

L.S. Vygotsky's understanding of reflection and a study of its influence on the electrophysiological activity of the brain / *El concepto vygotkiano de la reflexión y un estudio de su influencia en la actividad electrofisiológica del cerebro*

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Irina Polikanova^{1,2} and Sizikova Tatyana Eduardovna³

Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of reflection on the central nervous system. Our hypothesis included two assumptions: first, that specific brain oscillatory activity occurs after reflection; second, that this activity is age dependent. The novelty of the study lies in registering wave activity before and after acts of reflection, as well as in confirming the age boundary of qualitative changes in reflection by psychophysiological indicators. The results showed the strongest effect of reflection on the central nervous system in subjects over the age of 22. This condition is characterized by a decrease in power in the lower band of the theta rhythm (4–5.5 Hz) and an increase in power in the upper band of the theta rhythm (7–8 Hz), as well as an increase in power in the lower band of the alpha rhythm (8–9.5 Hz) and beta rhythm (14–20 Hz). In contrast, younger participants (18–21 years) primarily show an increase in lower alpha rhythm power (8–9.5 Hz), which is associated with outward-directed intellectual activity, particularly attention processes.

Keywords

reflection; unit of analysis; EEG activity; Vygotsky; Imaginal Reflexive Resource Methodology

¹FSBSI Federal Scientific Center for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Laboratory of Convergent Studies of Cognitive Processes

²HSE University, Faculty of Biology and Biotechnology

³Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, Department of Correctional Psychology and Pedagogy, Institute of Childhood

Spanish translation / *Traducción al español*: Mercè Rius Riu

Corresponding author / *Autor/a para correspondencia*:

Irina Polikanova, FSC PIR, Federal Scientific Centre for Psychological and Interdisciplinary Research, Laboratory of Convergent Studies of Cognitive Processes. 125009 г. Москва, ул. Моховая, д. 9, строение 4 Москва, Moscow, 125009. Russian Federation.

Email: irinapolikanova@mail.ru

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es analizar el impacto de la reflexión en el sistema nervioso central. Nuestra hipótesis incluye dos supuestos: primero, que tras la reflexión se da una actividad cerebral oscilatoria específica y segundo, que esta actividad varía en función de la edad. La novedad de este estudio reside en el registro de la actividad de las ondas antes y después de la reflexión, así como en la confirmación de los límites etarios de los cambios cualitativos en la reflexión determinados por indicadores psicofisiológicos. Los resultados revelan un efecto mayor de la reflexión en el sistema nervioso central en los participantes mayores de 22 años. Esta condición se caracteriza por una disminución de potencia en la banda inferior del ritmo theta (4–5.5 Hz) y un incremento de potencia en la banda inferior del ritmo alfa (8–9.5 Hz) y beta (14–20 Hz). Por el contrario, los participantes más jóvenes (entre 18 y 21 años) mostraron mayoritariamente un incremento de potencia en la banda inferior del ritmo alfa (8–9.5 Hz), que se relaciona con la actividad intelectual dirigida hacia el exterior, especialmente los procesos de atención.

Palabras clave

reflexión; unidad de análisis; actividad EEG; Vygotski; metodología basada en recursos reflexivos imaginarios

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Reflection is the turning of all mental functions and personality upon oneself. Reflection under conditions of digitalization is necessary for the development of a cultural personality. Internet technologies are aimed at constructing a new reality, and it is in this reality that conditions are created in which the development of reflection is relevant, primarily personal, philosophical, existential, which determine the cultural development of personality (Leonov et al., 2021; Suroedova et al., 2023).

The emphasis on the development of reflection has led to interest in determining its impact on the state of the central nervous system. The hypothesis of this study consisted of two assumptions: the first was that there is a specific oscillatory activity of the brain after completion of the reflection process; the second was that this is age dependent. As the stimulus we used the projective technique 'Imaginal Reflexive Resource Methodology' (IRRM) developed by the authors.

The scope of 'reflection', defined in the works of the founder of cultural-historical psychology, allows us to correlate with it the scope of the concept of 'self-reference' used in modern

psychophysiological research. Thus, we can determine cross-cultural intersections in studies of electrophysiological brain activity during and after the reflexive act.

A related result of this study was the determination of the age limit of qualitative changes in the influence of reflection on the brain rhythms.

Our results contribute to the scientific discussion of psychophysical issues.

The essence of reflection and its psychological characteristics

The use of the term 'reflection' is extremely rare in Vygotsky's works. However, he did pay attention to and recognized the existence of reflection in the psyche; furthermore, he did find reflection and its function in the development of mental processes and personality.

For example, analysing the views of Spranger, Vygotsky (1984) outlined what can be attributed to the development of reflection. Vygotsky (1984) supports Buzeman's position that self-awareness is not something initial, that it is a secondary formation formed in interaction with

the social environment, and criticizes him for trying to form a biosocial view of reflection.

