MONASH University

Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie* and the methodology of autoethnography:

Developing a dialectical understanding of research practices

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Faculty of Education

To my partner Danni—

for being obstinately optimistic about all this

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Abstract

The present thesis is an autoethnographic story about finding the connections between the concept of *perezhivanie* and the methodology of autoethnography.

Vygotsky's incompletely developed concept of *perezhivanie*—which can be roughly translated as "lived experience"—has attracted increasing attention in recent years for its potential to explain a central part of his cultural-historical approach to development. Elsewhere, the autoethnographic approach to anthropology and sociology has challenged conventional ideas of how to do and write research. In autoethnography, the researcher studies her own experiences to better understand the broader issues, processes, and phenomena of the society and culture of which she is ostensibly a member. Since both *perezhivanie* and autoethnography relate to lived experiences, the question arises as to the extent to which they may be mutually informative: how does autoethnography support an investigation of *perezhivanie*, and conversely, how might the concept of *perezhivanie* explain autoethnographic data?

I initially sought to answer these questions through an autoethnography of my own learning of a second language online. Although difficulties in the process of analysis led me to abandon the empirical study, those difficulties led to a new direction in research. In this new approach, I delved deeper into the concept of *perezhivanie* to explore its roots in dialectical philosophy. A number of serendipitous events during my PhD candidature eventually led to a conceptualisation of autoethnographic research itself through the lens of dialectics, as a historical process in which the different aspects of research are shaped by, and reflect the conditions that brought them about.

Subsequently, I used this new understanding in considering the development of this study itself and restructured the thesis as a narrative to reconstruct the historical and personal events—the intuitive leaps, mistakes, misunderstandings, fortuitous events, and so on—that contributed to the research historically, if not substantively, and which shape its character. Consequently, I argue that it is reflexivity—an established research practice that is of particular importance to autoethnography—that supports the explication of a researcher's *perezhivanie*. Further, I contend that the narrative commitments typical of

evocative styles of autoethnography allow for a more verisimilitudinous account of those *perezhivanie* for the reader. Conversely, the concept of *perezhivanie* is argued to act as an explanatory principle that reveals the dialectical nature of experiences and their significance for understanding development.

The thesis itself contributes a conceptualisation of the ways in which reflexive research practices make visible the contexts of research, along with the decisions, experiences, events, and happenings, that allow for a dialectical understanding of the development of the research more faithful to the actual concrete experiences of the researcher. The narrative style of this thesis allows for a coherent account of how these aspects contribute not only to the development, but also character, of its constitutive ideas, theories, and researcher decisions, while also demonstrating this argument. Four of the publications included as part of this thesis further develop the conceptual content of *perezhivanie* within different disciplinary contexts, while the fifth (under review) presents an attempt at crystallising the dialectical conceptualisation of autoethnographic research practices.

List of included publications

Mok, N. (2015). Toward an understanding of perezhivanie for SLA research. *Language and Sociocultural Theory*, *2*(2), 139–159. doi:10.1558/lst.v2i2.26248

Mok, N. (2016). Commentary: Understanding and using perezhivanie and subjectivity. *International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 7(1), 238–246. doi:10.4225/03/5810078b82643

Mok, N. (2017). On the concept of perezhivanie: A quest for a critical review. In M. Fleer, F. González Rey, & N. Veresov (Eds.) *Perezhivanie, subjectivity and emotions: Advancing Vygotsky's legacy* (pp. 19–45). Singapore: Springer Nature.

Mok, N. (under review). A cultural-historical understanding of autoethnography: perezhivanie and dialectics.

Veresov, N., & Mok, N. (2018). Understanding development through the perezhivanie of learning. In J. P. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Development* (pp. 89–101). United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis.

Other publications

Mok, N., & Goulart, D. (2016). Perezhivanie and subjectivity within cultural-historical approach: dialogues between Australia and Brazil. *International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 7(1), 1–4. doi: 10.4225/03/580ff60d7a51a

Mok, N., & Goulart, D. (Eds.) (2016). Perezhivanie special issue. IRECE, 7(1).

Thesis including published works declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes two original papers published in peer-reviewed journals, two chapters published in reviewed books, and one unpublished manuscript. The core theme of the thesis is the relationship between Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*, and the methodology of autoethnography. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the student, working within the Faculty of Education under the supervision of Associate Professor Nikolai Veresov and Professor Marilyn Fleer. The inclusion of coauthors reflects the fact that the work came from active collaboration between researchers and acknowledges input into team-based research.

In the case of Chapters 2, 4, and 5 my contribution to the work involved the following:

	Publication Title	**Status**	**Nature and extent of candidate's contribution**
Chapter 2	Toward an understanding of perezhivanie for sociocultural SLA research	Published	Sole author
Chapter 4	On the concept of perezhivanie: A quest for a critical review	Published	Sole author
Chapter 4	Understanding development through the perezhivanie of learning	Published	Conception, key ideas, development, writing (50%; with Nikolai Veresov)
Chapter 5	Commentary: Understanding and using perezhivanie and subjectivity	Published	Sole author
Chapter 5	A cultural-historical understanding of autoethnography: Perezhivanie and dialectics	Reviewed; major revision required	Sole author

I have not renumbered sections of submitted or published papers in order to generate a consistent presentation within the thesis.

Student signature: [redacted] **Date**: 7th June 2018

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's and coauthors' contributions to this work. In instances where I am not the responsible author I have consulted with the responsible author to agree on the respective contributions of the authors.

Main Supervisor signature: [redacted] **Date:** 8th June 2018

Acknowledgements

It is only having slogged through the thesis that I can now appreciate how long the road has been, and how many opportunities there were to veer into detours or fall off the path completely, were it not for the people in my life. It is in the realisation of this research project that their ongoing support is reflected. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these people and express my appreciation.

To Mum, who has worked tirelessly and without complaint since migrating to Australia to raise me practically on her own, support me through my interminable university education, and give me the opportunities for a better life—in spite of the many obstacles she has faced since. I have been fortunate to be able to live at home for the past couple of years so that I can better concentrate on my work. She has always selflessly prioritised my happiness and well-being in allowing me to pursue my passions and interests rather than pushing me towards more obviously profitable work. I hope that this doctorate means that I will finally be able to repay her for all she has done—she will at least get a kick out of being able to say she has a doctor in the family.

To my partner, Danni, for her unwavering love and support all these years. She constantly supports the dumb things I want to do and has helped me over the years to better myself. In spite of my protests, she never doubted that I would eventually finish this thesis. In the time we have been together, I have written an honours, master's, and now doctoral dissertation—but I am at a loss for words in expressing my love and gratitude for everything she is and has become since we met. I cannot imagine a better person to share this journey with. And also our cat, Luna, for always being there, aloof—sometimes that is just a great way to be.

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this journey. I'd also like to thank the members of the milestone panels—especially for presubmission—for their feedback, which encouraged the eventual direction of the thesis.

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And to my friends, who know who they are. Being able to hang out, have fun, and completely forget about the thesis for a while helped keep me sane.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge financial support from the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (2015–2017), as well as the Monash Postgraduate Travel Grant (2017) and Faculty of Education Research Student Funding (2017) to assist in travel and conference expenses.

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Chapter 1: Introducing *perezhivanie* and autoethnography

The present thesis is an autoethnographic story about finding a connection between Vygotsky's (1994) concept of *perezhivanie* and autoethnographic methodology. Here, I understand autoethnography in its broadest sense as a qualitative approach to research in which the intrinsic subjective experience of the researcher is made explicit. I use a narrative structure to plot the creative development of an idea beyond the conceptual limits that are otherwise circumscribed in more traditional, analytic writing and thinking. It is something of a "messy text" (Marcus, 1998) and bricolage (Denzin, 2012), as I draw on different ideas, insights, theories, and domains as necessitated by the course of research. I did not envision the directions this research project would take me, and it is through the narrative form that I can appropriately trace the intuitive leaps, mistakes, misunderstandings, and fortuitous events that contributed to the research, rather than treat these as irrelevant. By configuring the constituent events and actions of this thesis into a coherent plot, the goal is to convey a *feeling* of the logic and verisimilitude of what will, by the end, be proposed: that what reflexive research practices illuminate is a researcher's *perezhivanie*, and this subsequently provides dialectical insight into the nature of the decisions, interpretations, and conceptualisations that progress the course of research. Consequently, this thesis also, in part, challenges the limitations of traditional academic discursive practices that reflect "paradigmatic cognition" (Polkinghorne, 1995).

So, to begin the story: what exactly are *perezhivanie* and autoethnography, and why examine their potential connection?

The concept of perezhivanie

Perezhivanie is a concept within cultural-historical theory (CHT) that refers, in a very basic sense, to the particular way in which a given individual experiences their environment. Since there is no exact English translation (see, e.g., Chapter 4 in this thesis, and Mok, 2017, for a discussion), I will use the original Russian term throughout the thesis. However, as an initial guide, it can be approximated with the term "lived experience". The Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky introduced his conceptualisation of

perezhivanie in the last years of his life, but his death left the concept underdeveloped. It seemed to mark the beginning of a shift in his focus from the social origins of higher mental functions to the broader issue of the structure and organisation of consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987; Zavershneva, 2010b). When I began this present project in 2014, there had been only sporadic attempts at further clarifying and developing the *concept* (e.g., Blunden, 2014; Bozhovich, 2009; Fakrutdinova, 2010; González Rey, 2009; Leontiev, 2005; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2008; Smagorinsky, 2011) in contrast to merely using the ostensible *definition*(*s*) given in the text in which the concept appears (i.e., Vygotsky, 1994). As Smagorinsky (2011) put it: "*perezhivanie* thus far remains more a tantalizing notion than a concept with clear meaning and import to those who hope to draw on it" (p. 339). Part of the requisite theoretical work of the present research project, then, must be to further develop the concept of *perezhivanie* to allow potential connections to autoethnography to be more thoroughly drawn out. That is, to be clear, to elaborate the *concept* at a deeper level, rather than use a superficial *definition* of the phenomenon. This distinction, and approach to conceptual clarification, is the same kind of strategy used by Chaiklin (2003) and Veresov (2004) in their respective elaborations of Vygotsky's better-known Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept.

The two passages in the English-language translation of Vygotsky's (1994) text that researchers often cite in defining *perezhivanie* are the following:

> The emotional experience [*perezhivanie*] arising from any situation or from any aspect of his environment, determines what kind of influence this situation or this environment will have on the child. Therefore, it is not any of the factors in themselves . . . which determines how they will influence the future course of development, but the same factors refracted through the prism of the child's emotional experience [*perezhivanie*]. (pp. 339-341)

> *An emotional experience* [*perezhivanie*] *is a unit where, on the one hand, in an indivisible state, the environment is represented, i.e.* that which is being experienced . . . *and on the other hand, what is represented is how I, myself, am experiencing this,* i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in an emotional experience [*perezhivanie*]; everything selected from the environment and all the factors which are related to our personality and are selected from the personality, all the features of its character, its constitutional elements, which are related to the event in question. So, *in an emotional*

> *experience* [*perezhivanie*] *we are always dealing with an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics, which are represented in the emotional experience* [*perezhivanie*]. (emphasis in original, p. 342)[1]

Though seemingly self-explanatory, these definitions require further interrogation. What is meant by the term *emotional* experience? What does it mean to *refract* factors through the *prism* of experience? Is the notion of refraction an ontological claim about how "factors" change the course development when refracted through *perezhivanie*, or is it an epistemological claim about how researchers might understand the developmental significance of a given situation for an individual? What is meant by *perezhivanie* being a *unit*? Is *perezhivanie* something through which environmental factors are refracted, or is *perezhivanie* meant to denote the refracted result itself? What kinds of personal characteristics are within the scope of the term (e.g., cognition, affect, personality, behaviour, activity, attitude, etc.)? And perhaps more importantly, how are researchers to use the concept in research? There is a risk that, like the ZPD concept, a lack of further elaboration will result in the term being used loosely, "becoming so amorphous that it loses all explanatory power" (Wertsch, 1984, p. 7).

In the time since I started this study, there has been increasing and concerted efforts towards conceptual clarification. Notably, two journal special issues—*International Research in Early Childhood Education* (2016, 7[1]; Mok & Goulart, Eds.) and *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (2016, 23[4], "Symposium on perezhivanie")—and a book, *Perezhivanie, emotions, and subjectivity* (2017; Fleer, González Rey, & Veresov, Eds.), have been dedicated to untangling and further exploring the concept. Furthermore, at the triennial congress of the *International Society for Cultural-historical Activity Research* (ISCAR) in 2017, the development of the *perezhivanie* concept was indicated as an area of interest by the then-president of ISCAR, Dr. Malcolm Reed, during his opening address. Indeed, the widespread use of the concept in presentations and discussions at the congress reinforces his observation. Much of the work on *perezhivanie* in the first parts of the present thesis

[1] I have not inserted the Russian term in brackets here: the editors of Vygotsky (1994) have done so in the cited text, noting that their translation of *perezhivanie* as "emotional experience" does not fully capture both the affective and rational aspects of the term (see Vygotsky, 1994, p. 354, footnote 1).

forms part of this emergent movement towards conceptual clarification, within both the CHT research community generally, and also the second language acquisition (SLA) research community, which appropriates aspects of CHT under the label of the "sociocultural approach".

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is an approach to ethnographic research in anthropology and sociology that challenges ideas of how to do and write research. It is, at least historically, a critique of and response to problematic power relations and epistemological assumptions of objectivity within anthropological research (Gaitán, 2000). As a methodology, the researcher studies their own experiences as the basis for better understanding broader issues, processes, and phenomena of the society and culture of which she is ostensibly a member. Its use of autobiographical and other literary writing practices in facilitating thick and rich descriptions of personal experience to understand broader cultural experience belies a concern for making research evocative, meaningful, and accessible to wider audiences for whom personal and social change can then be made possible (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

The realisation that *perezhivanie* and autoethnography share an apparent focus on an individual's experience—despite their differing origins in psychology and anthropology, respectively—provided the motivating intuition for my previous thesis for a Master of Arts degree in applied linguistics (Mok, 2013). In writing the thesis, however, I stated the rationale for the study was, instead, that the concept of *perezhivanie* 1) addresses some of the epistemological and methodological issues within second language acquisition (SLA) research identified by Firth and Wagner (1997, 2007) and 2) contributes to further developing the sociocultural approach to SLA. Conversely, 3) that autoethnography could be used to support the concept methodologically. Thus, in the master's thesis, I demonstrated how *perezhivanie* could be used as a theoretical basis for explaining the developmental significance of autoethnographic observations (i.e., accounts of personal experience)—or, at the very least, how the use of autoethnography might be justified in the context of the sociocultural approach to understanding second language (L2)

development. I did this by examining my own learning of Mandarin Chinese as a L2 on the social network language learning website, *Livemocha*.

