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MAŁGORZATA PUCHALSKA-WASYL
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF INNER DIALOGUES

The question of dialogicality is present in psychology since the beginning of the twentieth century thanks to Mead and Vygotsky. However, what has recently made it more popular is Hermans's conception of the dialogical self stemming from Bakhtin's metaphor of the polyphonic novel. The dialogical self theory provides a convenient background for empirical analyses of inner dialogues. The paper is focused on the above mentioned phenomenon. By means of an experimental procedure 125 internal dialogues were collected. All of them were grouped on the basis of 5 different criteria and compared for their psychological functions. Seven metafunctions were distinguished, namely: Support, Substitution, Exploration, Bond, Self-improvement, Insight and Self-guidance.

Key words: dialogical self, inner dialogue, imaginary interlocutor, imaginary figure

G. H. Mead (1934) and L. S. Vygotsky (1962, 1999) are recognized as the precursors of dialogicality in psychology. Functions of internal dialogues were also appreciated by C. G. Jung (1961) and representatives of Gestalt theory. Recently, Hermans has contributed to the growth of interest in the phenomenon. His conception of the dialogical self was based on Bakhtin's metaphor of the polyphonic novel.

The concept of the polyphonic novel was proposed by M. Bakhtin in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929/1973). He draws on the idea that in Dostoevsky's novels there is not a single author at work – Dostoevsky himself – but several authors or thinkers that is, characters such as Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov and the Grand Inquisitor. These characters are not treated as obedient slaves in the service of one author-thinker, Dostoevsky, but are put forward as independent thinkers, each with their own view of the world. Each hero

Please send correspondence to Małgorzata Puchalska-Wasyl, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Department of Personality Psychology, Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland. E-mail: wasyl@kul.lublin.pl

is perceived as the author of his own ideology, and not as an object of Dostoevsky's finalizing artistic vision. Bakhtin is of the opinion that there is not a multitude of characters within a unified objective world illuminated by Dostoevsky's individual vision, but a plurality of perspectives and worlds: a polyphony of voices. As in a polyphonic composition, the several voices or instruments have different spatial positions and accompany and oppose each other in a dialogical relation (see Hermans, 1996a, 2003, 2004; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001; Hermans, et al., 1992).

According to Bakhtin (1973), the notion of dialogue opens up the possibility of differentiating the inner world of one and the same individual in the form of an interpersonal relationship. When an 'inner' thought of a particular character is transformed into an utterance, dialogical relations spontaneously occur between this utterance and the utterance of imagined others. In Dostoyevky's novel *The Double* (1962), for example, the second hero (the double) was introduced as a personification of the interior thought of the first hero (Golyadkin). By externalizing an inner voice of the first hero in a spatially-separated opponent, a fully-fledged dialogue between two relatively independent parties is created. For the author, the externalization of internal thought seems to be a fundamental condition under which the creation of an authentic dialogue is possible. Dostoyevsky, and consequently Bakhtin, assumes that spatiality is an intrinsic feature of dialogue. There is no dialogue without a spatial opposition, because at least two independent points of view are necessary for a genuine dialogue (see Hermans, 2001, 2003; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001).

Bakhtin's (1973) conception of dialogue can only be understood if the difference between logical and dialogical relationships is taken into account. For Bakhtin the relations of agreement and disagreement, like question and answer, are basic dialogical forms. He is of the opinion that dialogical relationships totally differ from logical ones and that is why they cannot be reduced to logical ones. Logical relationships are 'closed' because they do not permit any conclusion beyond the limits of the rules that govern the relation. They can be also described as impersonal and decontextualized because they lead to a result irrespective of the personal stance of the individual who is involved in logical reasoning. In contrast, dialogue can be conceived as an open process because a thought is always polemically coloured, filled with opposing forces and open to inspiration from outside itself. Moreover, an utterance is never isolated from the consciousness of a spatially-separated interlocutor and, additionally, every utterance is always – implicitly or explicitly – responding to an utterance of another person. That is why the context of the dialogical relationships is highly personalized (see Hermans, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2000; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001; Hermans & Kempen, 1993, 1995; Hermans, et al., 1992).

Drawing inspiration from James's theory and Bakhtin's metaphor of the polyphonic novel, Hermans conceptualized the self as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I*-positions in an imaginary landscape. The *I* has the possibility to move,

as in a space, from one position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time. The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The *I* has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that each of them has a story to tell about its own experiences from its own stance. In that sense, each position is like the author of its own story. Moreover, the voices function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a dialogical process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement (Hermans, 2003, 2004; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995; Hermans, et al., 1992). These imaginary interactions between positions are called inner or imaginary dialogues (in a broad sense). Within the confines of the current study we use the concept 'dialogue' in the narrow sense. This means that internal dialogues are understood as a subgroup of dialogical processes (inner dialogues in the broad sense), where at least two *I*-positions are not only active but voiced.

The dialogical self theory was an inspiration for empirical investigation. It was based on two questions:

1. Can we distinguish some kinds of functions fulfilled by imaginary dialogues?
2. Is there any relation between types of inner dialogues and specific functions fulfilled by them?

Method

Subjects

The study was performed on a group of 63 people having inner dialogues (31 F and 32 M). They were between the ages of 19 and 32 (M = 23.11; SD = 2.67). Of the participants 53 were university students and 10 were graduates. As far as we know, they were not familiar with the dialogical self theory. During the research project each person conducted 2 internal dialogues.