Vygotsky (1999) supported that the function of reflection is to enable a person to be 'sensitive to contradiction, to be able not to rankle but logically synthesize judgements, to possess the ability of deduction' (p. 206).

The confirmation of the close connection between logical thinking and reflection led Vygotsky to conclude that initially, the development of reflection drives the development of logical thinking, and then the development of logical thinking drives the development of reflection. A turning point in this change in the relationship between reflection and thinking occurs during adolescence.

Without losing its essence, we can briefly formulate the definition of reflection, which was given by Vygotsky when analysing of the ideas of Buseman and Piaget. According to Vygotsky, reflection is a reflection of mental and personal processes in consciousness or self-consciousness as a transfer of social consciousness into individual consciousness. This understanding introduced many questions into the idea of reflection, as evidenced by its subsequent almost century-long study.

Modern experimental studies have a more detailed understanding of reflection and have built new connections between reflection and social situations; in particular, they have more thoroughly defined the role of the 'Other' in the perception and construction of a person's image of himself; they have defined in reflection the attribution of certain character traits to a person:

- (a) attributing some properties to one's personality (Belasheva & Ermakov, 2023);
- (b) discussing oneself when interacting with others (Naaman et al., 2010);
- (c) projecting one's personal beliefs, character traits and experiences onto others in the attribution process (Tamir & Mitchell, 2013);
- (d) a greater likelihood of remembering information if it has personal meaning (Symons & Johnson, 1997).
- (e) analysing the nature and structure of self-concepts (McConnell, 2011)
- (f) an individual's perception of self to create a self-concept (Crocker & Knight, 2005).

It should be noted that such studies did not delve into the analysis of the process of reflection nor its mechanisms; they supported the descriptive nature of psychological features, focusing on neuropsychological indicators. It was the study of neuropsychological indicators that aroused our interest and led to the setting-up of an experiment to determine the influence of reflection on the electrical activity of the brain.

Ontogenesis of reflection

The question of the ontogenesis of reflection proved to be a difficult one for scientific research.

Vygotsky (1984) considers reflection as a new formation in adolescence. This linking of reflection with logical thinking inevitably leads to the recognition of reflection in the adolescent and its denial in the child, 'the absence of arbitrariness and awareness of one's own operations is precisely the psychological equivalent of the absence of logical thinking' (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 96).

Justifying his conclusions, Vygotsky writes that 'the child begins to count long before he understands what counting is and meaningfully applies it. The child's speech contains such conjunctions as "because", "if only", "although", long before the awareness of causality, conventionality and opposition appears in his thinking' (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 90).

Taken out of the contexts of disputes with other psychologists of different psychological trends, these statements led to later studies of the age dynamics of reflection in non-classical psychology.

A significant contribution of Vygotsky (1984) to the problem of the development of reflection is the identification of the presence of the 'Other' as a necessary condition. In choosing their actions and thoughts, adolescents rely on this 'Other'. Moreover, the 'Other' emerges for the child from infancy, and Vygotsky carefully describes its role.

It should be assumed that the emergence of reflection begins alongside all other psychological functions in infancy.

Modern research experimentally confirms the shift in the boundaries of reflection manifestations from the age of three, as Vygotsky believed, when the child begins to treat himself as an 'Other' and sees himself in a mirror, from the age of 2-x months.

Special studies by Lisina (2009) have shown that after two and a half months, the child carries out initial cognitive activity. At first, it does not have a relatively constant structure and is expressed in a peculiar concentration of the child on the object, associated with disorderly movements (Smirnova, 2009).

Modern experiments related to the formation and recognition of the idea of the 'Other' have shown that the ability to recognize the falsity of other people's beliefs in children is already manifested at the age of 2.5. Children at this age recognize falsity in the representation of other people's actions. Consequently, these children are able to understand that other people's consciousness is different from theirs, and a person can act differently (T. G. Fomina et al., 2023; Vilenskaya et al., 2023).

Thus, studies of the ontogenesis of reflection have determined the lower boundary of the first manifestations of reflection at an average age of two weeks and they are more pronounced from two months of age. They confirmed that its development requires the development of perception, primarily visual, as well as memory, thinking, movement and the presence of the 'Other'.

The upper boundary, increased from adolescence, as it was defined by Vygotsky, to the completeness of adolescence. This is connected with the introduction of more different types of functions into the psychological boundaries of reflection:

- first, with the development of systematic thinking;
- secondly, with the quality of building interaction with the 'Other', not only recognizing but also coordinating the interests of the parties to mutual relations and actions;

- and thirdly, with the need for not only adaptation and self-regulation but also self-organization in changing conditions from greater certainty and stability to uncertain and dynamic, caused by the accelerated movement of information with the help of Internet technologies.

The definition of the lower and upper boundaries of the development of reflection does not negate Vygotsky's view of reflection as a new formation during adolescence.