In being permitted to look inward at the researcher-self, the very idea of doing autoethnography raised what seemed to be latent questions I had about whether I, as a researcher, could also be validly considered and studied as a language learner. Though my academic qualifications meant that I ostensibly had some insight into language learning processes, did this really invalidate (i.e., contaminate and bias) any observations I would have about my own learning? Are assumptions about the seeming omnirelevance of my linguistics knowledge, and their influence on my language learning, valid? Why is it that researchers seem to take the objective stance of being outside of the world they study? It is in asking these questions that the concept of *perezhivanie* came to be foregrounded in the study. The concept, to me, 1) suggested that the traditional reductive labels ascribed to research subjects were not omnirelevant (as Firth & Wagner, 2007, had also argued with respect to the categories used in SLA) and instead to be determined during analysis, and 2) provided a way to theorise and analyse my own experiences. In retrospect, the thesis lacked depth, in that there was a naive understanding and application of both autoethnography and *perezhivanie*.

Thus, for this present thesis, I sought to extend the study and deepen my investigation of the interconnections between the concept of *perezhivanie* and the methodology of autoethnography, by repeating the study but using a broader scope, longer time frame, and deeper examination of both autoethnography and *perezhivanie*. This empirical study, driven by specific research questions relating to mediation and learning, would be complemented with a deeper examination both of the *perezhivanie* concept and autoethnography. While this was the proposed intention and initial direction of the thesis, I struggled greatly with different stages and aspects of the research process and theoretical development. These issues were difficult not because they were clearly problematic, but precisely because I lacked the conceptual terminology and knowledge to adequately define the issue. However, a number of serendipitous insights, suggestions, and helpful assurances in the final year of my candidature sparked a complete rethinking of the questions that the study sought to answer, its underlying argument, while also providing the material for supporting it.

The present study

Therefore, to now formally introduce the thesis in its present formulation: This study explores the potential connections between autoethnography and the cultural-historical concept of *perezhivanie*, which could allow for mutual theoretical and/or methodological enrichment. For example, if the two are compatible, then researchers working in the cultural-historical tradition may gain a new methodology with which to conduct research and operationalise the *perezhivanie* concept. Similarly, autoethnographers may add new theoretical and conceptual lenses to their toolbox with which to understand and analyse both the data they collect and the work of autoethnography itself. To state these complementary approaches to the general research problem as specific research questions:

1. In what ways can autoethnographic methodology be used to support investigation of *perezhivanie*?
2. What is the explanatory role of the *perezhivanie* concept for autoethnographic data?

These were originally only secondary to the set of questions that guided the originally proposed empirical study. However, as will be revealed through the course of this thesis, a consideration of the way in which the study was undertaken would itself be a pivotal point for new theorisation, leading to a new focus on these methodological and epistemological questions, and an unexpected way of answering them. Central to the answer would be the connection between the researcher/participant's own *perezhivanie,* autoethnography's intrinsic concern for reflexivity, and the philosophical foundations of CHT. Subsequently, the thesis was restructured into its present form to demonstrate this new understanding: I use a dialectics to understand and reflect upon the nature of my own undertaking of autoethnographic research—from its initial conception, to the development of concepts and ideas, to the various decisions that constitute the journey.

Earlier, I mentioned sociocultural SLA: a note of clarification as to its absence from the research questions is in order here. Though this study is no longer framed as a response to issues within SLA, the initial explorations into *perezhivanie* (and autoethnography) arose from questions within that domain. Thus, though SLA is no longer *substantively* relevant,

the methodological and epistemological questions that motivated my initial approach to and understanding of the concept have a *historical* relevance. This historical relevance is, as I discuss over the course of this thesis, crucial—in line with tenets of cultural-historical research—to understanding the eventual character of the conceptualisation that is developed. Indeed, the singular focus on the concept itself (rather than exploring other connected concepts, e.g., the social situation of development, and Vygotsky's notion of "sense") also reflects my personal fear of repeating a past, costly mistake: that of exploring too broadly and attempting to connect too many concepts, leading to an unfocused, inelegant hodgepodge of ideas that fails to be convincing.

Overview

Writing against a backdrop of pivotal moments and struggles during my candidature journey, this thesis will reveal the personal and historical antecedents to the argument and understanding of autoethnography that is developed, the theoretical significance of which I only realised in light of the argument that was eventually developed. The dialectical understanding of autoethnography is then used to analyse this thesis itself to demonstrate this model as well as to support the conceptualisation of *perezhivanie* that is developed. The published papers included in this thesis have value not only in their substantial content, but also as crystallisations of particular conceptualisations of autoethnography and/or *perezhivanie* and their interconnection, that reflect changing concerns at particular points in time.

This thesis is divided into three parts through which two strands of thought—one regarding autoethnography, the other, regarding *perezhivanie*—come together. Each of the six chapters is written around a particular struggle in the course of developing this thesis. Part 1 explicates the theoretical foundations of this thesis. Following this present chapter, which introduces the motivation for pursuing this course of research, **Chapter 2** situates the *perezhivanie* concept within the contexts of CHT and sociocultural theory (SCT). In outlining the basic premises and concerns of SCT and CHT (of which SCT is an adaptation for SLA research), I discuss the issues that the *perezhivanie* concept is or can be used to address within each research tradition. The approach taken in explicating the

perezhivanie concept in Mok (2015) is also discussed within the broader context of conceptual development within CHT. **Chapter 3** introduces autoethnography as a methodology: the reasons for its development; the ongoing debates with respect to its existence, style, and purpose; and criticisms of the methodology. In doing so, I begin to draw links between autoethnography and *perezhivanie* on the basis of their shared methodological focus on concrete experience. This chapter also discusses the empirical study that was originally intended to form the core of this thesis, and the reasons why it was later abandoned.

Part 2 advances a connection between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography through dialectics. **Chapter 4** further develops the concept of *perezhivanie* by examining the dialectical philosophy (traced back to Hegel and Engels) that underlies CHT. The premises that underlie the historical approach to writing this thesis are also introduced here. The papers Mok (2017)—a review of research about or using *perezhivanie*—and Veresov and Mok (2018)—a discussion of *perezhivanie* within the context of sociocultural SLA—are discussed against the background of my shift in focus to dialectics. **Chapter 5** introduces a dialectical understanding of autoethnographic methodology and the circumstances that led to this insight and understanding. The methodological ideas of Mok (2016) are discussed as a precursor to those that become more fully developed in Mok (under review).

Finally, Part 3 concludes the study. By reflecting on the study through the understanding of autoethnography developed in the previous chapter, **Chapter 6** summarises the major ideas developed, clarifies the purpose of the narrative structure of the thesis, and why such an approach was taken. Specifically, the dialectical approach to understanding autoethnographic research (and research more generally) developed in Chapter 5 is turned back on the present thesis. The narrative progression of the thesis is summarised to make its dialectical character clear, before returning to answer the research questions to conclude the thesis.

Chapter 2: The contribution of *perezhivanie* to cultural-historical theory (CHT) and sociocultural theory (SCT)

My understanding of the concept of *perezhivanie* was initially framed within the context of the sociocultural approach to SLA research, and later shifted to the context of CHT proper as my theoretical concerns changed. As I aim to show in this chapter, the concept's character, purpose, and development is shaped by the theoretical—and in the case of the thesis, research—context in which it is understood. The discussion here is built around the publication, Mok (2015). After a brief introduction, I present the paper, in which I argue for a particular understanding of *perezhivanie* within the sociocultural approach to SLA. Given that the audiences for the paper and this thesis differ, I further elaborate central tenets of CHT before discussing its relation to SCT. Following this, I reflect on the nature of conceptual development as a reflection of domain-specific interests and concerns both in general and in relation to the present thesis. Throughout this discussion, I shed light on the ways in which the development of the *perezhivanie* concept in Mok (2015) reflect the conditions that initially motivated its writing.

Introduction to Mok (2015)

The first publication of this thesis, "Toward an understanding of *perezhivanie* for sociocultural SLA research" was written and submitted at the end of 2014 for the new *Language and Sociocultural Theory* journal, which had at the time only one published volume (with two issues). The journal is edited by James P. Lantolf, who is often credited with introducing Vygotsky's ideas into SLA in a pair of articles with William J. Frawley in the mid-1980s (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf & Frawley, 1984). The paper that I wrote reflected my understanding of the sociocultural approach to SLA as one that drew primarily on Vygotsky's concepts of the ZPD (as first popularised in Vygotsky, 1978[2])and

[2] The quality and accuracy of this collection of translations of Vygotsky's work has been called into question since its publication. See, for example Veresov (2004, 2009) for a discussion, and Vygotsky (1935/2011, A. Kozulin, Trans.) for an updated translation of the paper regarding the ZPD.

private and inner speech (Vygotsky, 1987), owing to early-SLA's concerns with pedagogy and psycholinguistics. Although Firth and Wagner (2007) had already noted SCT as one answer to the problematic, then-mainstream cognitivist approaches to SLA, I argued that some of the further methodological and epistemological concerns they had identified could be addressed from a sociocultural perspective by using the concept of *perezhivanie*. Specifically, I suggested that the concept of *perezhivanie* could provide theoretical support and justification for more emic (i.e., learner-centred), locally sensitive (i.e., to understand what learners actually do) research to counter and challenge reductive cognitivist assumptions, and also to support a broadening the traditional classroom-learner database of SLA. To support these arguments, I outlined the issues to which I believed Vygotsky used the concept of *perezhivanie* to respond: a static view of the role of the environment, reductionist epistemology, and the presumption of a factor's (e.g., trait, characteristic) relevance in analysis. If these issues were also present in SLA, as I argued they were, then *perezhivanie* could similarly be used to address them.

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Article

Toward an understanding of *perezhivanie* for sociocultural SLA research

Nelson Mok

Abstract

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory has been invaluable for informing new theoretical approaches to the study of L2 acquisition. However, the concept of perezhivanie *has been overlooked despite playing a central role in crystallizing ideas in both Vygotsky's negative arguments and his positive theory. Here, I revisit the concept as a potential means to inform the kind of emic approach to research Firth and Wagner (1997; 2007) had argued was necessary for balance in the field of SLA. As a first step, I examine* perezhivanie *as discussed in 'The problem of the environment' (Vygotsky, 1994), and within the context of other aspects of Vygotsky's work – his criticisms of psychology; the functional unity of consciousness; the concept of the unit; and holism – to clarify misunderstandings and expand on its theoretical content. I conclude with a discussion of the issues raised when perezhivanie is applied in the study of memory.*

Keywords: Second Language; acquisition; cultural-historical psychology; *perezhivanie*; Second Language Research Methodology; Sociocultural Theory

Introduction

This paper discusses the concept of *perezhivanie* and its potential contribution to second language acquisition (SLA)[1] research in providing a basis for informing emic (i.e., learner-centred) methodologies, reconceptualizing learner-centred data on sociocultural-theoretic terms, and expanding the tra-

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ditional classroom database. Without an adequate English equivalent, *perezhivanie* is loosely translated as 'lived experience', and within the context of cultural-historical theory (CHT), refers to a unit of analysis Vygotsky had identified for investigating the development of human consciousness. In this unit, Vygotsky attempted to capture, in an analytically useful manner, the unity of cognition and emotion (among other mental functions) in the experience of a concrete situation. However, appearing in his work only just before his death, the concept was not adequately developed and its consequences subsequently not well understood by researchers seeking to use it. Thus, if the concept is to be operationalized for SLA research, further examination is needed to unpack its content and its place within CHT overall. First, however, it is necessary to understand, briefly, the broader research context that necessitates the use of *perezhivanie*.

Sociocultural SLA

Sociocultural theory (SCT),[2] the adaptation of CHT for SLA research, has gained increasing recognition as a major alternative to traditional cognitivist approaches. Early in the history of sociocultural-SLA, the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and private speech opened the door to new possibilities for research and reconceptualizations of extant classroom research, learning, and practices; the concepts themselves having resonated with contemporaneous pedagogical and psycholinguistic concerns within the field. The ZPD led researchers to investigate the pedagogical implications of the zone: how it is created in activity, and how it can be best exploited for instruction (e.g., through the use of 'scaffolding'; Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976; also see, van de Pol, Volman, and Beishuizen, 2010) or assessment (e.g., dynamic assessment; Poehner and Lantolf, 2005). Meanwhile, research into private speech foregrounded the potential for self-directed verbalizations (whether in the L1 or L2) to act as a measure of, or means for, promoting linguistic development (e.g., Centeno-Cortés and Jiménez-Jiménez, 2004; de Guerrero, 2013; Frawley and Lantolf, 1985; Lantolf and Frawley, 1984; McCafferty, 1994; Ohta, 2001; Saville-Troike, 1988). Reflecting subsequent developments and expansions of Vygotsky's theoretical system, the work of A. N. Leontiev (1974/1981; 1977) and Engeström (1987; 2001) expanded the scope for sociocultural-SLA research (e.g., Coughlan and Duff, 1994; Lantolf and Genung, 2002; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Roebuck, 2000; van Lier, 2000) under the umbrella of Activity Theory.

The sociocultural approach emerged alongside meta-theoretical questions raised within SLA more generally (e.g., Firth and Wagner 1997; 2007; Ortega, 2012) regarding the then-dominant cognitivist approach. Two of the many

recommendations put forward to address this imbalance was the development of complementary methodologies that are socially-oriented and emically-informed, and the expansion of the traditional classroom database (Firth and Wagner, 1997; 2007). Therefore, in this paper, I wish to examine the possibility of informing such a methodological development by revisiting Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*, which has gained renewed and increasing attention in recent times. Grounding emic SLA research methods in CHT through this concept adds an important dimension to the understanding of L2 learning, a dimension that applies not only to classroom learning, but also extends to forms of learning and practices beyond formal education (e.g., self-directed online language learning). Additionally, the concept of *perezhivanie* provides researchers using qualitative and emic methods (e.g., narrative analysis, diary studies, phenomenology, conversation analysis, and autoethnography) a tool for reconceptualizing their data within the theoretical framework of CHT and sociocultural theory.

