

Introduction to the workshop “Cultural myth creation: interpreting traditional narratives through improvisational drama”

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Stanislavsky – Vygotsky – *perezhivanie* – *soperezhivanie* through *sodeistvie*

We interpret Vygotsky’s term “perezhivanie” in Stanislavskian sense as a strong emotional experience bringing qualitative changes of the personality.

Vygotsky most probably borrowed it from Stanislavsky. ‘Perezhivanie’ and ‘soperezhivanie’ are the central concepts and main mechanisms for creating role in his school of acting. Stanislavsky’s (1988, 2001) approach or system was called the theater of ‘perezhivania’ in contrast to the theatre of ‘predstavlenia’ (presentation/representation) (Vygotsky’s writing on the psychology of the actor’s creative work, 1984).

In Stanislavsky’s understanding the mission of the theatre is to bring certain qualitative changes in the audience. That’s why he was talking about the SUPERTASK of the presentation and a SUPERSUPERTASK of the theatrical group. Each role in the play had its task and goal, but these all were subordinated to the supertask of the presentation, which in turn was subordinated to the supersupertask of the theatre.

The actor creating his role, where perezhivanie is a central mechanism, director through creating a piece of real human life, where the central point is *dramatic collision*, which in turn involves the audience into strong perezhivanie of the events. This perezhivanie has to be genuine and strong in order to touch the human soul, make him face the dramatic situation as his personal life collision and to bring personal transformations in him.

Vasilyuk describes ‘perezhivanie’ as the productive process, a special kind of work, of producing meaning/sense (smysloporozhdenie). ‘Perezhivanie’ itself is understood as a productive act and it has a creative nature. “Productivity and, ultimately, creativity, is ... an integral part of experiencing in its higher, more fully developed forms” (Vasilyuk, 1988 p. 34). “Experiencing is precisely, activity, i.e., an independent process relating the individual to the world and resolving his actual life-

problems; it is not a special mental “function” of the same order as memory, perception, thinking, imagination or the emotions” (Ibid, p.35).

Vygotsky (1994) described ‘perezhivanie’ of the environment by the child as the unit of consciousness. Does this mean that act of sense creation is a unit of consciousness? In dramatizations and in playworlds (Lindqvist, 1995) the term ‘soperezhivanie’ (co-experiencing) might be relevant, which I would describe as *living through* or *emotional experiencing together* with the characters and situations.

Zaporozhets (1986) is adding one more term ‘sodeistvovat’, which I would translate as ‘co-acting’. Zaporozhets et al. (1986) have shown that while listening to the story a child follows the actions of the main character with his ‘inner eye’ – “living through together with...” co-experiencing (‘soperezhivat’) and assisting, co-acting (‘sodeistvovat’): he experiences all the events physically and emotionally.

The concept of ‘perezhivanie’ is a central in understanding the process of sense making (smysloporozhdenije, smysloobrazovanije).

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