In our research based on the 'Reflection Focus Questionnaire' (Sizikova, 2018), we demonstrated that regardless of the age period in which we observe various manifestations of reflection, its development reaches its cultural level in full only by the age of 22 (Sizikova & Durachenko, 2018a, 2018b). Unlike our studies, Karpov (2003) considers the age boundary for qualitative changes in the completeness of reflection development to be 18 years, while Leontiev and Osin (2014) set it at 23 years. These conclusions are based on psychological diagnostics using methods developed by these psychologists. We confirmed the psychological boundary at 22 years through the diagnosis of electrophysiological parameters in this study.

Electrophysiological study of reflection

Having determined the essence, conditions and age dynamics of reflection on the basis of Vygotsky's works and modern research, we formulated an assumption about the influence of reflection on the state of the central nervous system. In neuroscience, the term self-reference is most commonly used to denote reflection. This is an example of how in different sciences one can meet different terms and notions, which are correlated with each other by virtue of belonging to one meaning of the phenomenon; in the case of reflection, it is an inward reference to mental functions and personality. Self-reference is an inward reference to the personality, which corresponds to personal reflection.

Studies of reflection using EEG

There are at least two approaches to investigating EEG correlates of self-referential processing (Knyazev, 2013). The first approach is that, since it is possible to record EEG and fMRI simultaneously, it is possible to determine the degree of overlap between the two signals in brain regions associated with self-referential processing. A second, more direct approach is to study the EEG correlates of self-referential processing directly.

The distinction between self-referential and other-referential information is mainly associated with the P300 component of the evoked potential but is sometimes manifested earlier (Knyazev, 2013). In the frequency domain, different frequency oscillations have been shown to affect self-referential processing. Alpha and theta frequencies tend to be amplified, while beta and gamma frequencies tend to be suppressed during self-referential processing.

Cases from clinical practice are important for understanding various brain processes, in this case, self-reference. For example, T. Fomina et al. (2017) showed that, unlike healthy subjects, patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) lack electrophysiological correlates of self-referential thinking, which they believe may indicate changes in self-awareness and self-perceptions.

Kraus et al. (2019) investigated the neural processes underlying creative ideas. Alpha EEG activity was measured using a task-related power paradigm while participants performed an alternative use task as well as a category fluency task. Their results showed that left-hemisphere alpha power increased compared to right-hemisphere alpha power in response to the sequential order effect in the alternative use task but not in the category fluency task.

A cross-cultural study by Knyazev et al. (2012) examined the neural correlates of the default mode network (DMN) using EEG data and statistical brain imaging using low-resolution brain electromagnetic tomography (LORETA). The authors showed that the occurrence of spontaneous self-referential thoughts was best predicted by increased alpha activity in the DMN. Decreased

theta and delta activity in the superior frontal gyrus and increased beta activity in the postcentral gyrus complemented the prediction.

Mu and Han (2010) investigated whether irregular neural oscillations are involved in this self-reference effect during the memorization of self-related and non-self-related words. The authors recorded EEGs in healthy adults while thinking about words related to self and other familiar words. They found that words related to self-attitude caused synchronization of activity at 700–800 ms in the theta band and activity at 400–600 ms in the alpha band. In contrast, activity discordance was observed in the beta band at 700–800 ms and gamma band at 500–600 ms for words related to self-attitude. Theta and alpha band activity was associated with positive emotions, while beta and gamma band activity was associated with negative emotions. Moreover, frontal theta band activation was positively related to the self-referential effect in memorization.

Understanding brain processes is difficult to imagine without careful examination of data from different methodological approaches. Different techniques should complement each other, but in practice they may produce conflicting results. For example, fMRI and EEG display different aspects of brain activity, and there may be some discrepancies between hemodynamic and electrophysiologic signals.

The passive brain mode network (PBMN), or default mode network (DMN), was first introduced by Raichle (2015) and Raichle et al. (2001) based on evidence that there is a consistent pattern of deactivation of a network of brain regions that occurs during the onset of task-related activity (Raichle et al., 2001; Raichle & Snyder, 2007).

The DMN includes ventromedial prefrontal cortex, dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, lateral parietal cortex and posterior cingulate cortex along with adjacent parts of the precuneus. Often, the entorhinal cortex is also included in the DMN (Raichle, 2015). The more complex the task, the greater the deactivation (McKiernan et al., 2006; Singh & Fawcett, 2008). A notable exception to this general pattern of deactivation during goal-directed activity are tasks requiring

self-referential thinking and social cognition (Mitchell et al., 2006), suggesting that the DMN likely mediates active cognitive processes rather than being a passive brain mode network in which only inactivation is observed. Recent research suggests that these processes include first-person perspective taking (Greicius et al., 2003; Voegeley & Fink, 2003), task-independent thoughts (Binder et al., 1999; McKiernan et al., 2006), episodic memory (Greicius et al., 2003), social cognition and sense of agency processes (Decety & Sommerville, 2003), and the distinction between self and non-self thinking.

