



The Inexhaustible Experience of the Inner Voice: An Answer to Marioka (2023), Fadeev (2023) and Machková (2023)

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Accepted: 14 May 2023 / Published online: 18 May 2023

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Abstract

This article reflects on the analyzes and comments of Marioka (2023), Fadeev (2023) and Machková (2023) on the book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech* (Fossa, 2022a). First, I focus on responding and expanding the ideas presented by the authors, to later integrate the elements highlighted by them. By integrating the reflections and comments of the authors, it is evident that in inner speech there is an intersection between two continua. On the one hand, the control-lack of control continuum and, on the other hand, the diffuse-clear continuum. The level of clarity and control varies permanently during each act of internal speech, accounting for a phenomenon that advances from infinite interiority to infinite exteriority, and vice versa. This complex interaction of two continua – based on the level of control and the level of sharpness – defies empirical applications and demands methodological innovation in research centers interested in the Inexhaustible Experience of the Inner Voice.

Keywords Inner Speech · Semiotics · Dialogical Approach · Inner forms of word

Introduction

The study of inner speech has been growing in the last decade. Although the phenomenon of inner language constitutes a matter of concern in different periods of the history of philosophy, it is from the work of Lev Vygotsky, in his famous text *Thought and Language*, that the study of inner speech becomes a phenomenon of concern in psychology.

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Although since Vygotsky's conceptualization (1987) inner speech comprises an internalization of egocentric language, its main function being problem solving, contemporary authors have explored new dimensions and functions of inner language. Because of this, the study of inner speech has captivated the attention of philosophers, anthropologists, developmental psychologists, cognitive scientists, educators, cultural psychologists, and neuroscientists, constituting today an interdisciplinary field of research (Fossa, 2022a, b).

The book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech* (Fossa, 2022a) recently published by Springer constitutes an effort to summarize, perhaps in a general way, the theoretical and methodological advances involved in the study of inner speech today. Recently, the Integrative Psychological & Behavioral Sciences (IPBS) journal has published three comments/analyses on the book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech*. These comments correspond to *Free association and Inner Speech: On the internal form of words* (Marioka, 2023), *Semiotic approach to New Perspectives on Inner Speech* (Fadeev, 2023) and *Enacting Inner Speech on the academic stage* (Machková, 2023). In this article I will try to respond to the works of Marioka (2023), Fadeev (2023) and Machková (2023).

Inner Speech and the Psychology of the Depths: A Response to Marioka (2023)

Marioka (2023) does very well in linking the phenomenon of inner speech to psychoanalytic theory. His intuition is spot on, for at least two obvious reasons. In the first place, Vygotsky (1997) in his work on *The Problem of Consciousness* (1997) refers that his psychology constitutes a psychology of heights. A possible interpretation for this Vygotskian idea is that, by using the concept of psychology of the surface, he is differentiating his psychology from the psychology of depths, typical of psychoanalysis. On the other hand, a second possible link between the phenomenon of inner speech and psychoanalysis corresponds to the fact that when we talk about inner speech, we are talking about the inner psychic life that touches the deepest dimensions of subjectivity.

As Marioka (2023) proposes, the subject of inner speech is a phenomenon as fascinating as it is complex. This is because exploring the phenomenon of inner speech opens the door to understand the complex framework that exists in the constitution and development of the self. Talking about internal speech is talking about what it is and how the human experience is lived in the privacy of psychic life, which, from Marioka's (2023) perspective, makes it methodologically challenging.

When we say that the study of inner speech is related to the psychology of the depths, I mean that inner speech is related to the construction of meaning from one's own experience. Although Freud and Vygotsky come from different epistemological traditions, a good dialogue between unconscious mental representations (thing-representations) towards conscious verbal signs (inner word) can be seen in the work of Suárez-Delucchi and Fossa-Arcila (2020).