Measures

Two methods were constructed by M. Puchalska-Wasyl (2005a, 2005b, 2006) and administered in the study:

The Initial Questionnaire. The Initial Questionnaire is used to determine whether the subject has imaginary dialogues and who the interlocutors of these inner dialogues are. The method includes the list of potential figures. The participants can choose some of them and can also add their own interlocutors.

The figures included in the list are divided into internal and external ones. This distinction corresponds with Hermans's differentiation between internal and external *I*-positions (Hermans, 2001, 2003, 2004; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001). However, the term '*I*-position' was replaced with the more colloquial term 'figure' to make easier the understanding of the questionnaire and thereby to facilitate the process of identification of imaginary interlocutors. Consequently, in-

ternal figures are felt to be a part of oneself. I am able to distinguish them, because each of them has its own particular point of view (e.g., 'I as a daughter', 'I as an optimist', 'I as a pessimist'). External figures are felt as a part of the environment. Generally, they are replicas of people and objects in the surroundings (e.g., 'my mother', 'my father', 'my friend'); however, that type of figure can be also the equivalent of somebody who hypothetically could but does not exist (e.g., purely imaginary friends in dreams and fantasies with whom the person communicates as if they were really present) (Caughey, 1984).

The Initial Questionnaire has no general score. The purpose of this method is to induce the subject's reflection on internal dialogical activity and determine which *I*-positions are the respondent's interlocutors involved in an imaginary discussion. At the same time the Initial Questionnaire is a starting point for the other instrument exploring the phenomenon of inner dialogues, namely, the D-M-P Questionnaire.

The Dialogue-Monologue-Perspective Questionnaire (D-M-P). The D-M-P Questionnaire is used to determine functions fulfilled by imaginary figures. The method includes a list of 24 functions related to internal dialogical activity. These functions were established by means of rational analysis and were formulated in colloquial language, e.g. (dialogue with X) … gives me a certainty of being understood; … is a form of seeking some new experiences; …is the only way of telling the other person what I really think, … is a form of preparation for new types of situations.

Focusing on their own imaginary interlocutors (reported in the Initial Questionnaire), one by one, the respondent is to choose all the functions fulfilled by the inner dialogues with the figure. The person is also asked to add functions missing from the list.

Additionally, an *experimental procedure* was conducted in order to capture imaginary conversations in their natural progress and to grasp meanings constructed by a person with references to those dialogues.

The first instruction for a subject was as follows: 'I would like you to think about a question that is important, difficult, problematic for you. It can be a problem that has recently arisen and which currently absorbs you. It can be also a problem coming from the distant past; however, it bothers you still and you would like to talk about it or listen to something concerning this difficult question... Now, if you find the problem, try to conduct an imaginary dialogue on this topic. You can choose any interlocutor. If you want to have the dialogue aloud, it can be recorded. You can also write it down. In that situation you should conduct the conversation and write it down simultaneously. You do not have to worry about the form of the dialogue. The most important thing is to follow one's own thoughts and not to modify statements that spontaneously arise during the dialogue.'

The second dialogue was obtained in response to the instruction: 'Conduct another imaginary dialogue on any topic.'

Table 1. Affect terms used in the Self-Confrontation Method

1. Joy	7. Shame	13. Guilt	19. Safety
2. Powerlessness	8. Enjoyment	14. Self-Confidence	20. Anger
3. Self-Esteem	9. Care	15. Loneliness	21. Pride
4. Anxiety	10. Love	16. Trust	22. Energy
5. Satisfaction	11. Self-Alienation	17. Inferiority	23. Inner calm
6. Strength	12. Tenderness	18. Intimacy	24. Freedom

The procedure can be treated as a slight modification of the Self-Confrontation Method by Hermans, because it draws on the list of 24 affects coming from the aforesaid method (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995). The list is presented in Table 1.

After the dialogue the person was asked to answer the question: 'How do you feel after the imaginary conversation?' To describe his/her own emotional climate the respondent was to estimate the intensity of 24 affects using a 0-5 scale (0 – not at all; 1 – a little bit; 2 – to some extent; 3 – quite a lot; 4 – much; 5 – very much). In the next step the participant was to read or listen to his/her own recorded dialogue. If it was too long, the person shortened it to 8-10 replicas, paying attention to preserving the essential meaning of the dialogue. Then, focusing on the replicas, one by one, the subject estimated the degree to which each of the 24 affects described each replica. Statements of the participant were to be evaluated from his/her own point of view, whereas interlocutor's responses were assessed from the angle of feelings of the imaginary figure. Finally, the person was asked to determine the functions fulfilled by his/her imaginary dialogue. Using the list of 24 functions, derived from the D-M-P Questionnaire, the subject was to choose all the functions related to his/her inner dialogue. The subject could also add functions missing from the list.