Rhythmic activity is a characteristic feature of the EEG. Five main frequency ranges are generally recognized: delta (.5–3.5 Hz), theta (4–7 Hz), alpha (8–12 Hz), beta (13–30 Hz) and gamma (> 30 Hz). However, there is a general lack of consistency among studies in maintaining a standard range of EEG bands. Studies sometimes distinguish narrower sub-bands as well. It has been suggested that oscillations may play a specific and very important role in the integration of brain functions (Başar, 2008; Cantero & Atienza, 2005; Fingelkurts & Fingelkurts, 2010).

Based on the considerations outlined, we formulated the purpose of the study, which was to search for the influence of personal reflection on the state of the central nervous system. A related study was the delineation of age boundaries confirmed by brain electro activity.

Personal reflection can be understood as a mental process that includes a person's attitude to himself, to others, to the surrounding world or to universal values in three temporal aspects: past, present and future. The hypothesis is that reflection has a certain effect on the electrical activity of the brain and it is more pronounced in adult subjects (over 22 years old) than in young subjects (under 22 years old).

Methods

Sample

A total of 141 participants took part in the study and 118 participants (mean age 22 ± 8 years) were

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the subject groups.

	Experimental group	Control group
'Young' group	<i>Group 1</i> 41 people (mean age 19 ± 1)	<i>Group 2</i> 31 people (mean age 20 ± 1)
	<i>Group 3</i> 22 people (mean age 32 ± 8)	<i>Group 4</i> 22 people (mean age 36 ± 7)

included in the final analysis. All of them participated on a voluntary basis with previously signed consent, and with prior approval by the Ethical Committee of the Russian Psychological Society, in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration.

The sample was divided into experimental and control groups. At the same time, two different-age subgroups were identified in each group, which could be conventionally labelled 'young' (subjects' age ≤ 22 years) and 'adult' (subjects' age ≥ 22 years) subjects. All four subgroups were labelled with numbers (Table 1).

The experimental procedure took place during a standard university class and took 1.5 hours. During this time, the experimental group performed the Imaginal and Reflective Resource Methodology (IRRM). The control group performed academic assignments. At the beginning and at the end of the session, both groups were recorded with closed and open eyes.

Conditions for organizing the reflection process. The IRRM (Sizikova, 2018) was used as a stimulus material to study the influence of personal reflection on brain electrical activity. This technique is projective and relies on the actualization of two layers of consciousness — the reflexive layer and the imaginal layer, which includes archetypal images of the collective unconscious and a wide layer of cultural heritage, knowledge and representations of the main forces of world creation, primary elements and spiritual images. The methodology is performed in writing. Work with the method includes an associative method and a guided reflection method. Free association is structured in reflection, and logical connections

covering a wide range are built up. The subject relates the associations to his/her personality, relationships, life and future prospects. Three types of reflection are actualized: retrospective (directed to the past), introspective (directed to the present) and prospective (directed to the future), in which the examinee needs to identify his or her resources and ways of resolving the difficulty. The conditions are set for three intensities (orientations) of reflection: on the 'I', on the 'Other' and on the surrounding world.

Experimental group subjects are asked to consider cards with pictures in which the artist has depicted archetypes. Then a sequence of tasks is carried out: (1) lay out the cards on which the pictures of archetypes of specific content are painted: fire, water, air, world, tree, earth, mountain, smell; (2) determine their sequence in the range of like-dislike; (3) write associations for each card; (4) then structure all associations on the basis of the proposed criteria (fundamental — not fundamental, dynamic — not dynamic, realistic — fantasy, resource rich — not resource rich, neutral).

After associative-analytical work, which is subsequently the material for reflection, the subjects perform a personal reflection in writing, in which they link blocks of associations with personal life events. Then, on the basis of the number of associations to each archetype card, the perception of this archetype, and the distribution of associations by blocks, the test subject writes a story — a recommendation to an imaginary friend (i.e., to himself, as if alienated), in which he answers the question: 'What should I do in my life to make it more interesting and successful?' — i.e., he decentralizes and conducts self-analysis from the position of 'Other'. Having completed the first part of the work, the examinee proceeds to the second part. He/she needs to present his/her associations to other cards, on which the artist has depicted archetypes of philosophical, existential content: life, love, spark of creativity, light, flow. After that, these associations are connected with each other by logical links and related to the subject's life at the present time, and it is determined how they are manifested in the values and beliefs of the individual. Upon completion of the

self-analysis work, the most resource-rich card from all the cards is chosen and the subject thinks for themselves about how this resource can be applied in their life. Thus, the logic of the methodology makes it possible to involve all the main aspects of personal reflection. The duration of the methodology is 1.5 hours.