In his text, Marioka (2023) talks about the concept of "the internal form of the word". This is really interesting, since, without citing it in his paper, he alludes to

the notion of “internal form of the symbol” that has been widely used by Heinz Werner. Following Werner’s idea (see Werner 1955, 1956; Werner & Kaplan, 1963) and worked on by Marioka (2023) in his commentary on the book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech*, each symbol has its internal and external dimension. That is, the internal and external form of language, in the sense of Marioka (2023). From Vygotsky’s (1987) perspective, the internal form of language is more charged with meaning, while the external form of language is closer to socially communicative and socially agreed language. Here the famous Vygotskian idea becomes relevant with respect to the fact that internal language has a tendency to abbreviation and condensation; that is, fewer words are required, or even a single concept, to refer to a great idea. While, on the other hand, in the external form of language, a set of syntactically organized phrases and sentences is required to convey the same idea or thought (Vygotsky, 1987).

It is not without interest that Marioka (2023) has used the notion of *internal form of words*, since the language in the internal space is of a different psychological nature. As Marioka (2023) proposes, the internal space of the mind is full of personal meaning, unlike the external space of the mind. The external form of the word –speech– is closer to the meaning in the Vygotskian notion, while the internal form of the word is closer to the sense in the Vygotskian notion. The meaning –speech– is more related to the meaning of the socially agreed word, while the sense –internal speech– is loaded with subjectivity, history and culture.

At this point, it is important to reflect on what is internal and what is external. Recent works have proposed expressive forms of internal speech, not only at the verbal level but also at the physiognomic level (Fossa, 2017, 2019; Fossa et al., 2018, among others), alluding to physiognomic-organismic manifestations of inner speech, which that would allow us to think of a notion of *embodied inner speech*. This means that the forms of inner experience find expression in corporeality, breaking the external/internal dichotomy and positioning the experience of internal language as a complex experiential totality.

On the other hand, Marioka (2023) succeeds in establishing a clear relationship between the pre-reflexive dimension of inner speech with pre-verbal forms of inner language (dreams, images, fantasies). In a broad understanding of inner language (see Fossa 2017) it is possible to think of language not only as text, but as a (self) communicative tool through symbols. As Marioka (2023) mentions, in clinical work the subject is taken to that area –felt sense– to build from there a new content in inner speech. The pre-verbal and pre-reflexive zones of inner speech allude to the first stages of Vygotsky’s analysis of the phenomenon: a diffuse, sensitive, imaginary, non-verbal experience and charged with affectivity.

In this sense, free association in psychoanalysis can be seen as a method that allows the exploration and analysis of the unconscious, mediated by the work of inner speech (Marioka, 2023). In the same way, inner speech can be understood as an expression of the deepest dimensions of subjectivity (Vygotsky, 1987) or as a formation of the unconscious (Suárez-Delucchi & Fossa-Arcila, 2020).

As Marioka (2023) emphasizes, inner speech is also directly linked to the internalization and externalization process. Following a mainly Vygotskian approach, inner speech constitutes the internalization of the child’s egocentric language. While, on

the other hand, inner forms of language require translation into multiple phrases and sentences in order to be expressed as an external form of language. inner speech is mediated by the process of internalizing/externalizing at all times of micro and ontogenetic development. Along with this, the evident (auto)regulatory function of inner speech shows that the phenomenon constitutes an affectively guided space of intimacy. The internalization process that makes it possible to populate inner speech with internalized “voices” and the self-regulation function that emerges from some of these internal voices over other voices, accounts for the dialogic nature of the phenomenon of internal speech, as described by Machková (2023).

Dialogical Approach to Inner Speech: A Response to Machková (2023)

Machková (2023) does an excellent exercise by reviewing the recent book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech* (Fossa, 2022a). What the author does is build a definition of inner speech before and after reading the book. The definition of it varies greatly in complexity.