Results

The first research question was focused on possibilities to determine functions fulfilled by internal dialogues. The 24 functions included in the D-M-P Questionnaire were established by means of rational analysis. However, one could wonder if particular functions might be grouped into a few clusters. Thus, hierarchical cluster analysis of the functions for all the figures (N = 649) was performed and 7 metafunctions were differentiated. They were analyzed on the basis of their content to establish their psychological sense and names. They are as follows:

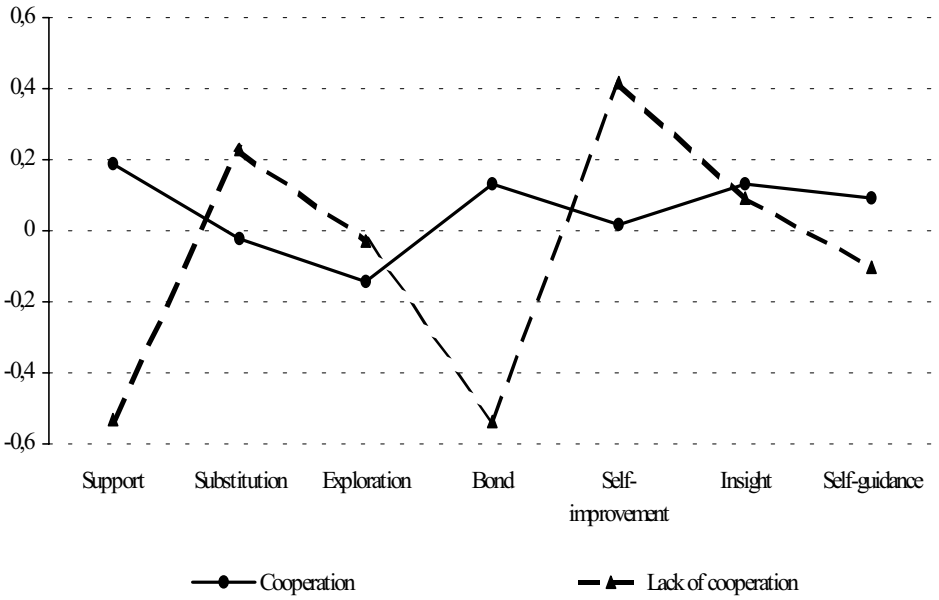
- Support – a source of hope and feelings of safety; a way to give a sense to life.
- Substitution – a substitute for a contact that is impossible in real life; the only method of expression of one's own real thoughts; a form of seeking arguments to convince somebody.
- Exploration – an escape from ordinary life; an attempt at seeking some new experiences, e.g., by the imaginary performance of a forbidden act.

Table 2. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 1: Is there any cooperation between a subject and an imaginary interlocutor to solve the discussed problem?)

Metafunction	Dialogues characterized by				t-Student		
	cooperation (n = 78)		lack of cooperation (n = 32)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p* <
Support	0.19	1.02	-0.53	0.72	4.19	81	0.001
Substitution	-0.02	1.02	0.23	1.01	-1.15	108	n.s.
Exploration	-0.14	0.78	-0.03	0.99	-0.64	108	n.s.
Bond	0.13	1.03	-0.54	0.60	4.30	95	0.001
Self-improvement	0.02	1.08	0.42	0.73	-1.30	47	n.s.
Insight	0.13	0.99	0.09	0.94	0.22	108	n.s.
Self-guidance	0.09	1.03	-0.10	0.88	0.91	108	n.s.

Note. Cochran-Cox test was performed if groups were characterized by heterogeneity of variance.

Figure 1. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 1: Is there any cooperation between a subject and an imaginary interlocutor to solve the discussed problem?)



– Bond – a way to experience a certainty in being understood and feelings of contact with somebody.
– Self-improvement – a scolding for one's own mistake; a warning not to make the same mistake again.
– Insight – a source of a new point of view, a piece of advice, a distance from one's own problem, some help with perceiving advantages and disadvantages and help with making a decision.
– Self-guidance – a criterion for self-esteem; a form of preparation for new types of situations; an incentive to work, to continue one's own work, to change it or to give it up.

The second question concerned the relationships between types of inner dialogues and their psychological functions. In the first step of the analyses all the dialogues (N = 125) – collected within the confines of the experimental procedure – were grouped on the basis of 5 criteria[1] which are as follows:

1) Is there any cooperation between a subject and an imaginary interlocutor to solve the discussed problem?
2) Is the imaginary interlocutor an internal or an external figure?
3) Whose problem is discussed in the dialogue?
4) How does a participant feel after the imaginary dialogue?
5) Where is the source of the problem discussed in the dialogue placed?

In the next step the distinguished groups of dialogues were compared in the range of 7 metafunctions. The intensity of fulfilled metafunctions was defined on z-scale (M = 0, SD = 1). Strategy of analyses depended on an applied criterion. If on the basis of a given criterion two groups of dialogues could be differentiated two tests were used. Firstly, multidimensional T^2 Hotelling test allowed us to state if the groups differed from one other on the general level. Secondly, particular metafunctions significantly differentiating the groups in question were established by means of the t-Student test. This strategy was performed with reference to criteria 1 and 2. Taking criteria 3, 4 and 5 into account, three groups of dialogues could be distinguished. In this situation the three considered groups were compared by means of MANOVA and ANOVA. Additionally, due to correlations among means and standard deviations the analyses were verified by the H Kruskal-Wallis test. The T3 Dunnett test was conducted as a *post hoc* analysis because of the heterogeneity of variance.

