SPECIFIC FEATURES OF COGNITION AND LEARNING IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT
PARADOXES OF THE EMPHASIS ON CULTURAL PRACTICES OF COGNITION CLOSE TO THE CHILD

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Abstract: The first part of the paper deals with contributions of the cultural psychological approach to learning and cognition (in comparison with individual cognitivist tradition): these are contained in the theory of situated learning (Resnick; Lave-Wenger) or in that of distributed learning (Perkins). Their representatives stress the difference between learning and apprenticeship and develop the ideas of Vygotsky, Leontiev and Luria concerning the role of artifacts of culture as tools of learning.

Second part criticizes the fact that many authors joining situated learning theory implicitly put cognitive processes displayed in practice (understood exclusively as everyday apprenticeship) as model for learning in school – without analysing the specificity of school way of cognition.

To conclude, different conceptions of the term "context" will be presented through examples of cultural psychological researches.

After fifty years of rule of the individual-psychological approach to cognition and learning, the last two decades have seen renewed interest in the socio-cultural character of human cognition. Initially, neo-behaviorism asserted itself since the latter half of the 1930’s and eclipsed the remarkable impulses of the cultural historical theory of psychological functions. Later, from the final years of the 1950’s onwards, the cognitivist stream, which stands on the unfortunate conception of man as a machine processing information with the brain as the central processor, came to dominate the discipline. This resulted in a reaction which took the form of renewed interest in the social and cultural-historical character of human cognition and of mental development in general.

This emphasis has been remarkably rising in prominence since the 1980’s. It could draw on earlier inspirations: the unachieved work of Vygotsky from 1925-1934 followed by the works by Luria and Leontiev. Unfortunately, these were usually published relatively late and translated into foreign languages only from the 1980’s onwards – remaining virtually unknown till then. Further, in the 1970’s and 1980’s there was the cultural anthropological research

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