Machková (2023) looks up a definition of inner speech in the dictionary, resulting in: “the silent expression of conscious thought to oneself in a coherent linguistic form” (Machková, 2023, p. 5). On the other hand, after reviewing *New Perspectives on Inner Speech*, Machková (2023) builds the following definition: “the embodied emergence of felt knowledge within one’s dialogical being-in-the-world in a form of sensorial imagery” (Machková, 2023, p. 6). This new definition built, after reviewing the book, accounts for an increase in complexity and different variables involved in the phenomenon. The notion of embodied emergence accounts for the physiognomic-organismic nature of inner speech (Fossa, 2017; Fossa et al., 2022). Although the phenomenon of inner speech has been widely described as a psychological problem-solving function, it is one of the more superficial functions of the phenomenon.

Vygotsky (1987) in his famous text, *Thought and Language*, describes the micro-genetic path of inner speech, from a diffuse, hybrid and pre-reflexive area to the mediation of thought in words, similar to the words of social-communicative language, with voluntary cognitive control. When Machková (2023) refers to inner speech as embodied emergence, she is alluding to its bodily, sensitive nature, to the most primitive dimension of the inner forms of language.

On the other hand, the definition constructed by Machková (2023) includes the notion of *felt knowledge*. This is not without interest, since it alludes to a self-appearance of consciousness, which constitutes a form of (self) knowledge of one’s own subjectivity full of personal meaning. Therefore, in addition to the physiognomic-embodied nature of inner speech, it implies an affective nature. That is, a form of language for itself, affectively guided (See Fossa, 2020). Finally, Machková (2023) includes in her definition the dialogical nature of inner speech.

Following this point, Machková (2023) identifies conceptual dichotomies in all the chapters of the book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech*. An interesting and fine observation to investigate how the phenomenon of inner speech is full of dialogicity. What the author wants to show with this is the dialogical, multidimensional and mul-

tilevel character of inner speech. That is, more controlled forms and less controlled forms of inner speech; a voluntary inner speech and an involuntary inner speech; an inner speech with cognitive control and a self-contemplating form of inner speech; a passive inner speech and an active inner speech. In this sense, Machková (2023) shows expressive polar forms of inner language that maintain a dialogical relationship with each other.

Specifically related to the dialogical nature of inner speech, Machková (2023) makes an excellent commentary and analysis of the book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech* (Fossa, 2022a, b), alluding to her own inner speech during the commentary writing process, as a performative act. This is an experience of dialogicity between the text in production and her own inner voice during that process. What Machková (2023) does is account for a dialogical process between the text and her own reflections, a phenomenon that also occurs only in the private space, between different voices of our inner speech.

However, this exercise presents a difficulty. Vygotsky (1987) emphasizes that the externalization of the inner speech, and even more, the externalization of the inner speech towards the written language presents some particular characteristics. The movement from inner speech to external speech is not static. It is not an intact expression of the internal language in external language. It is not a linear, automatic movement, as if what is inside at one moment can later be outside, lacking any transformation. On the contrary, for Vygotsky (1987), the externalization of the internal language is always a transformative process. That is, a translation of the internal language into external language. Remembering the Vygotskian approaches regarding the syntactic and semantic characteristics of inner speech, it is possible to understand that what we can observe as external language is only a translation of internal language. Therefore, it is important to consider at this point in Machková's (2023) analysis and commentary, that the translation of inner speech into the external world (externalization), and especially into written language, loses much of its complexity as a psychological phenomenon.

Finally, I consider Machková's (2023) correct observation that inner speech has become more complex as a result of the integration of other traditions outside of psychology, such as phenomenology, as well as the methodological innovation that research designs require to explore the phenomenon, called in the words of Machková (2023), the inner partner.