To begin this process of developing *perezhivanie* for SLA research, I first set out the tenets of Vygotsky's non-classical psychology, and its relation to issues in the methodology and epistemology of classical psychology Vygotsky had identified. It is from this foundation that *perezhivanie* is best understood. Next, I turn to the concept as it is presented in 'The problem of the environment' to unpack its role in Vygotsky's theoretical, epistemological and methodological arguments. I clarify some of the misunderstandings of the concept before examining how the concept may be operationalized in SLA research by applying it to existing empirical research. Here, a clearer understanding of *perezhivanie* provides sociocultural SLA researchers with a means to approach the study of L2 learning as 'principally the same type of process as other types of human learning' (Firth and Wagner, 2007: 806), while preserving the richness both of the process of learning and of the individual learners themselves.

Vygotsky: The methodology and epistemology of psychology

To contextualize the eventual emergence of the concept of *perezhivanie*, it is necessary to first examine Vygotsky's motivation for his non-classical, cultural-historical psychology. Here I examine two facets of his methodological criticism: the subject matter of psychology, and the lack of a general psychological theory to study it.

For Vygotsky (1925/1999b), the proper object of psychology was the culturally developed consciousness of human beings. Being unique to humans, it required a similarly unique theoretical framework, one beginning with the proposition that the study of consciousness was a problem of the structure

of behaviour – that is, that consciousness and behaviour are causally linked. Thus, the materialist approaches of (American) behaviourism and (Russian) reflexology were inappropriate because they only studied behaviour, conceptualizing human behaviour as essentially the same as animal behaviour, ignoring the contribution of consciousness. Conversely, the idealist approach of subjective psychology was inadequate because it only described consciousness without explaining its causal link with behaviour or human biology. Studying only behaviour or only consciousness, and in isolation from each other, both materialist and idealist approaches were unsuitable as approaches to the study of human psychology. Reflecting on this situation, Vygotsky declared there was a 'crisis' in psychology.

The nature of this crisis was the fact that, although materialism and idealism shed light on complementary aspects of human psychology, they had different goals and principles and were incommensurable with each other. Further, there lacked a general psychology to unify, coordinate, and structure their findings. Extending the explanatory principles or broadening the scope of either approach to serve as the unifying theory would merely lead to a version of materialism or idealism (Vygotsky, 1997a: Chapter 15). Moreover, it would have been inappropriate to generalize what is common to all branches of psychology, as this fails both to specify how heterogeneous fields relate to each other, and to determine the dominant conceptual language. Furthermore, Vygotsky took issue with the deriving of psychological methodology from the natural sciences, since the result was a focus on observation and description, in an effort to attain the status of a natural science, to the neglect of explanation.

Vygotsky: A new psychology

In the context of this methodological criticism, Vygotsky's theory is thus an attempt to situate consciousness at the centre of a new approach to psychology that is also both holistic and explanatory. One of the fundamental tenets of his theory is his genetic law of cultural development:

> every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category, then within the child as a intramental category. (Vygotsky, 1997b: 106)

Even in Vygotsky's (1925/1999b) early, but later abandoned, reflexological work, he noted that what differentiates human from animal behaviour is the former's cultural origin. Human behaviour is informed not only by immediate experience and biological adaptations (as is the case for animals), but also by

historical and social experience (i.e., the experiences of past generations and other people, respectively), and imaginative mental activity. The genetic law reconceptualizes the relationship between mental development and the social world and avoids contemporary psychology's dualism. The social world is not merely a context for development, but the source of development. Conversely, higher mental functions (HMFs) are uniquely human precisely *because* they have social origins.

Social activity is primarily mediated by signs (e.g., the use of language in asking someone to follow you) rather than being direct (e.g., grabbing them by the arm). All animals have the capacity for instinctive reaction to stimuli, but what differentiates humans is the ability to create signs, or 'artificial stimuli-devices' (Vygotsky, 1997b: 54) to externally stimulate, control, and coordinate the behaviour of ourselves and others. Within activities, sign use is structured by rules to accomplish specific goals within those activities. To internalize socially created signs is to assimilate these structures so that the signs can then be used as a stimuli-device for regulating one's own behaviour through their role in internal mental activities (Vygotsky, 1997b). It is this internalization of signs that constitutes cultural development – the development of HMFs.

The mental function that will later be internalized, as it appears on the social plane, is what Vygotsky (1994) calls the 'ideal form' (p. 347). It is the interaction between this form and the actual 'real' form expressed by the individual that constitutes the 'moving force of development' (Veresov, 2010: 85). As a concrete example, the speech of a child is a 'real' form, while the speech of adults surrounding her constitutes the 'ideal' form towards which the real form of speech develops. However, if the social environment were to be conceptualized in absolute terms, it would mean individuals in identical environments would develop identically – but this cannot be the case. The same child at different ages will be differently affected by the fully formed speech of adults around her depending on whether she understands only single words or whole sentences (Vygotsky, 1994). Similarly, the ideal forms to which the child is exposed may change if the child is put in a different environment (e.g., from home, to pre-school, to play with other children). That is to say, the relationship between the ideal and real – between environment and individual – is dynamic. In Vygotsky's (1994) example, three children from the same family are observed to present three completely different cases of disrupted development in relation to the sometimes-abusive behaviour of their mother, who suffers from various mental disorders. Vygotsky concludes, in this example, it is attitudes of the children and their unique experience of their living conditions that leads to their divergent developmental trajectories, and it is from here the concept of *perezhivanie* is introduced.

Perezhivanie

Though *perezhivanie* is a common Russian word, referring to the mental and emotional experience of some event, it is likely Vygotsky's theoretical usage was inspired by Stanislavsky, a Russian theatre director (whose eponymous system of acting forms the basis of what is commonly known as Method Acting), given Vygotsky's familiarity with both Russian theatre (Kozulin, 1999; Smagorinsky, 2011; Veresov 2009; 2010) and Stanislavsky's work (see, e.g., Vygotsky, 1999a: 237–244). The difficulty in translating the word into English is evidenced by translations of Stanislavsky's *perezhivanie* variously as 'the art of living a part', 'to live the scene', 'sensations', 'living and experiencing', 'experience', 'experiencing', 'emotional experience', 'creation' and 're-living/living through a role' (Carnicke, 2008: Chapter 7). Similarly, translators of Vygotsky have used 'experience' (in 'The Crisis at Age Seven', Vygotsky, 1998), 'lived experience' (drawing on the German equivalent, *Erlebnis;* Blunden, 2010), 'inner experience' (Zavershneva, 2010) and 'emotional experience' (in 'The problem of the environment', Vygotsky, 1994). The translation of *perezhivanie* as 'experience' is itself problematic for readers of Vygotsky's (1998) *Collected Works (Vol. 5)*, given that the Russian word *opyt,* referring to a person's accumulated body of knowledge or skills, can also be translated as experience. In 'The Crisis at Age Seven', for example, there is no clarification as to whether 'experience' is translated from *opyt*, or the more theoretical *perezhivanie*. By contrast, the editors of the volume in which 'The Problem of the Environment' appears (Vygotsky, 1994) explicitly acknowledge the difficulty in translation:

> Neither 'emotional experience' (which is used here and which only covers the affective aspect of the meaning of *perezhivanie*), nor 'interpretation' (which is too exclusively rational) are fully adequate translations of the noun. (p. 354)

In the following discussion, I focus on Vygotsky's examination of *perezhivanie* in 'The problem of the environment', where it plays a central role in three interrelated arguments:

1. the theoretical proposition that *perezhivanie* is the prism through which the role and influence of the environment is determined;
2. the epistemological argument that the concept allows for the holistic approach Vygotsky had been advocating, in contrast to reductionist approaches which lose the richness of the complex phenomenon that is human psychology; and finally
3. the methodological claim that an analysis of *perezhivanie* guarantees an analysis of the individual and environmental factors that actually played a role in the aspect of development under investigation.

I discuss these three arguments in two parts: the first covering theoretical aspects and conceptual aspects of *perezhivanie*, and the second its epistemological and methodological implications.

Perezhivanie as a prism

Discussing the role of the environment in development, Vygotsky (1994) writes:

> The emotional experience [*perezhivanie*] arising from any situation or from any aspect of his environment, determines what kind of influence this situation or this environment will have on the child. Therefore, it is not any of the factors in themselves (if taken without reference to the child)… but the same factors refracted through the prism of the child's emotional experience [*perezhivanie*]. (p. 339–340)

and:

> [Paedology] *ought to be able to find the relationship which exists between the child and its environment, the child's emotional experience* [*perezhivanie*], in other words how a child becomes aware of, interprets, [and] emotionally relates to a certain event. This is such a prism which determines the role and influence of the environment on the development of, say, the child's character, his psychological development, etc. (emphasis in original, p. 341)

In a traditional classroom demonstration of prism refraction, a beam of light is projected into one side of a glass prism and a change in the angle of the beam is observed both inside the prism and where the light has exited. The statement that environmental factors are 'refracted through the prism of the child's emotional experience [*perezhivanie*]' initially suggests that the prism represents the mind, and the influence of the environment determined when it has passed through the prism. This interpretation, however suggests an independent, dualistic analysis of mind and environment followed by an analysis of their structural relationship. While this may be appropriate for the study of light and prisms, the human mind is not similarly reducible. In actuality, *perezhivanie* is defined in Vygotsky's (1994) theory as containing an 'indivisible unity of personal characteristics and situational characteristics' and represents 'that which is being experienced…and how I, myself, am experiencing this' (p. 342). Returning to the metaphor, then, it is not the prism itself without light, nor is it the beam of light after it has been refracted but, more accurately, the prism *while* it is refracting a particular beam of light. Given that *perezhivanie* determines what kind of influence a given situation will have on an individual, any change to this *perezhivanie,* whether through a change in the individual or environment, will mean development will be differently affected. This concept thus provides a means to account for the different developmental trajectories

of the three children discussed earlier. The environment that emerges for the development of a specific individual through their *perezhivanie* of, and relationship to, an objective environment, is what Vygotsky (1998) calls the 'social situation of development' (p. 198). Within *perezhivanie*, individual and environmental characteristics are found in unity rather than isolation, and so too is the social situation of development defined by this unity, and not, as the name would otherwise suggest, only external circumstance. I return to the issue of 'unity' in the following sections, as first, it is necessary to examine of what this metaphorical prism consists.

Vygotsky (1994) writes that *perezhivanie* takes into account 'all the child's personal characteristics which took part in determining his attitudes to the given situation' (p. 342), specifying it 'does not just represent the aggregate of the child's personal characteristics' (p. 343). The question then is: what kinds of psychological characteristics are within the scope of 'personal characteristics'? Does Vygotsky include mental, psychological, emotional, cognitive, and/or affective characteristics? In the footnote to 'The problem of the environment', the editors acknowledge *perezhivanie* includes, though is not reducible to, both emotion and cognition.

It is possible to read 'The problem of the environment' in a way to support an interpretation of *perezhivanie* as referring to either emotion or cognition. For example, in discussing the two youngest children of the three and the effect of their sometimes-abusive mentally ill mother on their development, Vygotsky writes 'he is simply overwhelmed by the horror…' (p. 340) and '…a clash between his strong attachment, and his no less strong feeling of fear, hate, and hostility' (p. 341). Here, it appears that *perezhivanie* refers to strong (and negative) emotional experience of a particular situation. By contrast, in discussing the eldest child of this family, he writes that the child 'already understood the situation. He understood that their mother was ill and he pitied her' (p. 341), thereby foregrounding cognitive development – specifically the ability to comprehend a situation – as being central to understanding the effect of that situation for that particular child. Similarly, Vygotsky later writes that the effect of the environment on development is contingent on the degree to which a child is aware of, or has insight into, their situation: a child who does not understand the significance of a death in the family, or a child who does not have the mental capacity to comprehend the bullying that is happening to him, will clearly be impacted by those events differently in a comparison to a child who *does* understand.[3]

While an individual's emotional response to, or ability to comprehend, a given situation may possibly determine the developmental influence of that environment, it is in fact important for researchers to '*find out…which of these constitutional characteristics* [have] *played a decisive role in determining the*

child's relationship to a given situation' (emphasis in original, Vygotsky, 1994: 342). Thus, *perezhivanie* is best described as an indivisible unity of all and only those personal and situational (environmental) characteristics actually related to, and elicited in, a given individual's experience of a specific situation. In other words, it is through analysis of *perezhivanie* that a researcher identifies the personal characteristics (and the degree to which they are instantiated) that shaped that particular experience of the situation and are thus developmentally relevant.

However, researchers who have used the concept have interpreted *perezhivanie* as referring, pre-analytically, to particular kinds of characteristics. For example, A. N. Leontiev (2005) argues that Vygotsky's conception of *perezhivanie* emphasizes a subject's comprehension of a given environment, and its significance for that subject. Viewing this as unsuccessful in maintaining a true 'unity', Leontiev argues that what determines *perezhivanie* is not a subject's physiological properties, but instead the material content of their activity through which the relationship with a given object or situation is realized. Similarly, Bozhovich (2009) argues that Vygotsky 'felt that the nature of experience in the final analysis is determined by how children *understand* the circumstances affecting them, that is, by *how developed their ability to generalize is*' (emphasis in original, p. 67), with Bozhovich mounting an argument similar to Leontiev's that such a conception ignores the complex interrelations between a subject's needs and the possibilities for meeting them, in determining experience. By contrast, the editors of *Vygotsky and Creativity* initially highlight the influence of past experience in colouring present perceptions of social interaction when they define *perezhivanie.* However, their definition settles on unspecified 'emotional aspects of experience' (John-Steiner, Connery, and Marjanovic-Shane, 2010: 8), drawing on Stanislavsky's usage. In her chapter in *Vygotsky and Creativity*, Ferholt (2010) translates *perezhivanie* as 'intensely-emotional-lived-through-experience' (p. 164) and takes this to be self-explanatory without further discussion of the concept's place in Vygotsky's work.

Within SLA research, interpretations of *perezhivanie* have tended also towards its emotional and affective aspects. Mahn and John-Steiner (2002), for example, address what they view as a lack of emotion in conceptualizations of the ZPD by using *perezhivanie* to focus on the ways in which individuals cognitively and affectively relate to emotional aspects of social interactions. Specifically, they focus on ways in which partners in collaborative activity can provide emotional scaffolding for each other in what is often an emotionally turbulent process of learning. Similarly, Cross (2012) uses *perezhivanie* to refer to the way in which an individual's affective past (e.g., the sense of words already in their L1) can be set in emotional tension with present needs (e.g.,

the need to be understood in a certain way, to make sense of something), the cathartic release of which can be brought about through creative engagement (whether in the form of internalization and/or transformative externalization of signs and tools). By contrast, Antoniadou (2011) suggests that *perezhivanie* is formed by investment in a given activity, that is, an engagement with the subject's interests, motives, and needs, thus foregrounding the importance of emotion. Finally, Kang (2007) proposes that what underlies an individual's *perezhivanie* is their *identity* – constructed anew in each environment in the context of available cultural-historical resources available, and not necessarily known to the individual – within a given situation. However, Kang (2007) also later defines *perezhivanie* as an individual's 'thoughts, emotions, and intentions within each specific environment' (pp. 205–206).

