changes in their positioning, even if subtle and that revealed, not necessarily the turning point proposed by Vygotski, but indications of displacements in the ways of being and being of each participant.

It is worth narrating, to illustrate these observations, the presence of Aurora⁴ in theater classes. In her first class, the student approached me and clarified that she liked dramatic art a lot, however, as she had difficulty exposing herself, she preferred to just contemplate the experiences of other students. And so we agreed, she would be present at the classes as a “spectator”.

At the end of the first day, she came to tell me that observing the theatrical games was very “constructive” and that, from the chair, she can learn a lot, perhaps more than if she were on stage. For months Aurora chose to attend rehearsals. Interesting that there was a walk between the classroom and the amphitheater of the theater, and Aurora accompanied me - side by side - along the entire route (on the way there and back). On the way, she expressed her observations and reflections, brought reports of her personal life, spoke of the oppressions experienced in her love relationships, the choice not to have children, whispered fears, anxieties, dreams...

It was curious to follow Aurora's displacement during the year. The one who whispered intimately to me at the end of every class, gradually revealed to me that, from the condition of being an audience, the desire for protagonism arose. One day she took

the stage. She risked some improvisations, performed a hilarious pantomime of “lion tamer”, surprised and pleased her colleagues.

Going up to the circus stage was contradictory to the initial speech of the one who found it difficult to expose herself. Aurora experienced an unprecedented possibility in her life and inaugurated new meanings for herself:

- I never thought I'd be able to do that! She said after “taming the lion” and “releasing the animals”. From that day on, Aurora experienced more and more, each week she exchanged confessions with me about her internal and external transformations. At the end of the year performance, she chose to be the main character in a clown skit.

Admiring Aurora in that performance was like appreciating the caterpillar that “invents” wings. From the exuberant costumes (which she made herself) to the abused mannerisms, Aurora was, on stage, a “walking metamorphosis”. Aurora's participation in the group, although initially observant, put her in conflict with her position - beliefs and attitudes - and generated the need for change.

Aurora's flight makes us believe, as Vygotski suggests, that the turning points in the course of existence are not determined by chronological and/or biological age, but by challenging experiences that generate tension and, therefore, confront the person with himself, providing points turning point in your personality. In other words, what seems to move our history is the set of contradictions we experience and the way in which these are experienced.

We feel that, by raising her feet to the platform, Aurora did not change her personality entirely, as happens in moments of crisis recognized by Vygotsky, but she

4 All names used in the text are fictitious and were carefully chosen according to the meaning they carry (see: www.dicionariodenomesproprios.com.br) intertwined with the affective relationship established between the researcher and each elderly woman presented here. Aurora means “the sunrise”, “the break of day”, “the one that rises from the east” - because she shines brighter every year and because she has Japanese descent.

envisioned and experienced other possibilities of being and being in the world, expressing, in our view, a process of molecular change - consistent with periods of stability - in which transformations are more tenuous.

The reading we made is that Aurora's new movement, although discreet, manifested the beginning of a new Social Development Situation (SSD) – one that is, at the same time, expression and promotion of changes.

SOCIAL SITUATION OF DEVELOPMENT

According to Vygotski (1932-1934/1996a), the social situation of development is one of the most important concepts when thinking about the dynamics of each age, that is, one cannot lose sight of the understanding that the relationship between people and the social environment changes as new ways of acting and thinking are assumed - by transforming oneself, the person also transforms reality, which, modified, relates differently to each one of us. In summary, when changing, people change their relationship with the environment and with themselves.

In the words of the author: “the new structure of consciousness acquired at each age inevitably means that the child perceives his inner life differently, as well as the internal mechanism of his psychic functions” (Vygotski, 1932-1934/1996a, page 265). The author points out that the environment is not external to us, or a set of objective and static conditions that influence us, but something that also depends on our action to constitute itself, that is, as we transform ourselves, our social situation of development also changes. restructures, because we act differently in the context that binds us. Thus, in order to correctly understand the role of the environment in the human constitution, Vygotsky suggests that the approach be based on relative parameters – the type of relationship existing between

people and their surroundings, in a given situation.

As a result, the relationship established between people and the social environment is specific and unique at each age, in other words, for each period of existence there is a social development situation characteristic of the unique relationship of a given person, in a given historical, social and cultural context, which is not repeated for the same person, nor for his contemporaries of chronological age (despite keeping certain proximity), even though they live in the same time and space.