On the basis of criterion no. 1 dialogues were divided into two groups: 1) dialogues characterized by cooperation between the subject and an imaginary interlocutor to solve the discussed problem; 2) dialogues without any cooperation. There were no differences between these groups on the general level (T^2 Hotelling $F_{(7.41)} = 1.32$, $p = 0.268$), however they differed in the range of metafunctions: Support and Bond (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

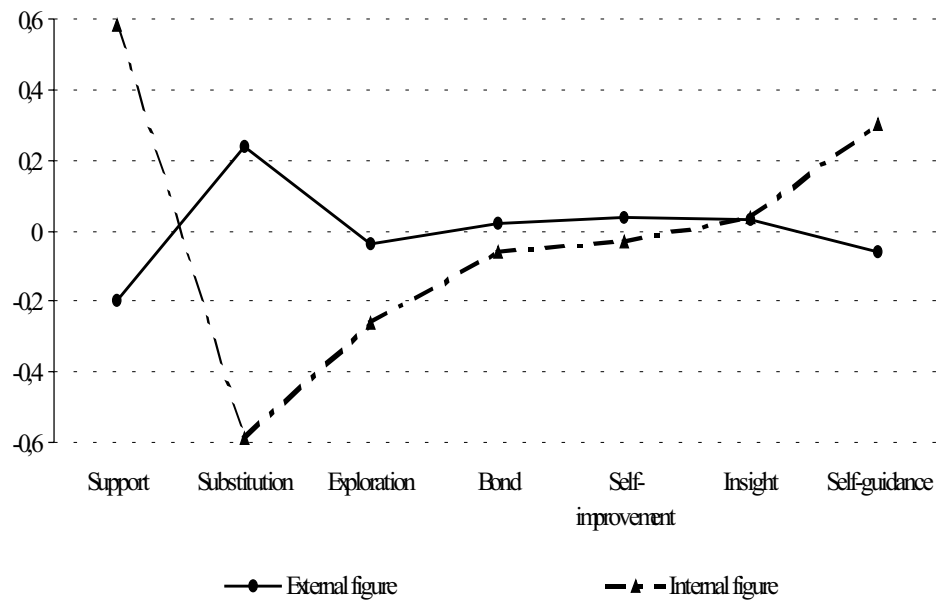
[1] Not all the dialogues might have been taken into account with reference to particular criteria.

Table 3. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 2: Is the imaginary interlocutor an internal or an external figure?)

Metafunction	Dialogues conducting with				t-Student		
	external figure (n = 89)		internal figure (n = 30)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p* <
Support	-0.20	0.86	0.58	1.18	-3.36	40	0.01
Substitution	0.24	1.03	-0.59	0.56	5.56	93	0.001
Exploration	-0.04	0.85	-0.26	0.85	1.24	117	n.s.
Bond	0.02	1.04	-0.06	0.93	0.37	117	n.s.
Self-improvement	0.04	1.04	-0.03	0.87	0.22	55	n.s.
Insight	0.03	0.99	0.04	1.05	-0.05	117	n.s.
Self-guidance	-0.06	1.02	0.30	0.87	-1.73	117	n.s.

Note. Cochran-Cox test was performed if groups were characterized by heterogeneity of variance.

Figure 2. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 2: Is the imaginary interlocutor an internal or an external figure?)



It was consistent with common sense that both metafunctions were more strongly related to the dialogues expressing cooperation. These dialogues significantly more often give feelings of safety, hope, and even a sense of life, experience of a contact with somebody and a certainty of being understood. Taking the level of particular indices into account one can add that generally speaking dialogues between cooperating interlocutors fulfilled all the seven metafunctions, whereas dialogues devoid of cooperation fulfilled merely some of them.

Criterion no. 2 allowed us to distinguish dialogues conducted with (1) an external figure or (2) an internal figure. The external and internal figures completely correspond with Hermans's differentiation between external and internal positions. This means that external figures are felt as part of the environment. Generally, they are replicas of people and objects in the surroundings (e.g., 'my mother', 'my dear one' and 'my friend'). Sometimes that type of figure can also be an equivalent of somebody who hypothetically could exist, but does not (e.g., a purely imaginary friend). Internal figures are felt as a part of myself. I am able to distinguish them, because each of them has its own particular point of view (e.g., 'I as my own critic', 'I as an idealist', 'I who I ought to be'). In the light of the abovementioned differentiation one can suppose that a person who needs support and feelings of safety (Support) is rather willing to enter into imaginary contact with a friend, a loved person or a parent, whereas during a confrontation with an internal critic or a personification of ideals and duties a person is probably prone to seeking arguments in self-defense (Substitution).

The dialogues differentiated on the basis of the criterion no. 2 differed in the range of 7 metafunctions on the general level (T^2 Hotelling $F_{(7.49)} = 2.50$, $p < 0.05$) and on the particular one (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

As we expected the noted differences concerned metafunctions of Support and Substitution. However, intuitive hypotheses were not entirely confirmed. It was stated that in order to derive support, feelings of safety and hope (Support) the subjects more often conducted dialogues with internal figures, whereas imaginary dialogues with external figures were accompanied by a significantly higher index of Substitution.

This means that dialogues with external figures are generally treated as the only form of expression of one's own real thoughts and they are created when a real contact with an interlocutor is impossible, but these imaginary conversations are not to give relief and consolation. Fulfillment of these functions is rather expected by persons from their own internal figures, that is, *de facto* from themselves. Inner discussions with figures we really know are used as a method to improve our argumentation.