Though these SLA researchers have productively engaged with *perezhivanie* and deployed it for the study of particular personal and/or environmental factors in learning, there has been little work done to understand *perezhivanie* within the broader context of Vygotsky's other theoretical contributions. Chaiklin (2003) and Veresov (2004), for example, have argued that researchers and educators have often employed the definition, rather than concept, of another of Vygotsky's contributions: the ZPD. The (narrow) definition of a term can be obtained simply by quoting the relevant passages in which the term is explicitly mentioned. However, to fully understand the (broader) *concept*, one needs to understand its interrelation with other concepts. Therefore, here I discuss two other aspects in Vygotsky's work to further illuminate the theoretical content of *perezhivanie*: his discussion of the functional unity of consciousness, and methodological units.

The functional unity of consciousness

Vygotsky agreed with the idea in traditional psychology that consciousness was a unified whole. However, he disagreed with the premises that interrelationships between mental functions within consciousness were constant and consistent, inessential for analysis, and that the development of mental functions could be studied in isolation. The development of consciousness, he argued, could not be understood as merely 'a sum of the changes occurring in each of the separate functions' (Vygotsky, 1987: 187–188). Rather, development of particular mental functions can only be understood in terms of changes to interfunctional relationships, that is, in terms of changes to the whole of consciousness. The emergence of a higher mental function like logical memory, for example, comes about when the biologically-given lower mental function of memory is interfunctionally connected, within the system of consciousness, with other mental functions, with volition and affect, with conceptual knowledge, and with sign systems like language and numbers.

This understanding of consciousness clarifies two aspects of *perezhivanie*. First, since consciousness is essentially, to use Mahn's (2013) term, a 'system of systems', any part of that system – HMFs, conceptual knowledge, internalized sign systems, personality, and so on – has the potential to play a role in a given *perezhivanie* due to the interdependence of all those systems. Not every system will be accounted for, of course, nor will the systems be equally salient. In some cases, emotional reactions to a given situation will dominate over rational thought; in other cases the opposite may be true. However, this can only be determined by examining specific *perezhivanie*: it would be premature to focus on rationality, emotion, or any other particular aspect of *perezhivanie* pre-analytically. It is clear from Vygotsky's discussion of consciousness that the different kinds of personal characteristics mentioned in 'The problem of the environment' (emotion, attitudes, and comprehension and understanding) form a non-exhaustive and descriptive, not prescriptive, list.

Second, since development of particular mental functions is best understood in terms of the development of consciousness as a whole (that is, in terms of interfunctional connections), then any on-going development will potentially have an influence, directly or indirectly, on future *perezhivanie*, altering its 'content' even if the objective environment remains unchanged. An English language learner, for example, will differently experience the words *tire* and *dire* depending on whether or not they have the ability to distinguish /t/ and /d/. Existing knowledge and ability, therefore, shape *perezhivanie*. As Vygotsky writes, 'mental functions always act in unity with one another' (Vygotsky, 1987: 188) – the act of perception in this example would itself draw at least on memory and the ability to discriminate, all of which are also connected to the developing system of English signs, among other systems (attitudes to the language and situation, conceptual knowledge, attention, etc.).

Perezhivanie as holistic

As discussed earlier, Vygotsky (1997a) had argued psychology could not be unified if it maintained a materialist-idealist dualism and forced together two fundamentally opposed disciplines. This position was also manifest as an opposition to reductionism in psychology: reducing the object of psychological research to its constituent elements is inappropriate for understanding the whole as a uniquely human phenomenon. If psychology was to provide insight into specifically human phenomena, then it could not proceed purely on the basis of general physical or biological laws. The conceptual language – in this case dialectical materialism – needed to be specific to the object of inquiry. Thus, Vygotsky (1994) argued, 'analysis into elements ought to be replaced by analysis which reduces a complex unity, a complex whole, to its units' (p. 341).

In this section, I aim to illuminate why Vygotsky identified *perezhivanie* as a *unit* of analysis by examining how a *unit* is distinguished from an *element*, and how this distinction fits within the broader argument against a reductionist approach to psychology.

Simply put, units and elements are both empirically identified actual parts (i.e., not merely analytic constructs) of the larger phenomenon under investigation. Where they differ is that units retain the dynamic relations (e.g., those characterizing its growth, development, and on-going operation) of the whole by maintaining a unity of what would otherwise be reduced to separate elements (Vygotsky, 1987; 1994). Thus to understand the development of verbal thinking Vygotsky identified and examined the unit of word meaning, within which the unity of thinking and speech was preserved. Similarly, to understand the role of the environment in the on-going development of consciousness, Vygotsky identified the unit of which consciousness consists[4] – *perezhivanie* – within which the unity of personal and situational characteristics as represented in development, is maintained.

An analysis by elements is, to use one of Vygotsky's well-known examples, like trying to explain the characteristics of water by decomposing it into oxygen and hydrogen atoms (Vygotsky, 1987; 1993). To do so would be to 'cut the knot rather than unravel it' (Vygotsky, 1987: 44) and ignore the internal regularities characterizing what is unique about and specific to water. Consequently, the researcher is forced to find the 'external, mechanical forces of interaction between elements' (Vygotsky, 1987: 45) to explain the characteristics of the whole – that is, what the oxygen atom does for the hydrogen atom (or thinking, for speech), and vice versa. Such analyses by elements are reductive, and while useful for other disciplines, are inappropriate for the study of human psychological development. Specifically, Vygotsky argued against three kinds of reductionism (Matusov, 2007). First is *downward reductionism* (Lantolf, 2006), the explanation of the whole in terms of lower-level biological or physical processes (as in e.g., behaviourism and reflexology). Second is *upward reductionism* (or what Wertsch, 1985, calls 'cultural reductionism'), an explanation of the whole in terms of higher-level cultural processes (e.g., idealism). Third is *horizontal reductionism*, the explanation of parts of a system in isolation from other interdependent parts. Each of these kinds of reductionism simplifies and destroys the complexity of the whole by ignoring the interdependence with higher-level processes, lower-level processes, and other parts of the system, respectively.

Any kind of reductionism, any kind of 'analysis' by elements 'is not analysis in the true sense of the word but *a process of raising the phenomenon to a more general level*' (emphasis in original, Vygotsky, 1987: 244). The issue with generalization here is that specificity is lost: an elemental analysis of water only

produces knowledge about oxygen and hydrogen atoms in general, and not specifically of the phenomenon of water itself. Consequently, the interdependencies between various elements, interdependencies characterizing the whole as being uniquely human, are lost, and the issues germane only to the whole (and not its parts) remain outside the field of view of the researcher (Vygotsky, 1987: Chapter 7). Thus, an elemental analysis of verbal thinking produces knowledge about speech or thinking, while saying nothing about what makes *human verbal thinking* distinct from other sounds in nature, or from the intellectual operations of other animals. Similarly, an elemental analysis of the influence of the environment on mental development says little about how the environment is concretely represented in the process of development for a specific individual. It becomes impossible to follow the process of human psychological development, to distinguish it from other kinds of development, to understand the diversity of internal regularities, when the analytic scope is not sufficiently specific to the unified whole.[5] *Perezhivanie*, then, as a *unit* of analysis, avoids these issues inherent in reductionism and allows more adequate theorization about how the individual and the environment are represented as a complex, dynamic, and rich unity in human mental development.

A final and brief note about Vygotsky's use of *perezhivanie* is its convenience: it accounts for all and only those personal and situational characteristics relevant to a given experience of a situation (and thus, relevant for understanding an individual's behaviour and mental development). A focus on *perezhivanie* also resists the imposition of top-down, researcher-imposed labels, and the distorting interpretation of participants' experiences from the perspective of the researcher – or what has been termed the 'psychologists fallacy' (Belland, Drake, and Liu, 2011: 529). Crucially, the ability to analyse the influence of the environment on an individual's development in concrete terms allows researchers to better understand what is an ever-changing dynamic relationship. Having examined the place of *perezhivanie* in Vygotsky's work, we can now turn to its potential contribution to SLA.

The *perezhivanie* of L2 learning

The concept of *perezhivanie* suggests an emic approach to research, one that is sensitive to the subjective experiences of the learner, linking these with both past and ongoing development. To highlight the potential contribution of the concept for sociocultural SLA research, here I examine some of the issues that are raised when *perezhivanie* is foregrounded, in the context of understanding the role of memory in L2 learning.

Perezhivanie provides a means to approach and reconceptualize fundamental SLA concepts from an emic perspective. Such a perspective, Firth

and Wagner (1997; 2007) argued, is necessary for theoretical, conceptual and methodological balance in a field traditionally dominated by cognitive approaches. By way of example, we can examine the case of memory. Typically discussed in terms of working memory, memory is often conceptualized as a capacity, with research focused on how this capacity can either be increased or better managed and used in activity (for a review, see Juffs and Harrington, 2011; Sagarra, 2013). Missing from this conceptualization, however, is an understanding of how the use of memory is experienced in concrete situations – that is, what is the developmental significance of the act of recalling information? Perhaps equally important, what is the content of recall? If we conceptualize memory as mediating learning (e.g., the use of mnemonic devices) and frame its analysis in terms of *perezhivanie*, then we can begin to answer some of these questions.

Tulving's (1989, 2002) theory of episodic memory, earlier defined by William James as 'present conscious awareness of an event that has happened in the rememberer's own past' (Tulving, 1989: 3), is useful here. In contrast to semantic memory – a purely factual type of remembering (Tulving and Szpunar, 2009) – episodic memory is what allows individuals to re-experience prior experiences. Episodic memory is not confined to the memory of linguistic form, and thus provides a way to understand the different kinds of memories that may be used in the process of learning language. Additionally, the content of a particular memory reflects what a learner originally noticed. As Schmidt and Frota (1986) noted in their seminal paper, noticing is the point at which individual differences, cognition, and affect enter into the language learning process. That which is noticed says as much about the environment as it does about the learner and their relationship to a particular situation at a specific point in time.

In her autoethnographic account of learning Spanish as a L2 as an 'edutourist' in Costa Rica, Lotherington (2007) recounts two examples where the social embarrassment of having misspoken, and the struggle to locate the correct word in time, 'turbo-charge[d]' (p. 125) her memory. The experience of being embarrassed ensures that the words she had mistakenly spoken – *lentejas* (lentils) instead of *lentes* (glasses), and *cuchillos* (knives) instead of *cucharas* (spoons) – are firmly lodged in her memory, as though the affective experience were a mnemonic device. Similarly, in Mok (2013), I undertook an autoethnography of my learning of Mandarin Chinese as a L2, and noted instances where I had recalled previous instances of being confused or mistaken, these recollections mediating my lexical search and production of written constructions. Analysed as part of the *perezhivanie* of language learning, the experience of recall is an emic conceptualization of memory as an active mediating tool in the learning process. The situations that give rise to those memories

can themselves be understood as experiences reflecting the unique relationship the learner had with the environment at a particular moment, thereby providing a basis for investigating that learner's development over time.

The need to understand what learners actually do in language learning – specifically with regard to the use of mediation – is a concern that has also been raised from within the framework of Activity Theory. In their study, Coughlan and Duff (1994) distinguish between *tasks,* the 'behavioural blueprint' given to subjects to elicit data, and *activities*, the actual behaviour produced. Although the same task may be given, different subjects (and indeed, the same subject at different times) may, for whatever reason, approach the task differently, with different goals in mind, creating different activities. As a result, the mediating behaviour used to complete the task will differ. While Coughlan and Duff's study is a caution against isolating data from the contexts from which they were gathered, the issues raised have also been echoed in classroom research, where the strategies deployed to complete tasks have been observed to vary with the learner's perception of the activity (Brown, 2008; 2010; Roebuck 2000). Similarly, others (Allen, 2010; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2010; Wigglesworth and Storch, 2012) have found that the degree to which learners engage with opportunities for learning (e.g., practice, engaging with feedback) is also contingent on the ever-shifting attitudes to, and perceptions of, those opportunities. Implicit in this activity-theoretic research is the centrality of *perezhivanie* – the dynamic relationship between individual and environment, personal and situational characteristics, expressed as an experience of that environment – in shaping behaviour and thus influencing and reflecting development. While for activity theorists this relationship is only part of the larger unit of analysis of the activity system, in Vygotsky's CHT, *perezhivanie* is in itself sufficient as a unit of analysis as the characteristics that are developmentally relevant are only those which are actually manifested in *perezhivanie*.

Concluding remarks

In this paper I have attempted to illuminate the concept of *perezhivanie* within the framework of Vygotsky's CHT so that it may be applied to SLA research with a full understanding of its theoretical content, methodological and analytical potential, and epistemological implications. To do this, I have set out the tenets of Vygotsky's non-classical psychology to illuminate the broader issue that inform his positive theory. It is from within the context of these issues that I have explicated the concept of *perezhivanie* as discussed in 'The problem of the environment'. Just as Vygotsky had argued that the development of mental functions cannot be understood in isolation, so too does the concept of *perezhivanie* require an understanding of its place within CHT as a holistic unit of

analysis that overcomes the reductionism which Vygotsky opposed. Thus, this paper has provided an elaboration of the theoretical content of *perezhivanie*. Further inquiry into the concept is possible by comparing *perezhivanie* to another unit of analysis, *word meaning*, Vygotsky had identified in what Gonzalez Rey (2009) pointed out was a distinct moment in Vygotsky's thinking. In examining the potential application of *perezhivanie* to SLA research in the case of memory, I have also highlighted its potential for informing emic sociocultural approaches to research. Such approaches allow for reconceptualizations of existing concepts by accounting for their concrete manifestations, thereby providing conceptual balance to the field more generally.