For Vygotski (1932-1934/1996a, p. 264), SSD “fully and completely determines the forms and trajectory that allow the child to acquire new personality properties, since social reality is the true source of development, the possibility of the social becoming individual” – thus, in order to study the dynamics of a given age, it is necessary to know the social development situation that surrounds it.

This observation demonstrates that Vygotsky was not interested in describing ages according to biological maturation. The periodization he proposed did not refer to an evolutionary line of development, but to the possible relationships between people and their context. The author's concern was not only to understand how the environment, as an absolute entity, exerts influence on us, but, especially, how people, modified, interfere in the restructuring of their relationships with the world and in the way they perceive their inner life.

If we transfer these ideas to old age, we may think that it is not just the physical condition and/or the chronological time of the elderly person that determines their relationship with the social context and with themselves, nor the environment itself, which directs the possibilities of transformation of those who age, but the interweaving of these two lines - social and biological - is what causes the

necessary tension for people to be in constant movement. As people come into contact with the reality of aging, they can become aware of their new needs and possibilities, which allows them to reposition themselves.

Vygotsky still draws our attention to the fact that the same element of reality is signified in different ways at different moments of life, thus playing different roles for different people and at different ages; as people's personality and degree of awareness about reality change. For him, "it is easily seen that the same situation in the environment, that the same occurrence in the environment of several people, surprising them at different age levels, has a different influence on the development of each one" (Vinha; Welckman, 2010, p. 685).

According to the author, the effects of the environment will depend on the understanding, awareness and apprehension that the person has about the events. If the awareness of the situation is different, then the meaning attributed to the situation will also be different, but it is not only the person who changes, the "attitude" of the environment towards him also changes. If person and environment are different, then the relationship is different.

Thus, one cannot generalize the experiences and possibilities of the elderly, but understand that each person, even in the same age group, will have unique experiences and, therefore, unique development possibilities.

It is not uncommon to find elderly women in our society who exhibit very different ways of being and thinking - which shows that, alongside the influence of the biological component, there is the social and historical context to which people are subjected and the unique psychological constitution of each one/one of us - consequence of singular and specific experiences. What changes is the experience of each person, better saying - the intertwined relationship between different

components.

In Aurora's case, her unique characteristics, constituted in the relationships she established throughout her life, supported a specific way of being in the theater group. Unlike her colleagues who risked dramatic games from the beginning, she needed to observe the group first, to build a more intimate and affective relationship with me, to reflect and process the experiences through many, many dialogues at the end of each class, so that, finally, he would feel the desire and have the initiative to go on stage.

Aurora was already an octogenarian and was still looking for new ways of being in the world. She was still attracted by the new, by the challenge - and she said yes to the unusual. As Vygotsky suggests, the possibility of resignifying and reinventing ourselves is not linked to a specific age, but to the social situation of development experienced by each one of us, regardless of the period of life in which we find ourselves.

PEREZHIVANIE PHENOMENON

For Vygotsky, perezhivanie can be conceptualized as a unit in which, "on the one hand, in an indivisible way, the environment, what is experienced, is represented - perezhivanie is always linked to what is located outside the person - and, on the other hand, side, it is represented how I experience it" (Vinha; Welckman, 2010, p. 686). This way, perezhivanie, as a phenomenon, would be related to the personal particularities of each person that determine how they will experience the most diverse situations and, on the other hand, it is these situations that constitute the particularities of each one of us.

Faced with this concept, we understand that, when thinking about the development of the elderly, we do not need to discard the strength of their hereditary organic constitution and the existing diversity within

the biological condition of each one / one - but we must focus especially on the study and observation of experiences that allow the long-lived to assign new meanings, the need to move from one place to another. In our experience, between one experience and another, we were able to witness these shifts, such as what happened to Antonia⁵who, after having been away from the university for a while, decided to return.

Antonia was enrolled at UATI, but only participated in literature and theater classes, taught by me. She always arrived at the end of the snack, because she wanted to avoid malicious comments like: – Enough just to eat! So she confided to me playfully. We'd take that quick drink of coffee and head to the living room. In class, she risked shy pantomimes, always interrupted by her own laughs and jokes that appeared to disguise her confusion.

During the process, beyond the second semester, while having fun with the improvisations that the apprentices created, I suggested to them the construction of a circus-comic presentation for the end of the year. They seemed to like the idea and our process continued, from then on, towards the construction of sketches that combined mime with clowning.