EEG recording. The electroencephalogram (EEG) was recorded using the software and hardware complex 'BOSLAB — 14' (Novosibirsk) with monopolar electrode montage in the Pz lead. The ear electrode Pz site was chosen as the reference electrode because the characteristics of alpha activity in the parieto-occipital region are the most stable and reproducible in repeated measurements, as well as the least variable (Balioz & Krivoshechekov, 2012; Bazanova, 2011). EEG was recorded in the resting state with eyes closed (2 min) and in the eye-opening test (30 sec). To control eye movements, electromyogram (EMG) from the forehead muscles was recorded. Artifact-free EEG epochs were included in the analysis of the electroencephalographic data, which were subdivided into segments of 4 s duration and subjected to fast Fourier transform in the 3–20 Hz bandwidth using a Hahn window. The output data were analysed using a specialized program, Win EEG by Mitsar, St. Petersburg, compiled with the accepted standards of signal analysis and presented in the form of an EEG spectral power table with a step of 1 Hz.

To analyse electrophysiological characteristics, we used the values of total and relative power of the main EEG rhythms: theta rhythm (4–8 Hz), alpha rhythm (8–13 Hz), beta rhythm (13–20 Hz).

Data analysis. Comparative analysis was carried out using the Jamovi 2.4.1 program. The normality analysis showed that the sample distribution was normal, and therefore the parametric Student's test ($\alpha = .05$) was used to compare the experimental and control groups in terms of anxiety, reflection and electrophysiological indices within each subgroup. One-factor ANOVA analysis was used to compare electrophysiological indices between groups.

experienced a significant reduction in anxiety after reflection. These findings align with some literature while contradicting others. Self-referencing involves individuals reflecting on their attributes (D'Argembeau et al., 2007; Kim & Johnson, 2015; Knyazev, 2013; Knyazev et al., 2012; Krause et al., 2021; Levorsen et al., 2023; Meyer & Lieberman, 2018; Mu & Han, 2010; Salvador et al., 2020). Studies show that self-referencing activates the default mode network (DMN), which is engaged when individuals are not focused on external tasks. Increased theta power is linked to working memory tasks and emotional discrimination (Aftanas & Golocheikine, 2001). Research indicates a positive correlation between frontal theta synchronization and self-reference during personality trait retrieval (Mu & Han, 2010), suggesting connections between personality reflection, memory and emotional attitudes in our study.

Thus, in the above studies, the process of reflection was not investigated independently of other mental processes, in particular, memory and emotions.

Klimesch (1996) compared changes in theta band activity associated with words recalled or not recalled during retrieval and found that successfully retrieved words involved a greater degree of theta band synchronization during encoding. In this study, the aspect of memory that plays an important role in reflection, especially retrospective memory, is important to us.

Previous studies suggest that the frontal theta rhythm may be localized in the anterior cingulate or medial frontal cortex (Asada et al., 1999; Scheeringa et al., 2009); using simultaneously recorded EEG and fMRI, we observed significant negative correlations between medial frontal activity and theta oscillations at rest, suggesting that theta activity may be considered as an EEG index of DMN activity.

The modulation of theta band activity under the influence of a self-referencing task (that we refer to as reflection) observed in our study is consistent with literature data that have shown increased theta rhythm activation during self-judgements (Fossati et al., 2004).

Thus, a general decrease in the power of the theta rhythm may indicate a state associated with the DMN. However, an increase in the power in the upper range of the theta rhythm may indicate inclusion in the self-referral task. Thus, after the act of reflection is completed, a 'trace' remains in the EEG activity of the brain, corresponding to the indicators obtained by the researchers during the act of reflection, the reaction to the stimulus presented. In general, the influence of reflection on the nervous system is strongest in the upper range of the theta rhythm.

Alpha (and possibly beta) oscillations are positively related to DMN and spontaneous self-referential processes and negatively related to attention processes. Also, a decrease in the power of the alpha rhythm is observed during the processing of external information related to the self (Knyazev, 2013).

To study the processes related to reflection (self-reference), the upper alpha rhythm is of great interest, an increase in which is identified with internally directed attention and, consequently, self-referential information processing during judgement about oneself (Benedek et al., 2014; Klimesch, 1999; Klimesch et al., 2007).

Thus, attention as a self-directedness in personality was included in reflection.

Previous research indicates that the spectral power of the upper alpha band (10.5–13Hz) reflects whether attention is directed inward or outward (Doppelmayr et al., 2008; Klimesch, 2012). Specifically, when observing external objects, upper alpha power decreases — a phenomenon known as alpha suppression (Benedek et al., 2014; Klimesch, 2012; Ray & Cole, 1985). This suppression occurs during tasks requiring outward attention, such as sentence processing and social observation (Perry et al., 2011; Salvador et al., 2020). Conversely, upper alpha power increases with enhanced internal attention, as seen when subjects close their eyes to minimize external stimuli (Ray & Cole, 1985). Our results show a significant increase in lower alpha power, indicating a focus on external rather than internal reflection due to the written tasks and the subjects' awareness of being observed.

High-frequency activity (beta and gamma rhythms) is also linked to self-referential processes. A study by Mu and Han (2010) found that self-relevant stimuli elicited greater responses in the beta and gamma ranges compared to non-self-relevant ones. Klein et al. (2002) noted that self-referential processing involves correlating stimuli with self-related semantic knowledge. Herrmann et al. (2004) suggested that high-frequency oscillations mediate the comparison of memory content with stimulus-related information. Thus, the notable increase in beta rhythm during our reflection task relates to the attribution of archetypal images to oneself in the MIRR methodology.

Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that the process of reflection, or self-reference, which coincides with our understanding of reflection realized in the course of performing the MIRR technique, is represented by special brain mechanisms on the level of the central nervous system. This effect or these mechanisms are related to a decrease in power in the lower and middle bands of the theta rhythm and an increase in power in the upper band of the theta rhythm (7–8 Hz), as well as an increase in power in the lower alpha and beta bands. At the same time, the greatest expression of this trend is observed in older age. At younger ages, the main changes are characterized by an increase in the power of the alpha rhythm.

Due to the age specifics of reflection, we can hypothesize about its brighter influence at the age of 22 years and older, which is consistent with our earlier psychological studies of reflection (Sizikova & Durachenko, 2018a, 2018b). Those results were confirmed in the present electrophysiological study.

Summary conclusion

We have determined that Vygotsky's views are important for understanding the essence of reflection, along with its place and functions in

the psyche. We identified a stable 'core' of views that became the basis for other studies and a changeable 'shell' that gave rise to other studies. This allowed us to harmonize the terms whose semantic loading correspond to the meaning of the concept of reflection revealed by Vygotsky in cultural-historical psychology.

Significant for our study is the connection between reflection and mental functions. Our data show a decrease in lower and middle theta rhythm power and an increase in upper theta (7–8 Hz) and lower alpha and beta bands, indicating reflection linked to memory, creativity, perception and thinking. These findings support previous electrophysiological studies that localize reflection's influence in medial cortical structures, particularly the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC/BA 10). Self-referential processes are often associated with the default mode network (DMN), and our findings align with this. However, we employed the more complex IRRM technique, which activates the creative component of reflection, connecting our results to studies on creativity.

The data indicate that in our study the reflection process is characterized by a greater orientation to the external world. This can be explained both by the written form of task performance and by the fact that after the act of reflection, an inward turn, exteriorization, as an outward turn, takes place.

It can be assumed that the process of attribution of IRRM pictures and task performance was not associated by the subjects with their intellectual efforts. Apparently, the experimental task was not associated with significant cognitive resources but was more characterized by activation of the DMN. Thus, the use of the IRRM technique is likely to more strongly engage the network of passive brain activity associated with moments in life when one is relaxed and performing a cognitive task. We have termed this state 'tension free'. From this position, our work is a good complement to and extends previous findings.

Some scientists say that it is not worth identifying such complex integrated processes as

self-referential processes or DMN with specific brain oscillations, since different oscillations may be involved depending on the situational context and the type of self-referential processes (Knyazev, 2013). This conclusion can be made in the case of the study of individual aspects of reflection. The present study overcomes the highlighted limitation. The influence of full personal reflection, covering the majority of contexts distributed in the directions 'Self,' 'Other' and 'World' (relations to universal values and the world as such), was to be investigated. Thus, it

allowed us to identify clearer boundaries of the influence of reflection.

We confirmed our assumption about a stronger influence of reflection on the central nervous system in subjects after the age of 22.

Overall, our study confirmed the results available in other studies and brought new insights into the understanding of reflection by identifying its impact on the central nervous system. These results can be applied to the design of social practices, particularly psychotherapy, psychological counselling and the training process.

El concepto vygotskiano de la reflexión y un estudio de su influencia en la actividad electrofisiológica del cerebro

La reflexión consiste en dirigir todas las funciones mentales y de la personalidad hacia uno mismo. La reflexión bajo las condiciones actuales de la digitalización es necesaria para el desarrollo de una personalidad cultural. Las tecnologías de Internet están orientadas a construir una nueva realidad y es en esta realidad donde se crean las condiciones en las que el desarrollo de la reflexión es relevante, principalmente las condiciones personales, filosóficas y existenciales, que determinan el desarrollo cultural de la personalidad (Leonov et al., 2021; Suroedova et al., 2023).

El énfasis en el desarrollo de la reflexión ha suscitado interés en determinar su impacto en el estado del sistema nervioso central. La hipótesis de este estudio se basa en dos supuestos: el primero es que se da una actividad oscilatoria específica en el cerebro tras completar un proceso de reflexión; la segunda es que esa actividad depende de la edad. A modo de estímulo, utilizamos una técnica proyectiva denominada 'Metodología de recursos imaginarios-reflexivos' (IRRM, por sus siglas inglesas), desarrollada por los autores.

El ámbito de la 'reflexión', definido en los trabajos del fundador de la psicología histórico-cultural, nos permite correlacionarla con el ámbito del concepto 'autorreferencia', utilizado en la investigación psicofisiológica moderna. Por tanto, podemos determinar las intersecciones interculturales en los estudios sobre la actividad electrofisiológica durante y después del acto reflexivo.