For SLA, *perezhivanie* embodies a less traditional epistemology and approach to research, one maintaining the richness of reality rather than its deconstruction. The concept also allows for a synergy between existing qualitative, emic methods and sociocultural theory as a whole, rather than individual concepts. Similarly, *perezhivanie*, shedding the pedagogical and psycholinguistic connotations of cultural-historical concepts previously adapted for SLA, broadens the scope of research to include the informal and self-directed L2 learning contexts that are a reality for some language learners. The concept is a useful addition to the sociocultural SLA repertoire, furnishing researchers with new perspective on L2 learning, as well as options and opportunities for thinking about the implications of their work, for making manifest their research agendas (see, e.g., Ortega, 2005), and for engaging with Vygotsky's work. *Perezhivanie* is useful in that it provides a more general non-linguistic approach to the study of language learning, an approach that appreciates the need to understand, for example, mediation more thoroughly in terms of its relationship to the individual. It also provides a way to reconceptualize existing constructs within SLA in terms of a dynamic, rather than static, relationship. Hopefully, there will be further development of the concept for SLA, if not for research, then for the sake of preserving the essence of Vygotsky's work, as Smagorinsky (2011) writes:

> *perezhivanie* thus far remains more a tantalizing notion than a concept with clear meaning and import to those who hope to draw on it. How this feature of human development is constructed and employed in future work will affect how Vygotsky's legacy in the development of a comprehensive, unified cultural psychology is extended and realized by those working in his considerable wake. (p. 339)

Notes

1. Here I use SLA to refer to the field of research and 'L2 learning' to the object of its study.
2. To clarify, I use 'cultural-historical' to refer to the work of Vygotsky, and 'sociocultural' to its adapted form within SLA.
3. Vygotsky also discusses attitudes, and although to what 'attitude' refers is itself a com-

plex issue, it is indicative of the issues in reading Vygotsky that the word translated as 'attitude' (*otnosheniya*) is more accurately translated as 'relationship' (Veresov, personal communication).

4. Vygotsky (1998): 'experience is the actual dynamics of the unity of consciousness; that is, the whole which comprises consciousness' (p. 294). A more accurate translation of this is '[*perezhivanie* is] an actual dynamic unit of consciousness, i.e. the complete unit which consciousness consists of' (Veresov, personal communication).

5. It should be noted that Vygotsky supports the generalization of a principle from a particular case – for example, he had earlier praised Pavlov's abstraction of a general biological principle, the conditional reflex, from a specific phenomenon, the salivation of dogs (Vygotsky, 1997b: Chapter 15). However, he is opposed to the application of the general principles, available to psychology at the time, to specific phenomena – for example, using the conditional reflex to explain the particular properties (and origins) of uniquely human higher mental functioning (Vygotsky, 1997a: Chapter 1).

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Discussing Mok (2015): Tenets of SCT/CHT

I wrote Mok (2015) with the assumption of a basic knowledge of SCT due to the readership of *Language and Sociocultural Theory*. However, for the purpose of this thesis, it is worth making this assumed knowledge explicit while at the same time further clarifying nuances of CHT and SCT with the benefit of knowledge gained since the paper was written.

CHT as a response to the problem of two psychologies

A distinction made in the paper is between materialist and idealist psychological theories, which examined behaviour and consciousness, respectively, without an adequate explanation of their relation to the other. Though suitable as a brief historical summary, a deeper exploration of the history will provide a better foundation from which to understand Vygotsky's CHT. Mimicking Vygotsky's own method of explicating issues within psychological research, the following exploration is through the lens of various historical and conceptual oppositions.

Vygotsky believed that the proper objects of psychology were higher mental functions (e.g., voluntary attention, logical memory, abstract thought), which, being unique to human beings, would allow for theorisation about what is unique to *human* psychological functioning as opposed to the psychology of animals generally. However, he resisted the notion that mere empirical methods—whether this was observation or introspection—could provide the insights necessary to understand and explain the nature of higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1997a, Chapter 15). The goal of psychology, he believed, should not be to merely observe then *describe* what mental functions were, but to *explain* why they were, and how they come to be (i.e., to reconstruct the process of development)—to make the process of development, not the product of development, the subject-matter of psychology. Rather than observe mental functions directly, they could instead be examined *indirectly* on the basis of a new theoretical framework that would allow for the correct interpretation of that which was actually observable (i.e., the traces and influences of a higher mental function). This approach would be the same as that taken in the natural sciences, in which a theory of how a phenomenon influences a

particular empirical instrument is used to interpret the readings from that instrument. For example, a thermometer divorces the sensation of heat from the researcher: what is used instead is model of the thermal expansion and contraction of mercury or alcohol in the thermometer to register a particular observation of the thermometer as the temperature of the substance measured. In this way, a phenomenon can be theoretically—that is, indirectly—reconstructed and explained. Though this explanatory approach would be a commonality between psychology and natural sciences, Vygotsky at the same time rejected approaches that reduced psychology to a natural science (what he called "vulgar behaviourism"), according to which higher mental functions were reduced to observations of behaviour (i.e., not explained by behaviour, but equated with it). Conversely, he also rejected teleological descriptions (e.g., phenomenology), according to which mental functions had no causal relation whatsoever with behaviour[3]. These numerous dichotomies—higher/lower functions, description/explanation, direct observation/indirect theorising, psychology/natural science, causal/acausal—were discussed against the background of Lenin's *partijnost'* (partisanship), according to which science could take one of only two positions: materialism or idealism. The above dichotomies each point to a different issue within the domain of psychology. However, within the dichotomies, opposing positions pull psychology in contradictory directions. The next section explicates these issues and contradictions, as a way of understanding how CHT later negates, reconfigures, and resolves, them, while also reflecting aspects of those debates. The aim here is to move beyond the simplistic materialism–idealism dualism used in Mok (2015) for contextualising Vygotsky's development of his CHT, and instead generate a more nuanced historical understanding. As will be seen, the ways in which CHT responds to issues within psychology shape its very character.

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[3] It should be noted that the present discussion refers only to the period of Vygotsky's works associated with his development of CHT, beginning around 1927. At other times, Vygotsky had different methdoological approaches to and focuses for his research. For example, as briefly noted in Mok (2015), Vygotsky had a period in which he used a materialistic reflexological (or reactological) approach (from around 1923–1925). Over the years, theorists and historians of Vygotsky's work have divided it according to different criteria (see, e.g., Dafermos, 2018, Chapter 3.3).

A brief history before CHT: Wundt and empirical psychology

The story begins with Wilhelm Wundt (1897), who sought to develop an empirical psychology to investigate mental phenomena in the same way that the natural sciences investigated physical phenomena. The notion of empirical psychology—a psychology that has real observation as its principle method—stands in opposition to "metaphysical psychology", in which metaphysical questions about the nature of mind (e.g., whether it was material or immaterial) were derived from hypothetical propositions. However, psychological could be made empirical in one of two ways: experimental observation or purely introspective observation. Wundt considered the objects of psychological research to be processes (i.e., occurring over time), rather than objects (i.e., being relatively stable over time). Being processes, he argued that they could only be studied through purposeful elicitation (e.g., by the introduction of a stimulus), since it was only in this way that the researcher would be able to determine when the process was actually occurring. Non-experimental observation (i.e., without researcher interference, e.g., pure introspection) would only be useful for studying objects, which being relatively constant, are always available to researchers. Of course, Wundt recognised that the very intention of an individual to observe and report on their mental processes could change or suppress that process, and thus purely introspective observation methods were ruled out. Consequently, experimentation was preferred but this was limited to situations in which the stimuli could be strictly controlled such that they could be assumed to be the direct cause of the mental event under investigation. The resulting method was that of "introspective reports", though contrary to modern connotations of the term, this did not involve reflective thinking. Rather, his method of introspection—more accurately *internal perception* as opposed to *self-observation*—involved situations in which the time between a research participant's inner perception, elicited by an external stimulus, and their subsequent observation and reporting it, was kept minimal. However, the strict requirements of this method and the unwillingness to embrace the kind of *retro*spective methods suggested by British introspectionists and the Würzburg school meant that Wundt's psychological programme was limited primarily to studies of the reaction times or discrimination thresholds of sensation and perception (Danzinger, 1980; Wagoner, 2009). That is, it became restricted to the study of only those *lower* mental functions.

This approach to psychology grounded the study of mental phenomena with the same laws of causality that governed the research in the natural sciences. Wundt's method of introspective reports presumed a causal relation between a stimulus being presented, and the occurrence of or response by a particular lower mental process. It is perhaps worth noting here that Wundt's philosophy is variously considered—according to the project he is argued to be fighting against, and whether the label is Wundt's own or a later interpretation of his work—to be an idealist, monist idealist, ideal-realist (de Freitas Araujo, 2016), critical realist (Judd, 1905), empiricist (Toulmin & Leary, 1985), or radical empiricist (A. Kim, 2016). Irrespective of the specific formulation, Wundt viewed both natural science and psychology as grounded in, and the science of, immediate experience. The difference being that claims about objects within the domain of natural science were made by considering immediate experience—the subjective effect of an objective process—but subtracting the subjective components of those ideas (i.e., removing elements to the extent that they reflect the influence of the observer/subject). Here, objects within the purview of either psychology or natural science were not different *kinds* of things, but rather two perspectives on the same content of experience. Consequently, Wundt rejected approaches that separate them as different kinds (i.e., mental/psychical and natural), since by divorcing mental phenomena from the natural world, mental processes become unexplainable with laws of causality. Instead, the result could only be a *descriptive* psychology.

Aspects of Wundt's work would later be adapted to different intellectual traditions (much like Vygotsky's work; see Dafermos, 2016). Indeed, the (American) behaviourists and (Russian) reflexologists would continue the tradition of experimental psychology, but instead ground it a materialist philosophy. Rather than being a science of immediate experience (as per Wundt), the materialist's version of experimental psychology was instead considered to be a science of observable behaviour or reflexes. Theorists working in these traditions retained Wundt's use of causal explanation in psychology, but differed from him in that the mind was considered reducible (or fully coinciding with) objective observations of behaviour. In this context, to speak of the mind as something other than equal to behaviour would be to enter an acausal, non-natural (i.e., immaterial) realm in

which behaviour could not be reliably understood and thus mastered (Vygotsky, 1997a, Chapter 7).

At the same time, there were theorists—philosophically, idealists—who accepted the mind as not being causally connected to the material world, instead embracing psychology as an empirical *descriptive* enterprise. Methodologically, this entailed the use of (nonexperimental) observation to empathically understand mental processes (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). Epistemologically, introspection rested on the assumption it was possible to adequately observe one's own mental processes without fundamentally altering them—that is, to think, and to think about thinking, are understood to be the same; the phenomenon and being coincide (Vygotsky, 1997a, Chapter 7). On this basis, and since most mental processes are, under this conceptualisation, accessible through phenomenological introspection, the higher functions, excluded by Wundt's methodology, could at least be described. Indeed, this was the situation that developed: causal explanatory psychology studied lower functions, while descriptive intentional psychology studied higher functions (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). However, Wundt had also begun to develop his own means for studying higher mental functions. According to Wundt, higher functions presupposed groups of individuals—"mental communities"—and were too variable in the individual to satisfy his experimental requirements. To satisfy the demand for phenomenal authenticity of higher functions would be to sacrifice the demand for experimental control (Toulmin & Leary, 1985). However, the *products* of such mental activity (e.g., language, myths, customs, law, history) had a necessary degree of constancy to be studied to infer the nature of the human minds that produce them (Wundt, 1897; Veresov, 2009). Indeed, Wundt dedicated extraordinary efforts to develop such a *social* psychology of cultural products called *Völkerpsychologie* (folk psychology). Vygotsky (1997a), however, was dissatisfied with this state of psychology. The fundamental issue, as he understood it, was the "empirical character of its constructions[, which] must be torn off from psychology's constructions like a pellicle . . . to see them as they really are" (p. 298). The multitude of psychological approaches at the time could be delineated into just two camps—the materialists, who tended to be causal explanatory psychologists, and idealists, who tended to be descriptive intentional psychologists. It is here that we rejoin the distinction made in the paper above.

Vygotsky argued that psychology ought to be objective, causal, explanatory, use experimental methods, and yet also study higher mental functions (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; Vygotsky, 1997a). However, for psychology to explain human higher functions (and thus be truly a psychology of *human beings* and not animals in general) at that time, the two fundamental approaches were inadequate. The materialist reduces the mind to objective behaviour, and uses causal explanations that were presumed to operate only at the level of lower functions and thus neglect the higher functions. Meanwhile, the idealist was confined to the subjective: that which exists epistemologically (i.e., can be experienced and known) yet not ontologically (i.e., is nonetheless immaterial and non-natural). However, as Vygotsky (1997a) argued, "no science can be confined to the subjective, to *appearance*, to phantoms, to what does not exist" (emphasis in original, pp. 326–327). Here, the idealist uses a descriptive approach that could describe higher functions but not explain them. Wundt's comparative study of cultural products as a way of understanding higher mental functions was also inappropriate as it, in a sense, relied on a reduction of the cultural to the psychological and provided no insight into why those cultural products are specifically *social*—they are merely thought of as expressions of the internal. Instead, Vygotsky (1997a) sought to explain higher mental functions as being causally explainable and having an objective material basis: "The unreal must be explained as the non-coincidence, generally as the relation of two real things; the subjective as the corollary of two objective processes (p. 327). Such an explanation, however, though not empirical in Wundt's sense, could nonetheless be derived from experimentation and observation—but this would require an appropriate materialistic theoretical framework to interpret the observable traces and influences of unobserved higher mental functions in the experimental setting, and reveal connections previously obscured in inquiry limited to the directly observable. That is, psychology needed a unified theory that could cast off the empirical presumption that the *perception* of phenomena is equal to having *knowledge* of those phenomena (Hyman, 2012; Vygotsky, 1997a, Chapter 15).

The general genetic law (of the development of higher mental functions)

This leads to Vygotsky's genetic law of development, which can be understood as unifying aspects of the materialist's causal explanatory approach (e.g., experimental method, explanatory framework, material basis) with the idealist's descriptive approach (e.g., a focus on higher mental functions at the level of the individual, mind as immaterial). At the same time, it also avoids the undesirable commitments of either approach (the sole focus on lower mental functions, and the lack of causal explanation, respectively). The genetic law of cultural development is as follows: "every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category, then within the child as a intramental category" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 106).