Taking criterion no. 3 into account, three types of dialogues were distinguished: (1) dialogue where a problem concerning the subject was discussed; (2) dialogue where a problem concerning the interlocutor was discussed; or (3) dialogue where no problem was discussed.

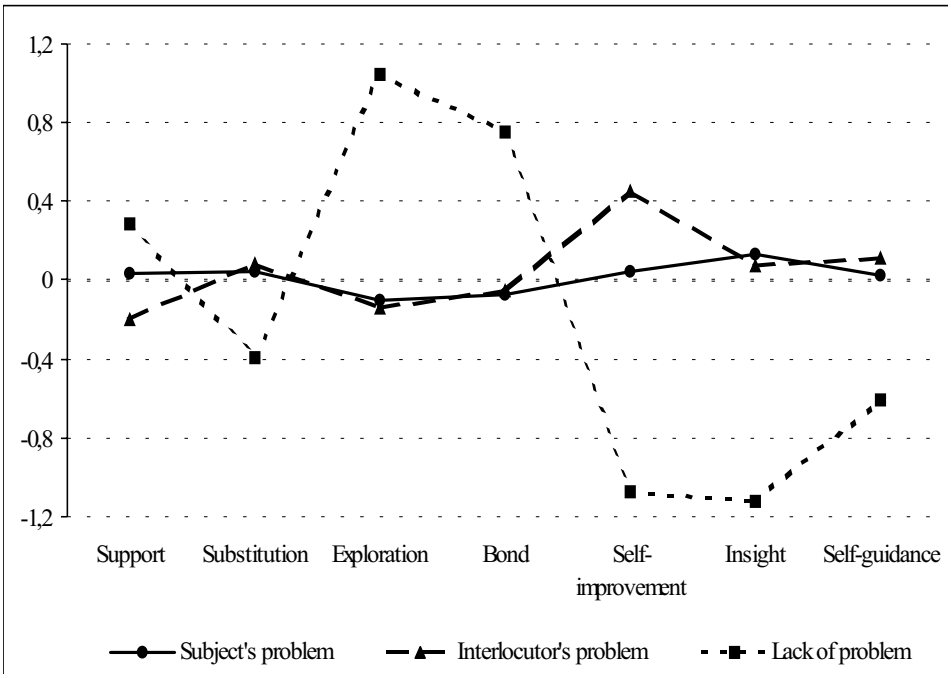
Table 4. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 3: Whose problem is discussed in the dialogue?)

Metafunction		Dialogue concerns: problem of subject (n = 84)	Dialogue concerns: problem of interlocutor (n = 26)	Dialogue concerns: any problem (n = 10)	ANOVA $F_{(2.\ 117)}$	ANOVA $p <$	H Kruskal-Wallis $H_{(2.120)}$	H Kruskal-Wallis $p <$	T3 Dunnett Differences between types	T3 Dunnett $p <$
Support	*M*	0.03	-0.20	0.29	1.00	n.s.	2.11	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.04	0.85	0.89						
Substitution	*M*	0.04	0.08	-0.39	0.91	n.s.	1.85	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.00	1.09	0.84						
Exploration	*M*	-0.10	-0.14	1.04	7.28	0.001	9.55	0.01	-	n.s.
	SD	0.86	0.79	1.54						
Bond	*M*	-0.07	-0.05	0.75	3.08	0.05	5.24	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.00	0.90	1.17						
Self-improvement [1)]	*M*	0.04	0.45	-1.07	5.17	0.01	9.64	0.01	b	0.01
	SD	1.02	0.91	0.47					c	0.001
Insight	*M*	0.13	0.07	-1.12	7.83	0.001	15.68	0.001	b	0.001
	SD	0.99	0.94	0.43					c	0.001
Self-guidance	*M*	0.02	0.11	-0.61	2.02	n.s.	3.45	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	0.97	1.07	1.03						

[1)] 55 dialogues were taken into account.

Note. Significant differences between types of dialogues: a) subject's problem – interlocutor's problem; b) subject's problem – any problem; c) interlocutor's problem – any problem.

Figure 3. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 3: Whose problem is discussed in the dialogue?)



The analyses performed showed that the three aforementioned groups differed in the range of 7 metafunctions on the general level (MANOVA: $R\ Rao_{(14, 92)} = 3.30$, $p < 0.001$) and on the particular one (see Table 4 and Figure 3). It was found that there were statistically significant relationships among these three types of dialogues and the metafunctions of Exploration, Self-improvement and Insight.