Un resultado relacionado con este estudio es la determinación del límite de edad de los cambios cualitativos respecto a la influencia de la reflexión en los ritmos cerebrales.

Nuestros resultados contribuyen a la discusión científica de cuestiones psicofísicas.

La esencia de la reflexión y sus características psicológicas

El uso del término 'reflexión' es extremadamente escaso en los trabajos de Vygotski. Sin embargo,

el autor prestó atención y reconoció la existencia de reflexión en la psique; es más, identificó la reflexión y su función en el desarrollo de los procesos mentales y de la personalidad.

Por ejemplo, en su análisis de las opiniones de Spranger, Vygotski (1984) señaló las posibles atribuciones al desarrollo de la reflexión. Vygotski (1984) respalda la posición de Buzeman en el sentido de que la autoconciencia no es algo inicial, sino una formación secundaria que surge de la interacción con el entorno social, y critica a ese autor por tratar de formar una perspectiva biosocial de la reflexión.

Vygotski (1999) defendió que la función de la reflexión es permitir que la persona sea 'sensible a la contradicción, capaz de controlar su irritación y de sintetizar los juicios de forma lógica; de poseer la capacidad de deducción' (p. 206).

La confirmación de la estrecha conexión entre el pensamiento lógico y la reflexión llevó a Vygotski a concluir que, inicialmente, el desarrollo de la reflexión orienta el desarrollo del pensamiento lógico y, después, el desarrollo del pensamiento lógico dirige el desarrollo de la reflexión. El punto de inflexión en este cambio en la relación entre reflexión y pensamiento ocurre durante la adolescencia.

Sin perder su esencia, podemos formular brevemente la definición de reflexión ofrecida por Vygotski en su análisis de las ideas de Buseman y Piaget. Según este autor, la reflexión es un reflejo de los procesos mentales y personales en la conciencia o autoconciencia, como la transferencia de la conciencia social a la conciencia individual. Esta interpretación suscitó muchas preguntas sobre la idea de reflexión, como evidencia su estudio de ya casi un siglo de duración.

Los estudios experimentales modernos tienen una concepción más detallada de la reflexión y establecen nuevos vínculos entre reflexión y situación social; en particular, definen de manera más exhaustiva el papel del 'Otro' en la percepción y en la construcción de la propia imagen;

Así pues, los estudios sobre la ontogénesis de la reflexión determinan el límite inferior de las primeras manifestaciones reflexivas a una edad media de dos semanas, más pronunciadas a partir de los dos meses. Estos estudios confirman que su desarrollo requiere el desarrollo de la percepción, principalmente visual, así como de la memoria, el pensamiento, el movimiento y la presencia del 'Otro'.

El límite superior, que aumenta desde la adolescencia, fue definido por Vygotski hasta la finalización de la adolescencia. Está relacionado con la introducción de más tipos distintos de funciones en los límites psicológicos de la reflexión:

- primero, con el desarrollo del pensamiento sistemático.
- segundo, con la calidad de las interacciones creadas con el 'Otro', no solo de reconocer sino de coordinar los intereses de las partes en las relaciones y acciones mutuas,
- y tercero, con la necesidad no solo de adaptación y autorregulación, sino también de auto organización en las condiciones cambiantes de mayor certidumbre y estabilidad a mayor incertidumbre y dinamismo, causadas por el movimiento acelerado de información con la ayuda de las tecnologías de Internet.

La definición de los límites superior e inferior del desarrollo de la reflexión no niega la perspectiva vygotskiana de la reflexión como una formación nueva durante la adolescencia.

En nuestra investigación basada en el 'Cuestionario sobre el enfoque de la reflexión' (Sizikova, 2018), demostramos que, independientemente de la edad en la que se observan diversas manifestaciones reflexivas, su desarrollo solo alcanza su nivel cultural completo a partir de 22 años (Sizikova & Durachenko, 2018a, 2018b). A diferencia de nuestros estudios, Karpov (2003) considera que el límite de edad para los cambios cualitativos en el desarrollo completo de la reflexión es a los 18 años, mientras que Leontiev y Osin (2014) lo establecen en los 23 años. Estas

conclusiones se basan en diagnósticos psicológicos utilizando métodos desarrollados por estos psicólogos. En este estudio confirmamos el límite psicológico a los 22 años mediante diagnóstico de parámetros electrofisiológicos.

Estudio electrofisiológico de la reflexión

Una vez determinadas la esencia, las condiciones y dinámicas etarias de la reflexión a partir de los trabajos de Vygotski y de la investigación contemporánea, formulamos un supuesto sobre la influencia de la reflexión en el estado del sistema nervioso central. En neurociencia, el término autorreferencia es el utilizado con mayor frecuencia para denotar la reflexión. Este es un ejemplo de cómo en distintas ciencias nos encontramos con distintos términos y conceptos, correlacionados entre ellos por pertenecer a un significado del fenómeno, en el caso de la reflexión, por constituir una referencia hacia uno mismo, a las funciones mentales y la personalidad. Autorreferencia es una referencia hacia la propia personalidad que se corresponde con la reflexión personal.