To expand on Mok (2015): the genetic law states that higher mental functions have their genetic basis (i.e., their origins) as social relations, and that there is a causal link between this and their appearance as higher mental functions. Being social relations, they have a material basis that can therefore be observed and studied (though not in the manner Wundt envisioned with his *Völkerpsychologie*; I expand on this in the next section). Since there is a direct relation between its appearance *inter*mentally and its subsequent appearance *intra*mentally, a higher function's initial material existence as a social relation can be the subject of an experimental, causal explanatory research methodology. Finally, since there is a causal relation between material social relations and the immateriality of the mind (the latter emerges from the former), it becomes possible to maintain both an *ontological* monist materialism (allowing for causal explanatory psychology) and an *epistemological* dualism (recognising the fact that the mind is still perceived and experienced as immaterial)[4]. This latter dualism maintains a qualitative distinction between mind and matter that allows Vygotsky's theory to avoid reducing mind to matter

[4] This line of thinking is adopted from Payne's (1968) discussion of Lenin's reflection theory, which was also argued to allow for both a monistic ontology and dualistic epistemology. I provide a further discussion of reflection theory and its link to Vygotsky in Mok (2017), in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

(as per "vulgar behaviourism"; see Matusov, 2007)—that is, it resists the reduction of the immaterial appearance of mind to the workings of matter, allowing for explanations of what it is about the mind that makes it qualitatively (e.g., structurally, functionally) different from mere physiological processes. It should be clarified here that the genetic law is a specification of the development of higher mental functions as being a *cultural* process. This is opposed to the development of lower mental functions, which occurs through *natural* (i.e., biological) processes. These two lines are interdependent: the natural line feeds into the cultural and vice versa (Wagoner, 2009).

Before moving on to an overview of the concepts of mediation and internalisation, which support the law, and the methodology necessitated by it, I would like to clarify the use of the word "category" in the law's definition, which has a meaning that differs from common parlance. Veresov (2009) has argued that it comes from pre-revolutionary Russian theatre, and used to refer to a dramatic event, a collision of characters on stage, and thus denotes an emotionally coloured and experienced collision between individuals. Not a physical collision, of course, but one that is represented in, to borrow Veresov's example, a debate between two people (i.e., interpsychological), which leads to a self-reflection (i.e., the debate is now represented intrapsychologcally). Blunden (2014b) disagreed with this assessment, arguing that Veresov's conceptualisation links the Russian-theatre "category" with Aristotle's "*kategoria*". In Aristotle's Rhetoric, *kategoria* referred to a mode of speech—an accusation—to which the other responds—*apologia*. Blunden argued that there is no textual basis for reading Vygotsky as drawing on this etymological lineage (though does not discount the possibility of this interpretation entirely). Instead, Blunden links Vygotsky's use of "category" to Kant's sense of the word (i.e., a pure abstraction that is divorced from experience and concrete instantiations, from which other concepts derive meaning), which can itself be traced back to another sense in ancient Greek as meaning a predicate (something attributed to a subject). This Kantian meaning is then argued to be more plausible as it was taken up by Hegel, then Marx, and consequently, Vygotsky. Though Blunden no longer insists on his interpretation (Veresov, personal communication), the terminological discussion had prompted my own analysis so that I could understand and resolve the disagreement in a way that is consistent with my own understanding of CHT.

Veresov (2009) cites the following from Vygotsky (via his own translation of the Russian text) as support for his claim: "From here comes, that one of the central principles of our work is experimental unfolding of higher mental process into the drama, which happened between the people. (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 145)" (p. 274). Not indicated in this translation, however, is the omission of words that clarify the meaning and are present in the *Collected Works* translation:

> From this, one of the basic principles of our will is *the principle of division of functions among people, the division into two of what is now merged into one,* the experimental unfolding of a higher mental process into the drama that occurs among people (emphasis added, Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 106)[5].

From this, a reading different from both Veresov and Blunden, yet drawing on both, is possible: it is not that the social relation is required to be a dramatic *event* between two people, but merely be *social*, in that the relation has two sides ("the division into two"). This relation can be fulfilled by the reading of category as referring to the rhetorical *kategoria*, since *kategoria* (the accusation) implies its opposite, the *apologia* (response/defence). *Kategoria*, even if it is not a dramatic *event* per se, is nonetheless a necessarily social relation. That is, the "two . . . merged into one" refers to the two complementary sides—the *kategoria*, and the *apologia*, or the *kategoria implying* the *apologia*—that is fulfilled by two people *inter*psychologically, but which *intra*psychologically, are merged into one. In much the same way, an understanding of the concept of a "question", necessitates the concept of an "answer". Veresov's interpretation appears to be a reading of Vygotsky as describing *why* the transition occurs, though it seems that Vygotsky, as cited above, is focused on describing *what* is being transitioned. However, it does not appear that the question of what prompts such a transition to occur is the focus of the discussion. To recycle Veresov's debate example: what is relevant is not that the dramatic nature (in a theatrical sense) of arguing in a debate *causes* the a

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[5] From the original Russian: Отсюда одним из основньгх принципов нашей воли является принцип разделения функций между людьми, разделение надвое того, что сейчас слито в одном, экспериментальное развертывание высшего психического процесса в ту драму, которая происходит между людьми (emphasis added, underlined text corresponds to italics. Vygotsky, 1983, p. 145).

transition of the debate to the intrapsychological plane, but rather, the notion of debate as a particular kind of social relation between people (i.e., dramatic by virtue of being between people) is what comes to be mirrored internally. The question of why this occurs is answered elsewhere. Though this discussion may seem to border on pedantry, it is precisely this kind of careful concern with historical accuracy that aids understanding of concepts developed in geographically, culturally, and temporally distant contexts. The debates not only help to resolve misunderstandings, but also brings to light aspects of concepts that would otherwise be taken for granted. Indeed, it is this kind of approach—specifically an awareness of and concern with difficulties of translation—that characterises much of the work in the present thesis.

Genetic/historical methodology: Mediation and internalization

The idea of higher mental functions is necessitated and explained by the social reality of human beings. Social activity (broadly understood to include *cultural* activity; Vygotsky, 1997b, Chapter 5, p. 106) requires a shared means for coordinating the behaviour of groups of people and to move beyond the limits of the "organic system of activity which exists for each mental function" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 63). This role is filled by *signs* (e.g., language, numbers, maps, music), which are artificial creations used to change and direct behaviour—whether that of others or one's own. Vygotsky sees the sign as an internally directed analogue to the externally directed *tool*, which is used to change the object of one's activity (i.e., to change one's environment). Both sign and tool have, psychologically, an instrumental—that is, *mediating*—function (Vygotsky, 1997b, Chapter 2) but differ in the object of their action. As mediators, they allow human beings to act beyond biologically given capabilities: a wrench (tool) allows for the application of more torque than one's strength allows, and the particular meaning of a pointing gesture (sign) directs the attention of other people. In the latter scenario, the pointing gesture, in Vygotsky's view, begins as an attempt by a child to reach and grab an object. It is the caregiver's interpretation of this movement as a particular indicative gesture that establishes its social meaning (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1988; Vygotsky, 1997b, Chapter 5). It is this meaning that becomes *internalized* by the child, becoming incorporated into and

transforming natural forms of behaviour, altering the range of that child's possible activity (i.e., allowing them to interact with objects beyond their physical reach). The meaning of the gesture has transformed the relationship between the reaching behaviour and the child's desire to reach something: now they can gesture to indicate something beyond their reach, and their caregiver can retrieve the object for them. In a sense, the gesture is a "social organ" (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 106), an extension of the child, in the same way that a tool is an extension of one's physical capacities. However, once internalized, the development of that higher function has concluded and, having formed complex psychological interrelations, becomes difficult to study, at least empirically.

Therefore, a full understanding of higher mental functions requires a study not of the product, but process, of development—the way in which the higher functions comes into being:

> for only in movement does the body exhibit that it is. . . . [An] historical study of behavior is not supplementary or auxiliary to theoretical study, but is a basis of the latter. (Vygotsky, 1997b, p. 43)

This entails that the researcher should:

> transform the automatic, mechanical, fossilized character of the higher form and turn its historical development back, experimentally return the form that we are interested in to its initial moments in order to make it possible to trace the process of its genesis (p. 71).

For Vygotsky, this was manifest in his method of "double stimulation" (also known as the instrumental method): a child is observed attempting to solve a task that is beyond their capabilities, then the researcher provides the child a means (an external mediator) by which they can solve the task (though the researcher does not *determine* for them how it should be used; Vygotsky, 1997b, Chapter 3; Wagoner, 2009). In this way, the child can be observed in the process of actively forming a higher psychological function when they use the mediator to solve the task. At this point, the child incorporates the artificially introduced mediator into new structures with existing lower mental functions, creating a new, mediated path to the task. The child is now able to control and direct their own behaviour using a means that was once unconnected to their activity. In making this

process experimentally visible, the conditions under which this development occurs can be better understood.

This approach to studying the process of development rather than the product of development reflects the crucial fact of psychological processes, noted by Wundt, that they occur over time. This also entails that they cannot be understood as isolated invariants, since they are constantly changing (even if only minutely), irreversible, and therefore in principle, *historical* in nature (Smedslund, 2016). For example, when a child attempts to complete a task, whether they are successful or not, they will have memory of that attempt when given the same task again, and thus the starting conditions will be different. This is why it is necessary, rather than understand how a psychological process works per se, to understand how and why a particular psychological process emerges from observable activity and subsequently becomes internalised. Without such an understanding, there is no theory of the emergence, functional significance, or structure of the higher function; only tenuously related description (Vygotsky, 1997b, Chapter 2).

Being central to the theory of the development of higher mental functions, the concept of internalization is not without contention. In positing internal and external planes, the concept can be read as reifying the dualism that Vygotsky sought to avoid (whether this dualism is read epistemologically, ontologically, or both, is a more complex matter; see, e.g., Sawyer, 2002). For example, Cobb and Yackel (1996) view internalization as reflecting the transmission/transfer model of learning, according to which learners passively acquire static cultural objects. However, Vygotsky had actually used *vraschivanie* (ingrowing) to refer to internalization (or interiorization, by some translations; Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018, Chapter 21), which connotes an active transformation of the external into emergent, personally meaningful experience, a kind of inner growth and integration such that the individual acquires a sense of ownership of what is internalised (Frawley, 1997; Levykh, 2008). Nonetheless, theorists working closer to the Activity Theory (AT) tradition have preferred alternative terminology such as “appropriation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991), “mastery” (Wertsch, 1993), and “participation” (Rogoff, 1990, 1992, 1995) to broaden the focus from decontextualised individual transformation to also include the individual’s transformation of their social environment (Matusov, 1998; Rogoff, 1995).

CHT and contexts of interpretation

Having explicated the historical context from which Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory of development emerges, the remainder of this chapter briefly discusses the ways in which the interpretation and reception of CHT can shaped by the disciplinary contexts as well as the motivations and commitments of theorists—here, myself. First, as a kind of case study, I discuss the rhetorical differences between the notion of "ideal form" and mediation, which reflect different periods of Vygotsky's work, and which were erroneously conflated in Mok (2015). Next, I explain how my early interests in SLA shaped my understanding of the relation between SCT and CHT. Finally, this section concludes with a brief note regarding the name of Vygotsky's theory.

Mediation and ideal form

One aspect of Vygotsky's theoretical development not clearly delineated in Mok (2015) is the two different periods (or what González Rey, 2009, calls "moments") of his work. The well-known instrumental period of 1928–1931 is the source of the main ideas of mediation, internalisation, and the genetic law. During this period, Vygotsky focused on the historical development of higher psychological functions. From 1932, Vygotsky began to move away from the study of the structure and instrumental functions of signs, to the study of the internal structure of signs (i.e., its meanings; Zavershneva, 2010a; 2018). He had realised that consciousness was essentially itself a kind of mediator in the relationship between the person and the environment (Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018, "Introduction") and it is in this context that he introduced the concept of *perezhivanie* as a unit for analysing consciousness. Running to parallel to the broader theoretical orientation, Vygotsky had also, from about 1927, begun to use the principles of his cultural-historical psychology in the development of paedological theory (the study of child development).

The blurring of the instrumental and later period can be seen on page 143 of Mok (2015), in which I erroneously conflate mediation and "ideal form", the latter being a concept introduced in the later period. The two concepts are similar in that they refer to that which is (or should be) internalised during the process of development. However, as with

any other concept, their use requires a careful consideration of whether the purposes the concepts originally served, can align with the problems they are being operationalised to solve. To be brief: the concept of mediation arose within Vygotsky's work on a general psychology, whereas that of the "ideal form" arose from his work in paedology. Part of this latter work was in developing a systematic explanation of child development as proceeding through specific age periods. Each period was characterised by the dominance of a different part of the system of personality of the child, and the presence of specific ideal forms in that child's environment that are ideal only relative to the dominant aspects of the child's development. The development (that is, internalisation) of this ideal form[6] would mark the end of the age period and the start of a new period in which a new aspect of personality would be dominant, resulting in a new structural relation between the child and their environment (e.g., from ages 3 to 7 years, a child begins to bring their behaviour under control of their own will, leading to the ability after this period to begin to develop control in their relations with other people; Vygotsky, 1998, Chapter 10). Though the use of ideal form as synonymous with mediation is at least superficially acceptable in the discussion of language learning issues, the former has an additional normative implication that the latter does not. That is, the "ideal form" represents what a child *ought to* have developed by the end of a culturally defined age period. This concept of an ideal form thus also implies that there are forms that are unwanted or less than ideal (e.g., particular forms of speech), an implication not present in the more value-neutral concept of mediation (e.g., the sign system of language as a whole). When applied to second language learning, these seemingly similar concepts can lead to two different approaches: the notion of ideal form invites discussions of speech "deficiency" relative to the ideal model of the native speaker, whereas mediation supports theorising of ways in which "non-native" speakers can, nonetheless, creatively deploy language or other communicative resources for social interaction.

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[6] Strictly speaking, Vygotsky (1994) calls this developed form both ideal and final: "ideal in the sense that it acts as a model for that which should be achieved at the end of the developmental period; and final in the sense that it represents what the child is supposed to attain at the end of his development" (p. 348). That is, it both exerts a force for development, as well as being the form of development.