T3 Dunnett test was performed to answer the question how these three groups of dialogues differed from each other in the range of the aforesaid metafunctions. As a result of the analysis differences among groups of dialogues in Self-improvement and Insight were found. Both these metafunctions allowed us to differentiate between dialogues pertaining to a problem and ones which were not focused on any problem. At the same time there were no differences between dialogues concerning the subject's problem and the ones discussing the interlocutor's trouble. In general, dialogues free of problems were characterized by significantly lower indices of Self-improvement and Insight in comparison to dialogues expressing problems. It follows that imaginary discussions about problems can fulfil the same functions regardless of whose problem is discussed. In both cases a dialogue becomes a source of possible solutions to problematic questions, not only currently discussed but also other ones. Additionally, these dialogues are

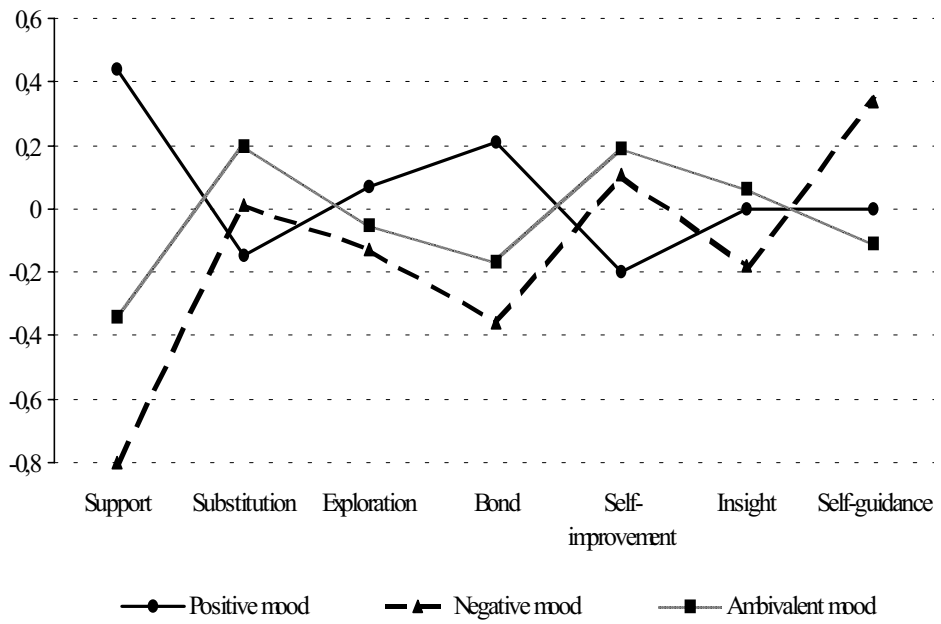
Table 5. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 4: How does a participant feel after the imaginary dialogue?)

Metafunction		Subject's mood after imaginary dialogue is			ANOVA		H Kruskal-Wallis		T3 Dunnett	
		positive (n = 63)	negative (n = 15)	ambivalent (n = 46)	$F_{(2.121)}$	$p <$	$H_{(2.124)}$	$p <$	Differences between types	$p <$
Support	*M*	0.44	-0.80	-0.34	17.07	0.001	29.58	0.001	a, b	0.001
	SD	1.01	0.25	0.83					c	0.01
Substitution	*M*	-0.15	0.01	0.20	1.69	n.s.	3.19	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	0.92	1.13	1.05						
Exploration	*M*	0.07	-0.13	-0.05	0.34	n.s.	0.85	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.03	0.81	1.02						
Bond	*M*	0.21	-0.36	-0.17	3.14	0.05	5.96	0.05	-	n.s.
	SD	1.06	0.79	0.92						
Self-improvement [1)]	*M*	-0.20	0.11	0.19	1.06	n.s.	3.28	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.10	0.51	0.95						
Insight	*M*	0.00	-0.18	0.06	0.32	n.s.	1.01	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.06	1.09	0.89						
Self-guidance	*M*	0.00	0.34	-0.11	1.14	n.s.	2.47	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	0.98	1.16	0.97						

[1)] 58 dialogues were taken into account.

Note. Significant differences between types of dialogues: a) positive mood – negative mood; b) positive mood – ambivalent mood; c) negative mood – ambivalent mood.

Figure 4. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 4: How does a participant feel after the imaginary dialogue?)



conducive to standing back from one's own problem, to get a new point of view and to perceive advantages and disadvantages of different solutions. Finally, they enable conclusions to be drawn from the discussed situation, to criticize oneself for one's own mistake, and to warn oneself not to make the same mistake again. Dialogues characterized by lack of a problem fulfil the functions to a minimal extent. At the same time, the latter type of dialogue – in the light of ANOVA – has a tendency to realize the metafunction of Exploration. This means that seeking some new, sometimes forbidden, experiences and ones of imaginary escape from ordinary life more often accompany 'trouble-free' dialogues than the others.

Criterion no. 4 concerned the subject's mood after the imaginary dialogue. According to the experimental procedure after an internal dialogue a respondent was asked to describe his/her own emotional climate from the angle of 24 affects included in Hermans's list. Taking mood evaluations into account all the imaginary conversations were divided into 3 groups – dialogues evoking: (1) positive; (2) negative and (3) ambivalent mood. There were no differences among the groups in the range of 7 metafunctions on the general level (MANOVA: $R\ Rao_{(14.98)} = 1.71$, $p = 0.066$). However, by means of ANOVA and the H Kruskal-Wallis test differences on a particular level were found (see Table 5 and Figure 4).