One day, at the end of the class, while we were talking about the previous year's presentations, Antônia, until then discreet in the group, asked me for permission, apologized in advance to her colleagues and placed herself in front of them to declare, dismayed, that there was no I didn't like the last performance staged by the dance students at all. She justified that the choreography underestimated the dancers by exposing them to ridicule. Antônia was referring to a presentation in which the students danced a "tarantela" (seated on a chair) and accompanied the rhythm of the music with clapping hands. Antonia did not participate in the aforementioned dance

⁵ Antonia means valuable, priceless, priceless. Because the years of living together in good humor made us accomplices.

performance, but, as an audience member, she felt uncomfortable and revealed that she was feeling the same discomfort with the creation of the clown skits, which is why she would no longer participate in the rehearsals.

Antonia's declaration triggered a tremendous squeal between them. Disagreements, silences and consents. Antonia had inaugurated the possibility of criticism, discord, so muffled by those ladies and never witnessed by me in that place. Some defended the presentation, others said – You know you're right? Had not thought about it...

There was a particularity of Antonia that needed to be respected and she stopped participating in the rehearsals. On the opening day of the clowning skits, the students had a great time – they showed how much effort they put into the costumes, the make-up, and every detail thought through. They squandered richness of imagination and won sincere and deep laughter from the audience. Antonia did not go on stage, but made a curious revelation at the end of it:

- Today I didn't see my elderly colleagues, nor the old ladies, nor the grandmothers, but the artists. And that's exactly what the students showed, they were no longer referred to or recognized for an (exclusive) condition of being elderly and came to be signified as actresses, clowns, singers, dancers - there was a repositioning of them as learners/people.

Antonia also commented that she laughed so much at the presentation that she even felt a stomach ache – she didn't laugh at her colleagues, she laughed at herself – at the limitations inherent in all of us who insist on disguising our feelings behind socially accepted behaviors. The apprentices represented human beings and not old age.

Two weeks after the end of classes, Antonia gave me a vase of orchids accompanied by a card whose footer recorded the following statement:

Next year I'm on stage... Wait for me!

Promise of future change - next year, registered with a verb in the present - I am... This is how we understand Antônia's footer. She initially resisted participating in the classes, then decided to assume the role of a clown, but halfway through, she withdrew, gave up. Which does not mean that she regressed, but that she was reorganizing her internal structures, forming new syntheses, albeit provisional ones.

We understand that Antonia's change of perspective happened because she experienced a dramatic event in a unique way. And the way in which she refracted this social situation, provoked internal changes that, slowly, materialized, creating for her, for me and for the group, new social development situations.

Veresov (2017) states that only when a social situation is experienced as a social drama does it come to be represented as a social development situation, as it carries an emotional dimension. When that happens, she passes from the social plane to the psychological plane, shaking and transforming the internal structures, in her words: "without internal drama [...] such types of psychic changes are hardly possible. So, the term 'drama' is a keyword here" (Veresov, 2017, p. 60).

This perspective makes us reflect that not every experience promotes transformation, only those that produce a certain tension, which leads people to a certain instability to the point that they feel the need to reorganize their actions and thoughts. Our experience at the UATI allowed us to envision that there are elderly women who are more resistant to change, while others are more easily drawn to the new, which we believe is related to the uniqueness of each one, as well as the way the context presents itself to them.

This way, the concept of *perezhivanie*

refers to the way a person becomes aware of, interprets and emotionally related to a given event. Which shows us that, without disregarding, but going beyond the social situation, awareness, interpretation and emotion are essential elements for understanding a phenomenon.

Antonia reviewed concepts and launched the new projection – wait for me! Perhaps her repositioning happened because she became aware of the tension between what she experienced on the one hand and what she symbolized on the other. And if the awareness of the situation changes, then the meaning attributed to the situation is also different, but it is not just the person who changes, the attitude of the environment towards her also changes - not infrequently Antonia's colleagues insisted that she continued on paper, because it was pleasing, because it represented very well.

Such attitudes of the group were not enough for Antônia to actually participate, but the Christmas card showed that this movement, associated with so many others (which we were unable to apprehend in their entirety), created seeds of change and promised changes for the following year. And if Antonia and a half show themselves to be different, then the relationship changes.

As we know, the idea of becoming, in this case, would not have happened in the same way if not for Antonia's immersion in the group, since we believe, based on the historical cultural theory, that the dramatic events refracted by the experiences of this group produced qualitative changes in the life trajectory of the elderly, our research and ourselves - as a researcher and advisor.

Like the experience experienced by Antonia, in our research, we think of the elderly not as a reflection of the concepts that are attributed to them, nor of the opportunities that are offered to them, much less of their organic

condition, but as a tangled relationship where they can be a transforming agent of oneself and another person, since, as Veresov (2017) explains, experience is not an empirical event that occurs at a given moment, but understood from a perspective of displacement and “the social environment as a source of development of the individual only exists when the individual actively participates in this environment, acting, interacting, interpreting, understanding, recreating and redesigning it” (Veresov, 2017, p. 57).