Semiotic Approach to Inner Speech: A Response to Fadeev (2023)

Fadeev (2023), on the other hand, makes an excellent analysis of *New Perspectives on Inner Speech* (Fossa, 2022a) focusing his commentary on the question of why and how inner speech is cultural. Fadeev (2023) is correct in stating that inner speech is a psychological and cultural process simultaneously. This idea is based, once again, on the Vygotskian approach to internalization. Inner speech as an internalized external language carries all the cultural elements included in the social-communicative language. On the other hand, since meaning is the indivisible unit of analysis between thought and language, it accounts for the psychological-cultural integration of the

phenomenon. From Vygotsky's (1987) perspective, meaning is thought because it is related to sense, to everything that is stirred in consciousness in front of the word; while, on the other hand, meaning is language, since it is directly related to the socially and culturally constituted word.

Fadeev (2023) also identifies different dimensions in inner speech. One is that inner speech varies in level of awareness and cognitive control. In other words, there would be more conscious forms of inner speech than others, and there would also be more or less cognitive control in internal speech at different moments of the microgenetic development of inner language. This is relevant since the idea of Fadeev (2023) could be related to the *mind wandering* phenomenon. According to Fossa, Gonzalez & Cordero di Montezemolo (2019), *mind wandering* constitutes a form of inner language with specific characteristics: spontaneous, uncontrolled and involuntary. This seems relevant since it establishes a continuum of cognitive control in the phenomenon of inner speech. In other words, an internal dialogue that advances from more controlled areas to more uncontrolled and spontaneous areas.

On the other hand, Fadeev (2023) takes up another dimension of inner speech highlighted in the work of Vygotsky (1987): a continuum between linguistically well-formed inner speech and diffuse and condensed inner speech. In this sense, Fadeev (2023) establishes a cross between two continua typical of inner language. A continuum based on the level of control and another on the clarity/sharpness of the inner language.

From Fadeev's (2023) perspective, internalization as a constructive process of inner language is at the base of the dialogic dimension of inner speech. That is, as the internalization of language reflects various aspects of social communicative language, in the constitution of inner speech the same voices of external language are experienced.

Finally, Fadeev (2023) is also right about the need to innovate methodologically in order to explore the multidimensional nature of inner speech. This is because inner speech is the study of the role of language and, consequently, of culture, in psychological and cognitive processes.

Conclusion

In this article I have analyzed and responded to the comments made by Marioka (2023), Fadeev (2023) and Machková (2023) to the book *New Perspectives on Inner Speech*. In these comments there are important linking points that emerge from the fine analysis carried out by the authors. In these works, inner speech, being an embodied emergence (Machková, 2023), is directly related to the dimension of meaning proposed by Marioka (2023) and therefore is bodily experienced (Fossa, 2017, 2019).

On the other hand, the internal language continua proposed in these articles; namely, control (more controlled and less controlled) and sharpness (sharper and less sharp) (Fadeev, 2023), is related to Marioka's (2023) statements on free association (associated with lack of control of thought and involuntary language) and the felt sense (associated with an affective experience, pre-verbal and with a low level of sharpness).

It has been shown how Fadeev (2023) relates internalization to the polyphony of voices in the internal language, as highlighted by Machková (2023) in her analysis based on a dialogical (en)acting perspective, both realizing that inner speech is a dialogical phenomenon, based on the interaction of the different I-positions. Finally, Fadeev (2023), Marioka (2023) and Machková (2023) agree on the importance of methodological innovation for the study of internal speech.

In summary, the 3 authors agree, although in different ways and through various conceptualizations, in the intersection of two continua during the phenomenon of inner speech. That is, the continuum of control - lack of control and the continuum of the diffuse - clear. This is relevant since it seems that there are different layers or zones in inner speech, which not only have to do with the formulation of thought and its mediation in language, as Vygotsky (1987) proposed, but also with the level of condensation or sharpness and the level of cognitive control that is displayed at all times and in each act of inner speech. This connects with the notion of infinite interiority and infinite exteriority of the psychological experience developed by Valsiner (2014). All the above makes these 3 authors and many others think about the complexity of the methodological applications of internal speech, giving an account of the inexhaustible experience of the Inner Voice.

Author Contribution PF wrote all manuscript text and reviewed the whole manuscript.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest This article does not present a conflict of interest.

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