Sociocultural theory and cultural-historical theory

Though I did not clearly distinguish between the instrumental and later period of Vygotsky's work, I *did* distinguish between Vygotsky's CHT, and the adaptation of his theory that has come to be attributed to him (i.e., sociocultural theory). Here I give three reasons why this distinction was made. The first is that much of the research within the sociocultural approach to SLA has been built primarily on investigating the notions of private speech and the ZPD, which reflects SLA's focus on classroom learning and also its origins in psycholinguistic and pedagogical issues. Notably, the concept of the ZPD has come to inform techniques for both teaching (e.g., "scaffolding"; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) and assessment (e.g., dynamic assessment; Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). Though this is a broad oversimplification of sociocultural SLA, these are the main concepts used when introducing the approach in applied linguistics textbooks (e.g., Lantolf, Thorne, & Poehner, 2015; Thorne & Tasker, 2011). Second, the sociocultural approach does not draw solely from Vygotsky, but also on subsequent theoretical developments (e.g., Activity Theory). The concept of *perezhivanie* can thus be viewed as having emerged from Vygotsky's CHT, but not yet come to have its placed defined within SCT. The task of bringing *perezhivanie* into the sociocultural approach requires an assessment of the concept's fit (or otherwise) with the sociocultural-theoretic interpretation of CHT. Third and finally, the separation between CHT and SCT also allows for a distinction between theorists who seek to adapt Vygotsky's for modern practice contexts and issues on one hand, and those who seek to better clarify Vygotsky's work on the other. In the latter stream of research, for example, there has been an argument for a restoration of the original translation of *zona blizhaishego razvitia* (ZBR) to mark an understanding more closely reflecting Vygotsky's intentions and to overcome limitations of the scaffolding metaphor derived from a limited understanding of the ZPD (for a discussion, see, e.g., Valsiner & van der Veer, 1993; Veresov, 2017b). The issue of situating *perezhivanie* within different theoretical contexts is discussed in Mok (2017) in Chapter 4.

A note on names

Of course, different theorists have distinguished CHT and SCT differently: John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) refer to CHT as a subset of SCT; Fleer and Veresov (2018) distinguish between CHT and AT, with SCT falling within the umbrella of the former, and suggest that terminological differences may in part be geocultural; and Roth and Lee (2007) note that some scholars use "sociocultural" to refer to Vygotsky's work and CHT to Leont'ev's work (which is elsewhere called AT). It is quite intriguing then, that according to Vygotsky's notes, he had not decided on a name, since in his view he was merely doing psychology. However, Vygotsky seemed to prefer the name "historical theory of higher psychological functions" to emphasise a) that development was *historical* (and consequently necessitated a historical method) and b) that higher functions were *psychological*—though notes on the name of this theory were written just as he began to shift his theoretical focus (Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018, Chapter 9)[7]. Regardless, it can be seen that the labels ascribed to Vygotsky's work reflects what researchers consider novel about or essential to the theory in the context of their own domains of expertise (Dafermos, 2016; Koshmanova, 2007). In the case of the label of "sociocultural", it represents an emphasis on the interpenetration of social and cultural in human life (Cole, 2005), rather than on cognitive processes. "Cultural-historical" shifts the focus from the psychological *product* to cultural-historical *process* of development. This is all to say that the motivations for using Vygotsky's work are reflected not only in the specific interpretations of concepts, but also in the very name of the theory.

[7] For a further discussion of the different labels given to Vygotsky's work during his time (rather than in modern scholarship) by Vygotsky himself (at different moments of his work), his followers, and his critics, see Dafermos (2018, Chapter 3) and Keiler (2012). The most accurate *general* label for his later-period works is likely to be "theory of the higher psychological functions" (Keiler, 2012). "Cultural-historical theory" was coined maliciously by a critic of Vygotsky, though ironically this aided in its definition and understanding (Dafermos, 2018).

In conclusion: Approaching CHT through SLA and SCT

The paper presented in this chapter crystallises a particular approach to understanding *perezhivanie*; one that is framed within the discourse of SLA. Though I was drawn to the concept some years ago during my MA, it required grounding in some identifiable gap I knowledge. Given that I was previously doing my research within a linguistics department, I found, within epistemological and methodological issues raised by Firth and Wagner (1997, 2007), a question to which *perezhivanie* could be the answer. Specifically, that *perezhivanie* could provide a theoretical foundation not only for further developing the sociocultural approach to SLA research, but also for informing autoethnography, itself a potentially new methodological tool for understanding language learning. For this PhD, however, I found myself surrounded not by linguists, but by researchers of early childhood education, all of who had a keen interest in CHT at a deeper level. Subsequently, I found myself engrossed in Vygotsky's work and texts per se—in truly understanding them—rather than in its manifestation as the sociocultural approach to SLA. Much of Mok (2015), then, is spent on an analysis of Vygotsky's "The problem of the environment" (1994) and relating it to SLA issues.

The desire to explore the concept of *perezhivanie* was tempered by the need to ground such an exploration in concrete SLA issues to produce a discipline-appropriate and examinable thesis. Consequently, the conjunction of this practical need and my interest in *perezhivanie* produces the particular interpretation found in the paper—an interpretation that begins to dig deeper into the reasons for the concept's existence, but does not yet quite dig deep enough; an interpretation that is couched in terms of SLA. As Dafermos (2016) writes, "the definition . . . of Vygotsky's ideas is not a neutral point of view, but it depicts the understanding of the essence of his theory . . . . in various social and scientific contexts" (p. 29). In a sense, the concept is (and was) refracted through the prism of my own concerns, needs, knowledge (even if incomplete), aspirations, and so on, to the extent that they actually characterise my research and writing. I can say now, in hindsight, that what was missing in Mok (2015) was an explicit understanding of *dialectics* which, in later papers (see Chapter 4) provides the language to make sense of why the concept is novel (in a modern context), important, and represents a fundamentally different way of thinking about the world. Nonetheless, the concept of *perezhivanie* provided a means to

begin to destabilise the static character of the concepts, categories, and labels of SLA, and to move towards a more emic, emergent, dynamic understanding that reflects living reality. Consequently, it is also a step forward in operationalising *perezhivanie* for explaining the data of autoethnography.

Chapter 3: Autoethnography and drawing links with *perezhivanie*

Autoethnography is an approach to qualitative ethnographic anthropological (and more recently, sociological) research in which the researcher's subjectivity and experiences are made explicit in and for analysis. Though the term was first used in reference to ethnographic studies in which the researcher was a member of the culture being examined (rather than being an outsider), the paradigmatic questions and questioning that such studies incited, have come to be a central feature of autoethnographic research.

Since autoethnography has its origins in critiques of anthropological and sociological ethnography, I can only approach it as an outsider. As stated in the first chapter, I was introduced to autoethnography during my MA degree at a time when I needed to replace an untenable study, yet still produce some kind of data for analysis. Neither I, nor my then supervisor, were anthropologists; neither of us (or at least, I) had lived experience nor familiarity with that discipline, its worldview, or its methods and debates. We were applied linguistics researchers studying language learning. Subsequently, I had developed only a naive and superficial understanding of what autoethnography entailed: it seemed to be a simple matter of merely using myself as a research subject rather than recruit participants. It seemed straightforwardly obvious to me that I, the researcher, was also a person who could be a source of research data. I believed that, as a research method, a study of my own experience would provide convenient access to experiences that could be described richly, forming a dataset to which either grounded theoretic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or thematic content analyses could be applied.

Yet, I had niggling doubts that such a radical departure from post/positivist notions of objectivity could be a) considered legitimate social science research, and b) acceptable to examiners. Though I now realise that these very doubts were guiding me towards deeper philosophical and paradigmatic questions, I mostly ignored them at the time. For the sake of examination, I still needed to justify and defend autoethnography alongside my use of *perezhivanie*. In the MA thesis (Mok, 2013), I explained that *perezhivanie* could provide a conceptual tool for explaining and theorising the *developmental* significance of

introspective observations (i.e., the data of autoethnography). Grounding a relatively radical methodology in the safer, more established theoretical framework of CHT provided the thesis with some much-needed legitimacy.

The kind of autoethnography that emerged was a kind of self-study diary that was analysed by discerning salient recurring themes. Though the study shed light on important experiential dimensions of existing SLA constructs (e.g., the sometimes surprising and strange mnemonic associations that emerge; the ways in which the experience of actively "remembering" can eventually become a more automatic "knowing"), I did not use the opportunity to take up the more serious philosophical task of challenging hegemonic paradigms of what constitutes knowledge. As I skim through the thesis now to write this chapter, it seems as though the use of the autoethnographic approach had merely a thin veneer of being "radical", masking what was otherwise a fairly traditional, unchallenging qualitative study. That is, I had appropriated the "radical" label without engaging in the questioning that made it such a departure from traditional research methodologies. Alas, I needed to write to the expectations of both the department and the nameless examiners. I needed to do "real" social-scientific concrete analysis, and I did not have the time or knowledge to engage with the *methodology* of autoethnography. It could be said, then, that my specific interpretation and operationalisation of autoethnography was shaped (or even determined) by my particular history, abilities, needs, and the demands I perceived to be bearing on my work, in much the same way that Vygotsky's new vision of psychology reflected his own understanding of debates within the field, as well as the social and cultural forces that shaped research at the time.

This chapter aims to update my prior knowledge gaps, by outlining the autoethnographic approach to research in terms of its foundations, concerns, and internal debates. I look at the methodology in terms of its postmodern scepticism toward post/positivist paradigms, its role in new paradigms (e.g., interpretivism, social constructionism, critical, and transformative/emancipatory), its postmodern challenge to traditional forms of knowing and research writing, its fundamental concern with and rationale for reflexive practices, and its ways of dealing with the radical acknowledgement of the researcher. In doing so, I begin to draw links to the concept of *perezhivanie*. Borne as a result of these links is an

empirical study that was originally intended to generate data for analysis, but which was later abandoned and subsequently became a point of reflection. Here, I outline that study, discuss the struggles that derailed the project, and the new path on which these difficulties set me.

From autoethnography to postmodernism and back

As the story goes, Sir Raymond Firth's was the first notable use of the term auto-ethnography, in reference to Jomo Kenyatta's study (1938) of his (Kenyatta's) native Kikuyu people (a Kenyan ethnic group). When Kenyatta, a Kikuyu tribal man and later the first president of independent Kenya, had presented his work at a seminar, it sparked a heated debate with Louis Leakey, the son of Christian missionaries working with the Kikuyu and a white African. Both men were born in Kenya and educated abroad with degrees in anthropology, though they differed in their approach to research. Leakey used a traditional hypothesis-driven style of anthropology as a relative outsider, while Kenyatta combined ethnography with autobiography, given his intimate familiarity with the Kikuyu. Thus the question emerged as to who had the right to re-present and write about a culture, and similarly, the extent to which the validity of anthropological research should be judged on the basis of the researcher's characteristics, interests, and origins (Hughes & Pennington, 2017, Hayano, 1979). This was a challenge to the fundamental post/positivist ideal of the detached, objective researcher. By the 1980s, the use of autoethnographies—the ethnographic study of the researcher's own people—in anthropology and sociology was a reality: in part due to a lack of financial support for fieldwork abroad (leading to students studying their own local communities) and in part due to the increasing numbers of minority and foreign students who were interested in studying their home cultures (Hayano, 1979).

At the same time, there was a growing and pervasive destabilisation of fundamental ideas about research. The postwar social movements of the 1960s created a lingering suspicion of the ability for all-encompassing paradigms to "ask the right questions, let alone provide answers, about the variety of local responses to the operation of global systems" (Marcus & Fischer, 1999, p. 9). The new awareness of social inequality, colonialist and imperialist

history, and a rejection of paradigmatic authority fostered theoretical fragmentation and disciplinary intermingling. Geertz (1980) subsequently identifies what he calls the "blurred genres" movement: the borrowing of ideas, methods, and discursive structures from across disciplinary boundaries, bridging gaps between the arts and sciences. This borrowing provided researchers a way to examine the kinds of complex interactions that were beyond the purview of single approaches, to move beyond "a laws-and-instances ideal of explanation toward a cases-and-interpretations one" (p. 165). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identify this movement as providing a foundation for the "crisis of representation", in which the new doubts about the value and applicability of "grand theory" paradigms led to an uncertainty about how social reality could or should be described (Marcus & Fischer, 1999). These, and other fundamental questions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, gave rise to a new postmodern sensibility.

Ellis et al. (2011) provide a concise summary of the situation:

> In particular, scholars began illustrating how the "facts" and "truths" scientists "found" were inextricably tied to the vocabularies and paradigms the scientists used to represent them (Kuhn, 1996; Rorty, 1982); they recognized the impossibility of and lack of desire for master, universal narratives (De Certeau, 1984; Lyotard, 1984); they understood new relationships between authors, audiences, and texts (Barthes, 1977; Derrida, 1978; Radway, 1984); and they realized that stories were complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that taught morals and ethics, introduced unique ways of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others (Adams, 2008; Bochner, 2001, 2002; Fisher, 1984). Furthermore, there was an increasing need to resist colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively entering a culture, exploiting cultural members, and then recklessly leaving to write about the culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to cultural members (Conquergood, 1991; Ellis, 2007; Riedmann, 1993). (p. 274)

In postmodernism, the dominance of the traditional scientific method (and its assumptions) is questioned, the transformative potential of research is increasingly recognised, and the door to new ways of knowing is opened. Within this context, autoethnography emerges as a way to participate in these conversations through recognising the epistemic value of explicating a researcher's subjectivity, the constructed and interpretive nature of knowledge, rejecting the postpositivist facade of objectivity,

and as a blurred genre, drawing on and experimenting with other modes of writing for enacting the transformative potential of research (Wall, 2006). The next section provides an overview of the main approaches to autoethnography.

Autoethnography as an approach

Perhaps reflecting the postmodern questioning of singular grand theories and narratives, "the meanings and applications of *autoethnography* have evolved in a manner that makes precise definition difficult" (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 449). It has been characterised as an autobiographic genre of writing (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), a highly personalised account drawing on the experience of the researcher to extend sociological understanding (Holt, 2003; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Sparkes, 2000), a self-directed narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005), and a reflexive methodology (Turner, 2012), among others. Ellis and Bochner (2000) and Ellingson and Ellis (2008) also include, under the umbrella of autoethnography, studies that have been referred to by other terms such as personal (experience) narratives, narratives of the self, personal essays, lived experience, critical autobiography, evocative narratives, experiential texts, reflexive ethnography, ethnographic autobiography, ethnographic short stories, writing stories, autobiographical ethnography, personal sociology, autoanthropology, auto-observation, emotionalism, radical empiricism, and many more. The broad rubric of autoethnography thus finds expression through a similarly broad variety of research programs.