We understand that the search for university in old age, alongside the commitment and courage with which the apprentices launch themselves into the most diverse and challenging proposed activities, are evidence that they are in transformation. There are those who were not used to dancing and today wear ballet shoes and memorize steps and setbacks, there are those who had never climbed onto a platform and now memorize texts and represent characters, in addition to those who had stopped writing in primary school and now accept the provocation of publishing a text of his own authorship.

We therefore believe, based on this theory, that people, by putting themselves in interaction and immersing themselves in dramatic social situations, which only appear in this meeting, also place themselves in a possibility of reframing/development.

That is, the group proves to be a privileged place of transformation for Antônia, for the elderly person, for any of us, because social interactions are the only and primordial source of dramatic social situations. What they demonstrate is the search for challenges. They want to be confronted. They are there to learn - they want to move around, as we all want them to, and they call for provocations that make them more creative, builders of other ways of positioning themselves in the world - they are in the process of becoming.

THE GROUP CONTEXT

If we consider our study group – in general women over 70 years old – we understand that there is still a desire to transform attitudes and thoughts. Worried and bothered by the decrease in memory, loneliness, isolation and surrender to the nearest death, these elderly women seek new experiences, new encounters. They leave home, live with their peers, with the teacher, with the coordinator - they prepare futures.

In literature and theater classes, they reveal the desire to learn, to know more, to overcome fears, to overcome barriers. They experience activities never experienced before, dare and continue transforming the functioning of the group, the space in which they are inserted and the interior of themselves, as in the case of Florinda, which we will report later.

It happened during a literature class, in which we proposed the production of texts whose theme had previously been given by the coordination – “My Roots”. The texts would form part of the composition of a book that would be published by the Institution. The suggestion was that each one reported their origins, the history of their ancestors.

At the end of one of the first classes, Florinda addressed me in particular, saying that she had a lot of difficulty writing, which she attributed to the fact that she had not completed the fourth grade of primary school. She commented that she would make many mistakes and that she might not be able to produce a text worthy of publication. I asked her to write a first draft, fearlessly, unconcerned with rules or coherence.

Three weeks after the conversation, Florinda handed me her text. There were a few timid lines, in which she reported facts related to religiosity, such as the experience of confirmation and being an “altar boy” at the church where her parents congregated. I took your text home and said that I would like to

enjoy it in peace. Reading sent me to a long procession.

In the next class, I handed her the text with some suggestions and observations and suggested that she expand her writings based on the song *Romaria* by Renato Teixeira, which I offered her in print so that she could read it and see if it served as an inspiration. The other week, Florinda presented a new text, longer and bolder, with the right to a parody between her life and the recommended song.

The text contained greater brilliance, in it, Florinda showed herself to be more authentic, more confident. I asked her to read the initial version and the final version to the class, as an example so that the colleagues could also explore other possibilities in their writings. Florinda hesitated, afraid of giving a bad reading. Curious, the students persisted and, after much requesting, managed to get Florinda to come forward to share her texts.

Florinda began by apologizing for possible mistakes. The students fell silent. During the reading, a colleague sometimes interrupted asking her to read louder. Florinda followed and, in the end, the students were also surprised and gratified, especially by the last paragraph:

Someone's destiny is made of dreams and memories, like me lost in daydreams about my future. It's nostalgia and knots in the throat of past lives in the small citadel. I'm a hillbilly from Sodrélia, help me Our Lady of Aparecida, she lights up my life, blesses my path and protects my family.

From that day on, Florinda, until then silent during classes, began to be more participative and to give her opinion on the production of other students as well. She appropriated her potential and the possibility of contributing to the group. He allowed himself to be a part, to belong... He found himself capable. The following week, as she had already completed her text, she was asked by another student to help her. Florinda did so and asked me

if she could make some remarks about her colleague's text. She told her friend that she could write more, report in more detail some of the facts described.

Interestingly, when relating differently in the group, Florinda also changes the group's expectation of her, that is, Florinda's action causes a shift in her and her colleagues. The student who, supposedly, needed to learn to write, finds herself in the situation of teaching, she changes her position.

By accepting the provocation of polishing the text, Florinda consented to re-elaborate her thoughts, rearrange her words, her way of writing. The writing of a poetic narrative, which she had not done for a long time, enabled another dimension in her relationship with writing itself, with herself and with the group. When writing, she assumed the possibility of becoming aware of her abilities, of her expressive potential, as a writer, as a person.