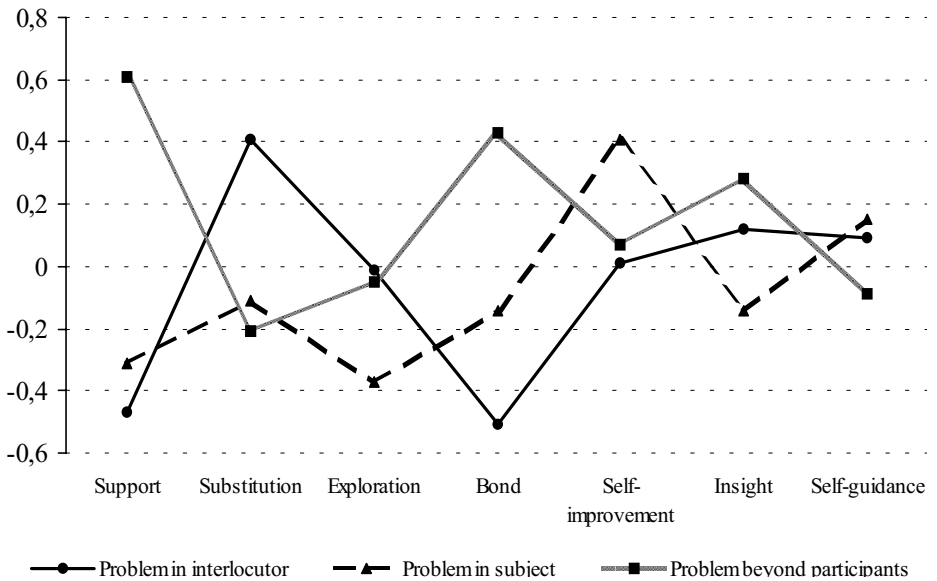
Table 6. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 5: Where is the source of a problem discussed in the dialogue placed?)

Metafunction		Source of a problem lies			ANOVA		H Kruskal-Wallis		T3 Dunnett	
		in interlocutor (n = 42)	in subject (n = 26)	beyond subject and interlocutor (n = 42)	$F_{(2, 107)}$	$p <$	$H_{(2.110)}$	$p <$	Differences between types	$p <$
Support	*M*	-0.47	-0.31	0.61	18.02	0.001	28.96	0.001	b	0.001
	SD	0.61	1.03	0.98					c	0.01
Substitution	*M*	0.41	-0.11	-0.21	4.60	0.05	8.28	0.05	b	0.05
	SD	1.08	1.03	0.84						
Exploration	*M*	-0.01	-0.37	-0.05	1.66	n.s.	3.23	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	0.97	0.53	0.84						
Bond	*M*	-0.51	-0.14	0.43	12.03	0.001	19.51	0.001	b	0.001
	SD	0.53	1.04	1.05						
Self-improvement [1)]	*M*	0.01	0.41	0.07	0.66	n.s.	1.58	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	1.03	0.89	1.06						
Insight	*M*	0.12	-0.14	0.28	1.51	n.s.	2.23	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	0.89	0.81	1.12						
Self-guidance	*M*	0.09	0.15	-0.09	0.57	n.s.	0.95	n.s.	-	n.s.
	SD	0.93	0.92	1.09						

[1)] 49 dialogues were taken into account.

Note. Significant differences between types of dialogues: a) in interlocutor – in subject; b) in interlocutor – beyond interlocutor and subject; c) in subject – beyond interlocutor and subject.

Figure 5. Comparison of dialogues in the range of metafunctions (criterion no. 5: Where is the source of a problem discussed in the dialogue placed?)



They were confirmed by the T3 Dunnett test. This allowed us to state that each of the three types of dialogues significantly differed from each other in the metafunction of Support. With reference to average intensity of Support indices one can state that dialogues evoking a positive mood in their authors are an important source of feelings of safety, hope and sense of life. Sometimes similar functions are also fulfilled by imaginary conversations related to ambivalence of emotions. If an internal discussion gives rise to negative affects, it almost never provides support. Taking into consideration that the most characteristic of the latter type of dialogue is Self-guidance one can advance the hypothesis that a dialogue evoking a negative mood in the subject can be treated as an incentive to action, a form of preparation for new types of situations and a criterion for self-esteem.

Criterion no. 5 was focused on sources of problems discussed in the dialogues. On the basis of the content analysis of imaginary conversations, three options were established: 1) an interlocutor bears responsibility for a problem; 2) the source of a problem lies in the subject (respondent); 3) the cause of a problem is located beyond the participants of the imaginary relationship.

It was stated that on the general level, the abovementioned groups differed in fulfilled metafunctions (MANOVA: $R\ Rao_{(14.\ 80)} = 2.24$, $p < 0.05$). On the particular level the differences were noted in the range of Support, Substitution and Bond (see Table 6 and Figure 5).

These three metafunctions differentiated dialogues in which the source of the problem resided in an interlocutor from ones in which – according to partners of imaginary communication – causes of the problem lay beyond them. Additionally the dialogues free of reciprocal accusation differed in Support from ones in which the subject is recognized as guilty of a problematic situation. In the light of the obtained results one can state that, generally, dialogues in which partners treated themselves as the cause of the discussed problem are significantly more rarely a source of Support (hope, feeling of safety and certainty that life has sense) than dialogues free of mutual accusation. It is also worth noting that dialogues in which the source of a problem is located beyond the partners of the imaginary communication are characterized by high index of Bond. This type of dialogue differs in the range of the aforesaid metafunction from ones accusing an interlocutor, whereas it does not differ from ones accusing the subject.