Estudios sobre la reflexión mediante el EEG

Existen al menos dos enfoques en la investigación de las correlaciones del EEG con el procesamiento autorreferencial (Knyazev, 2013). El primer enfoque es que, puesto que es posible registrar simultáneamente un EEG y una imagen por resonancia magnética funcional (fMRI, por sus siglas inglesas), es posible determinar el grado de solapamiento entre las dos señales en las regiones del cerebro relacionadas con el procesamiento autorreferencial. Un segundo enfoque, más directo, es el estudio directo de las correlaciones del EEG con el procesamiento autorreferencial.

La distinción entre información autorreferencial e información en referencia al 'Otro' está relacionada principalmente con el componente P300 del potencial evocado, pero en ocasiones se manifiesta antes (Knyazev, 2013). En el ámbito de las frecuencias, se ha demostrado que distintas oscilaciones frecuenciales influyen en el procesamiento

atención dirigida internamente y, en consecuencia, el procesamiento de información autorreferencial durante el juicio sobre uno mismo (Benedek et al., 2014; Klimesch, 1999; Klimesch et al., 2007).

Por tanto, la atención en tanto que autodirección en la personalidad fue incluida en la reflexión.

Indicaciones previas indican que la potencia espectral de la banda alfa superior (10.5–13 Hz) refleja si la atención está dirigida hacia el interior o el exterior (Doppelmayr et al., 2008; Klimesch, 2012). En particular, al observar objetos externos, disminuye la potencia de banda alfa superior, un fenómeno denominado supresión alfa (Benedek et al., 2014; Klimesch, 2012; Ray & Cole, 1985). Esta supresión ocurre durante las tareas que requieren atención hacia el exterior, como el procesamiento de frases o la observación social (Perry et al., 2011; Salvador et al., 2020). Y al contrario, la potencia superior alfa incrementa con un mayor nivel de atención interna, como se observa cuando los participantes cierran los ojos para minimizar los estímulos externos (Ray & Cole, 1985). Nuestros resultados revelan un incremento significativo en la potencia alfa inferior, indicando un enfoque en la reflexión externa en lugar de interna, debido a las tareas escritas y al conocimiento de los participantes de estar siendo observados.

La actividad de alta frecuencia (ritmos beta y gamma) también está vinculada a los procesos autorreferenciales. En el estudio realizado por Mu y Han (2010), los autores observaron que los estímulos relevantes para el yo suscitaban mayor respuesta en los rangos beta y gamma que los no relevantes para el yo. Klein et al. (2002) observaron que el procesamiento autorreferencial implica la correlación de estímulos con el conocimiento semántico relacionado con el yo. Herrmann et al. (2004) sugirieron que las oscilaciones de alta frecuencia mediaban la comparación del contenido de la memoria con información relacionada con el estímulo. Por tanto, el incremento notable en el ritmo beta durante nuestra tarea de reflexión está relacionado con la atribución de imágenes arquetípicas a sí mismo en la metodología MIRR.

Conclusión

Así pues, podemos concluir que el proceso de reflexión, o autorreferencia, que coincide con nuestra interpretación de la reflexión realizada durante la aplicación de la técnica MIRR, está representado por mecanismos cerebrales específicos a nivel del sistema nervioso central. Este efecto o estos mecanismos están relacionados con un descenso de potencia en las bandas inferior y media del ritmo theta y con un incremento en la banda superior del ritmo theta (7–8 Hz), así como con un incremento en la potencia en las bandas alfa inferior y beta. Al mismo tiempo, la mayor expresión de esta tendencia se observa en los participantes de más edad. Con los más jóvenes, los cambios principales se caracterizan por un incremento en la potencia del ritmo alfa.

Debido a la especificidad etaria de la reflexión, podemos hipotetizar sobre su mayor influencia a partir de los 22 años y en adelante, lo que es coherente con nuestros estudios psicológicos anteriores sobre la reflexión (Sizikova & Durachenko, 2018a, 2018b). Estos resultados se ven corroborados en el presente estudio electrofisiológico.

Resumen final

Hemos determinado que las opiniones de Vygotski son importantes para comprender la esencia de la reflexión, así como su lugar y funciones en la psique. Hemos identificado un ‘núcleo’ estable de opiniones que forman las bases de otros estudios y una carcasa intercambiable que dio pie a otros estudios. Esto nos permitió armonizar los términos cuya carga semántica corresponde al significado del concepto de reflexión revelado por Vygotski en la psicología histórico-cultural.

Un elemento significativo de nuestro estudio es la conexión entre reflexión y funciones mentales. Nuestros datos revelan un descenso en el ritmo theta inferior y medio y un incremento en las bandas theta superior (7–8 Hz), alfa inferior y beta, lo que apunta al vínculo entre memoria, creatividad, percepción y pensamiento. Estos resultados corroboran los de