Such an attitude reveals that the group's demand was essential to create the necessary tension for Florinda's displacement. When challenged, she swayed, then accepted and remade... Remade the text, remade the relationships, remade herself.

According to Vygotski (1932-1934/1996b, p. 383), "the experience has a biosocial orientation, it is something intermediate between the personality and the environment". Thus, we consider that the transformation that occurred in Florinda was a unique and particular experience resulting from the relationship between its internal processes and the concrete situation. For her, the challenge of writing and the movements that were being instituted in the group motivated the construction of new meanings.

For someone who previously saw herself as a bad writer, this experience had a unique and distinct meaning in relation to the other partners in the group - which demonstrates that what was essential was not the situation

itself, but the way in which the situation was experienced by her, by colleagues and by myself.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our work was based on the assumption that, when entering into relationships with other people and putting themselves in a learning situation, the elderly women were thrown into challenges and conflicts that removed them from the edge of comfort and repositioned them in new projections.

Since the beginning of our interaction with the UATI students, we observed that, in the group context, where different experiences took place and countless stories circulated, there was a tension between: the individual and the social; the biological and the cultural; the thought and the word; the intellectual and the emotional potential generators of conflicts and drivers of creative leaps.

As our observations and reflections progressed, we confirmed that there was a restructuring of the students' previous experience; not necessarily profound changes, to the point of completely transforming their personalities, but periods in which small crises occurred, experienced due to the anxiety and anguish generated by the teacher and the group mediators of the impasses experienced by all of us.

Contrary to common sense (spread by the media) that advocates rescuing and maintaining certain functions in old age, what the UATI students exposed was the work under construction and many other blueprints. As they revise the outline of their life courses, they locate themselves in the future, in the endless field of possibilities.

Thus, in the light of Vygotsky's theory, we understand that there is a continuous movement of internal and external movement throughout life, unpredictability and contradictions of experience with other

people.

By displacing the idea of development from the strictly biological to the synthesis between this and the cultural, the historical and the social, Vygotsky allows us to envision transformations that are also present in older age, which breaks with the stereotype of the stagnation of the elderly person.

In the intertwining of his theory with what we experience at UATI, we understand that there is a gradual change in the personality of the students represented by moments of disorganization and ruptures, as well as some fundamental qualitative leaps in their actions and thoughts.

We believe that the continuity of the longitudinal follow-up of her and the other students could aggregate and clarify the perception of these molecular modifications, since, the author himself points out that the changes that occurred in these more stable periods, "externalize and can be directly observed only with the end of prolonged processes of latent development" (Vygotski, 1932-1934/1996a, p. 255).

This way, we trust that, when the focus is on building creative and powerful forms of existence in old age, the cultural-historical approach provides valuable contributions, as it makes it possible to think of aging in the uninterrupted course of human development and helps to understand groups of people elderly women as privileged spaces for transformation.

REFERENCES

REIS, Clayton Washington dos; FACCI, Marilda Gonçalves Dias. Contribuições da psicologia histórico-cultural para a compreensão da velhice, *Revista eletrônica arma da crítica*, n. 6, p. 99-116, 2015. Disponível em: https://repositorio.ufc.br/bitstream/riufc/23237/1/2015_art_cwreismgdfacci.pdf. Acesso em: 16 out. 2022.

VERESOV, Nikolai. The Concept of Perekhivanie in Cultural-Historical Theory: Content and Contexts. In: FLEER, Marilyn; REY, Fernando González; VERESOV, Nikolai (Eds.). *Perekhivanie, emotions and subjectivity*, Advancing Vygotsky's Legacy, Singapore: Springer, 2017, p. 47-70.

VINHA, Márcia Pileggi; WELCMAN, Max. Quarta aula: a questão do meio na pedologia, Lev Semionovich Vygotski, *Psicologia USP*, v. 21, n. 4, p. 681-701. Disponível em: [doi:https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-65642010000400003](https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-65642010000400003). Acesso em: 16 out 2022.

VYGOTSKI, Lev Semionovitch. El problema de la edad. In: VYGOTSKI, Lev Semionovitch. *Obras escogidas IV. Psicología infantil*, Madrid: Visor, (1932-1934/1996a), p. 251-273.

VYGOTSKI, Lev Semionovitch. La crisis de los siete años. In: VYGOTSKI, Lev Semionovitch. *Obras escogidas IV. Psicología infantil*, (1932-1934/1996b), Madrid: Visor, p. 377-386.