Trying to explain the situation one can pose an interpretative hypothesis that if the author of a dialogue wants to confess his mistake he usually creates his interlocutor as a person who gives him the experience of certainty in being understood. However, when the dialogue is arranged in order to recognize an imaginary interlocutor as a culprit, then his partner – that is the subject – is not as understanding. Taking into account that the latter type of dialogue is characterized by relatively the highest index of Substitution one can conclude that imaginary conversations concerning a problem caused by an interlocutor usually are treated by a subject as a way of testing arguments that are to convince somebody in real life. At the same time these dialogues can only be a substitute for an authentic expression of convictions hidden by a person.

To summarize, it can be stated that:

- The dialogues expressing cooperation between a subject and an imaginary interlocutor to solve the discussed problem are characterized by higher indices of Support and Bond (criterion no. 1).
- The imaginary dialogues with an external figure more often fulfil the metafunction of Substitution, whereas imaginary dialogues with an internal figure are treated as a source of Support (criterion no. 2).
- The inner dialogues concerning a problem (of a subject as well as of an imaginary interlocutor) are characterized by significantly higher indexes of Self-improvement and Insight in comparison with the dialogues free of problems. The most specific to the latter type of dialogues seems to be Exploration (criterion no. 3).
- If the subject's feelings are positive after an imaginary dialogue, this means that the dialogue is an important source of Support. Dialogues evoking ambivalent affect significantly more rarely fulfil the metafunction of Support. If internal discussion gives rise to negative affects, it almost never provides Support. The most typical of the third type of dialogues seems to be Self-guidance (criterion no. 4).

– The dialogues in which an interlocutor is treated as a source of the problem fulfil the metafunction of Substitution, whereas dialogues free of reciprocal accusations are strongly connected with Support and Bond (criterion no. 5).

Discussion

Psychological theories seeking to introduce functions of inner dialogues seem to be challenged by the results of current study. First of all, the survey of the aforementioned theories points out striking discrepancies between opinions on the discussed question. For example, Jung (1961) treated his imaginary talks with Philemon as a source of insight. According to Vygotsky (1962, 1999) inner dialogue allows us to plan and control the activities of the subject. Mead (1934) perceived imaginary conversation as a form of testing planned actions. Psycholinguists consider the phenomenon as a way of language acquisition. Psychodynamically oriented authors emphasize that imaginary communication is conducive to increasing emotional control, autonomy, ability to stand back from one's own weaknesses, and, additionally, can be understood as a form of compensation for one's own defects and for loneliness, as a reservoir of feelings of safety and support during stressful times in life, and as help with the exploration of new realities (see Benson & Pryor, 1973; Bouldin & Pratt, 1999; Harter & Chao, 1992; Manosevitz, et al., 1973; Meyer & Tuber, 1989; Myers, 1979; Nagera, 1981; Rucker, 1981; Singer & Singer, 1990; Somers & Yawkey, 1984).

It should be noted that a multiplicity of functions is attributed to inner dialogues but only a few are simultaneously analyzed by different theoretical approaches. At the same time the representatives of different psychological trends claim that their research is reliably conducted. In that context one can suppose that particular conceptions and empirical analyses based on them take merely a fragment of the imaginary dialogues' reality into account. Similar doubt was expressed by M. Watkins (1986). She is of the opinion that theoretical assumptions often determine research projects and force results consistent with the assumptions (see also Kuhn, 1962). For example, if a child is observed solely during logic problem solving – as in Vygotsky's experiments – there is little chance to perceive other functions of inner dialogues apart from the guiding of thoughts and actions.

The metafunctions presented in our study seem to reflect the psychological meaning of internal conversations emphasized by different theoretical approaches. Planning and control of actions – the functions of concern to Vygotsky – may have a partial equivalent in Self-guidance. An imaginary testing of planned activities – noticed by Mead – resembles Substitution. Insight and ability to stand back from one's own problems – discussed by Jung – can be perceived as similar to the metafunction of Insight. Functions of imaginary communications enumerated by psychodynamically oriented authors, e.g. providing support during stress-

ful times in life, compensation for loneliness, or help with the exploration of new realities, can be compared to Support, Bond and Exploration respectively. Finally, gaining of emotional control, autonomy and other abilities in a sense resemble the metafunction of Self-improvement.

In the current study it was found that inner dialogue generally fulfilled 7 metafunctions, which was more than any of the theories assumed. It was also established that depending on the type of dialogue some functions characterized it more than others. In that context it seems to be more probable that particular conceptions and empirical analyses based on them take only single types of inner conversations into account and, in consequence, only their single functions. Thus they manage to describe merely a fragment of the reality. It should be emphasized that types of dialogues presented in our studies were differentiated on the basis of criteria taken by way of example. Dialogues which individual theoreticians are focused on could also be considered, e.g. imaginary conversations in children's play, discussions with an invisible figure that appear as a reaction to sibling's birth or else inner dialogues that accompany logic problem solving. If it is true that distinct kinds of dialogues fulfil various functions to varying degrees, theoreticians' belief that only one type of inner dialogue exists inevitably over simplifies our knowledge of the manifold roles of the phenomenon in question. In that sense theoreticians and researchers of internal dialogues are challenged by our findings. The conclusion is that all the hitherto existing expertise concerning imaginary activity demands a new integrating model.

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