Autoethnography as a *methodology* is the rationale for the study of the self to understand a particular phenomenon, the experiences of a group of people, or philosophical issues about research itself (Hughes & Pennington, 2017). As a *method*, it encompasses the various means by which researchers make their subjectivities explicit in the text as a basis for further analysis (though what constitutes analysis is a point of contention, as seen in the following sections). In introducing their overview of autoethnographic research, Ellis et al. (2011) instead describe it as an *approach* to research to also capture the ways in which the conventions of different literary genres have been deployed to convey research. Likewise, Gingrich-Philbrook (2005) considers autoethnography as more of a "broad orientation toward scholarship than a specific procedure" (p. 298). As a genre of writing,

the *product* of the process of autoethnography involves storytelling, though differs from memoir, autobiography, and creative nonfiction in that transcends the self to engage in analysis (Pace, 2012, p.5). Thus, writes Chang (2008), autoethnography should be "ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (p. 48). The differing emphases on the auto- (self), -ethno- (link to culture), and -graphy (writing) of autoethnography "results in the production of manuscripts that differ significantly in tone, structure, and intent" (Wall, 2006, p. 152). Despite this diversity, autoethnographers generally agree about the centrality of the researcher's subjectivity in research.

"We are conditioned as researchers to see subjectivity as a contaminant. Yet, that contaminant is always present" (Campbell, 2016, p. 100). Postpositivists, in striving to maintain objectivity, have various procedures for mitigating the degree of contamination. Autoethnographers, on the other hand, work with more postmodern sensibilities and view subjectivity more virtuously as the very basis for a researcher's ability to make a distinctive research contribution (Peshkin, 1988). From a more critical perspective, the traditional forms of doing and writing research primarily reflect a "White, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 275). Ignoring the value of one's subjectivity or hiding behind the language games of impersonal, abstracted academic writing only serves to reinforce the narrow ways of knowing that are inaccessible to the wider public. Embracing, accommodating, and drawing on subjectivity, on the other hand, allows researchers to: engage with the conflicts and complications of one's positions, open up a wider lens on the world, broaden the narrow definitions of what constitutes meaningful and useful research, sensitise readers to experiences shrouded in silence, and explore forms of representation the deepen our capacity to empathise with others (Hughes & Pennington, 2017; Ellis et al., 2011). An explicit examination, understanding, and making sense of one's own lived experiences and subjectivity provides a means for connecting the personal to the cultural. However, differences in the extent to which the personal or cultural is emphasised have given rise to two different approaches to autoethnography (Denshire & Lee, 2013). On one hand is the idiographic particularity of *evocative autoethnography* (emphasising the personal), and on the other is the nomothetic commitment of *analytic autoethnography* (emphasising the cultural). Though these mark

two ends of continuum rather than distinct approaches (Allen-Collinson, 2013), it will be helpful for understanding autoethnography more generally by sketching these positions.

Evocative autoethnography

Though autoethnographies had existed in different forms since Kenyatta's study (and likely before that, too), it was the work of Carolyn Ellis in the 1990s and 2000s that popularised the genre. She advocated for what has come to be known as *evocative* autoethnography, referring to the use of literary techniques and genres to draw readers into the narrative so that they can experience the experience as lifelike, believable, and possible (Ellis et al., 2011). However, Ellis and Bochner (2006) clarify that evocation is a goal, not type, of autoethnography: autoethnography *should* be evocative to serve its purpose as a radically different way of knowing, and so the designation of "evocative autoethnography" is considered redundant (though I use it here as a heuristic for discussion). As a mode of inquiry, it is intended to be "unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious, and creative" (p. 433) in that it takes a critical stance towards traditional social science values and the styles of writing that reinforce them.

Evocative autoethnography is concerned with making research that is meaningful, engaging, and accessible. This is accomplished through the use of storytelling and narrative writing techniques to produce evocative, thick (Geertz, 1973) descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience, and thus illustrate discerned patterns of cultural experience (Ellis et al., 2011). In functioning as "a universal singular, a single instance of more universal social experiences . . . . the autoethnographer inscribes the experiences of a historical moment, universalizing these experiences in their singular effects on a particular life" (Denzin, 2003, p. 268). In this context, evocation has an ethical grounding, being a kind of performance of struggle that aspires to social change by "provoking conflict, curiosity, criticism and reflection" (p. 261) upon social processes, thereby enhancing the potential for individual and collective re-storying (Sparkes, 2002). Accordingly, the use of literary techniques is not a purely stylistic choice, but also an implicit criticism of the inaccessibility and homogenisation of scientific writing, and its undertones of dominance and control. In being encouraged to write from the omniscient

voice of science, scientific writing becomes "impersonal, rigid, authoritative, jargon-laden, . . . disengaged" (J-H. Kim, 2016), "boring" (Richardson, 1994), "elitist[,] and not meaningful or accessible to most of the population including those about whom I am writing" (Herd, 2014, p. 49). Furthermore, it serves to foster hierarchy and division between an elite class of professionals "who see the light and those [who are] kept in the dark" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 436).

Evocative autoethnography seeks to communicate an ethical consciousness *with* its audience rather than abstracting and transferring information *to* them. Rather than being concerned with the representational problem of accurately depicting experience as it was lived (the possibility of which is denied in various strands of postmodern thought), autoethnography invokes an "epistemology of emotion, moving the reader to feel the feelings of the other" (Denzin, 1997, p. 228). It is thus less concerned with issues of how we know, and instead of how we should live. Consequently, traditional analysis and generalisation is seen as antithetical to evocative autoethnography in that it produces explicit, ostensibly definitive statements or explanations of what things mean and settles how they should be interpreted, rather than permitting stories an openness to interpretation. It is this openness that compels the active involvement of the reader as they interpret the story, using it as a basis for reflecting on their own experiences, thereby supporting the moral project of stories. At the very least, where more traditional analysis is used alongside evocative narratives, they should not be treated as necessary for legitimising the autoethnography as research: not only does the act of translating stories in the language of analysis close it off from further conversation and engagement, but it also reinforces the ways of knowing that autoethnography seeks to challenge (Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

The radical understanding of what can constitute research also necessitates formal experimentation and the borrowing of literary techniques. This is needed since the creative expressiveness needed for evocation of experienced realities is limited by the conventions and grammar of traditional social science writing (Naidu, 2014; Tamas, 2009). Beyond the use of personal narratives, which can be informed by theories of narrative knowing (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) authors have explored different ways to convey experience, as well as write publications,

by playing with voice, perspective, structure, and linearity. Spry (2001) commits "scholarly treason" in using poetic structures to suggest a "live participative embodied researcher" (p. 709). Similarly, Naidu's (2014) use of poetry and poetic elements such as metaphor and symbolic imagery allows for the expression of deep-seated symbolic material. Austin (1996) uses a narrative poem to capture the musicality, metaphor, tension, lyricism, and circularity of her conversation and interaction with a woman over dinner. Warren (2016) uses a poetic, layered dérive ("drift"; a kind of unplanned, aimless traversal of experience) to capture the disjointed rhythms of his academic depression, using footnotes to explain and discuss each verse. Lee (2008) examines her feelings of loss as her daughter leaves for a one-week camping trip, by showing and reflecting on pictures from her daughter's sketchbook. Muncey (2005) uses multiple techniques (snapshot, artifacts, metaphor, and journey) to examine her past experience of teenage pregnancy through different symbolic and temporal lenses to understand both the limitations of those individual techniques, and the power of their juxtaposition. Gingrich-Philbrook (2004)—examining his "appreciative distrust" (p. 289) of autoethnography—and Tamas (2009)—reflecting on the deleterious effects of writing tidy, logical stories about messy, unreasonable experiences—weave theory and story together in what Bochner and Ellis (2016) call "seamless writing" (p. 204). By contrast, Carol Rambo (Ronai) uses a "layered account" to offer an impressionistic sketch of the stream of consciousness as experienced, by presenting the different layers of experience, the simultaneous multitude of voices that produce and interpret a text, sometimes nonlinearly. In doing so, she breaks with ideas of narrative coherence and instead seeks fidelity to the multilayeredness of lived experience. She uses this technique to discuss her childhood sexual abuse (Ronai, 1995, 1996), her experiences as an exotic dancer (Ronai, 1992), and the tension that arises when needing to write about situations that require the revelation of secrets that cannot be ethically revealed (Rambo, 2016). Finlay (2002) and Petersen (2015) both juxtapose their traditional scholarly voice with a more casual reflexive one in their discussions of reflexivity, and the underlying realist ontology of ostensibly poststructuralist research, respectively. Van Maanen (2011) advocates for the use of "confessional tales" to provide a kind of humanising behind-the-scenes accompaniment to conventional realist ethnographies. Humphreys (2005) brings these confessional tales into the text itself through vignettes, which provide a vivid sense of his spontaneous in-the-moment reactions and experiences, based on field notes. Ellis

and Bochner (2006) present their rebuttal to critics of evocative autoethnography as a conversation (between Ellis and Bochner) to show multiple voices and positions. Finally, Ellis' (2002) invited response to a paper is presented as an open letter addressed to the author of that paper. This present paragraph—this quick list of the different ways authors have experimented with form, and the diversity of topics examined—gives a brief sense of the expansive heterogeneity of autoethnographic writing.

Criticisms of (evocative) autoethnography

Evocative autoethnography's challenge to ways of doing research has, of course, been met with resistance. This resistance ranges from the relatively benign tensions experienced by researchers who have been socialised into the postpositivist research tradition (e.g., Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Guyotte & Sochacka, 2016; Wall, 2006) to—what I was distressed to discover—vile online abuse (Campbell, 2017). From within the ethnography community, critics have derided the perceived lack of effort required to undertake autoethnography. The "armchair pleasures of 'me-search'" (Fine, 1999, p. 534) are said to require little, if any, fieldwork or interaction with others, and consequently fail to "generate faithful renderings of the complexity of social life and its multiple forms of social action" (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006, p. 750). In particular, Atkinson (1997) highlights the sentimental, romantic (i.e., Romantic-era) view of the self that erroneously considers "rich" description (i.e., detailed) to be a synonym for the more ethnographically useful *thick* description (i.e., meaningful, contextualising; Geertz, 1973). Furthermore, autoethnographers are accused of being self-absorbed, self-indulgent, navel-gazing narcissists who abrogate their scholarly obligations to analyse and theorise (Coffey, 1999; Ellis, 2009; Sparkes, 2000). Others have argued that the focus on the researcher-self in the absence of an explicit explanation (i.e., analysis and theorising to broader sociological questions) is useless, unethical nonresearch that does not move the discipline forward (Delamont, 2009; Roth, 2009; Walford, 2004).

Roth's (2009) criticism of these, what he calls "woe-me . . . auto-graphies" (para. 10) stems from an understanding of the co-constitutional relation between the Self and the Other: the figure of Self is only understood against the ground of the Other (i.e., being in

different degrees a version of or different to the Other). Indeed, he briefly cites Vygotsky's genetic law as support, since it implies that what constitutes the self was at some point in the past, a form of relation between individuals. Roth's criticism is one of ethics: since the Other is always implied, the Other needs to be explicitly acknowledged through the explication of the ethnographic significance of one's "auto-graphy". One can write about the Self, but its effect on the Other that the research is ostensibly about needs to be made clear if research is to be ethical. Wall (2016) makes a related critique of "evocative and esoteric writing forms such as poetry and story . . . [which produce] a different kind of inaccessibility in writing" (p. 6). In the 10 years since she first expressed an agnosticism to evocative autoethnography, owing in part to the lingering effects of her positivist socialisation (Wall, 2006), she has come to form a stronger opposition to the evocative style and its formal liberties. "Is it not just another kind of power play to produce mysterious, poignant texts and then ask a reader to process the emotion and guess at what they mean?" (p. 6).

Ellis (2002) agrees that "personal narratives and autoethnographies always have been about the Other" (pp. 400–401), but where she disagrees is on the requirement for *explicit* analysis and explanation. Ellis and Bochner (2006) have argued that the openness to interpretation of what Roth derisively calls "auto-graphy" is precisely the virtue of (evocative) autoethnography that makes for a truly alternative way of knowing and sociological "analysis". In their conceptualisation, then, it is the reading audience that takes on the role of the Other; and it is the rousing of action (whether in personal or social change) via an evocative intimacy of writing that informs autoethnography's ethical dimension. Evocative autoethnography emphasises the moral imperative of social science research to effect change through the Other. It is precisely the indefiniteness of interpretation that rubs against Wall's still-lingering positivistic socialisation when she implies that evocative autoethnography's refusal to produce a "propositional or explicit statement or explanation of what things mean or how they should be interpreted" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 438) is precisely why poetry and stories cannot be research. This view runs counter to the postmodern understanding of social sciences as "continuing a conversation [which encourages] multiple perspectives, unsettled meanings, and plural voices" (p. 438) rather than singular, settled, monophonic master narratives, which limit

and oppress. Many of these, and other criticisms, of evocative autoethnography have come from those who align themselves with an *analytic* approach to autoethnography.

Analytic autoethnography

Understood as a reaction to the literary excesses of evocative autoethnography, analytic autoethnography seeks to restore ethnographic intent to the enterprise. Where the former emphasises the auto-, the latter emphasises the -ethno-, the connection to the broader social or cultural group of which the researcher is ostensibly a member. Anderson (2006) proposes five features of analytic autoethnography:

> (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status,
> (2) analytic reflexivity,
> (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self,
> (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and
> (5) commitment to theoretical analysis (p. 378).

Similarly, Chang (2007) outlines five "pitfalls" of which autoethnographers need to be mindful, the first three reflecting criticisms of the evocative style:

> (1) excessive focus on self in isolation of others;
> (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation;
> (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source;
> (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self- narratives; and
> (5) inappropriate application of the label 'autoethnography (p. 216).

Together, these features, which implicitly define what constitutes good research, seek to ground autoethnography in the realist ethnographic tradition (Anderson, 2006) according to which there exists a world independent of the subjectivity of researcher that can be faithfully elucidated. The main point of contention, then, between evocative and analytic autoethnographers is the function of the self-narrative in autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2006). Where evocative autoethnographers understand the purpose of self-narratives as being to "extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived" (Bochner, 2000), analytic autoethnographers see narratives as

empirical data about the "real" world to be analysed in an explicit commitment to addressing general theoretical issues. The aim of the analytic procedures of analytic autoethnography is thus to triangulate and validate one's experiences against those of others, to reduce the distorting influence of the researcher-writer, and get at some factual truth about the world (Walford, 2004). Accordingly, researchers adopting the analytic perspective are concerned with postpositivistic validity, in contrast to those taking the evocative approach, who take up the poststructural and postmodern denial of stable structures and truths (e.g., in Ronai's [1995] layered account, and Tamas' [2009] "messy" story). Ellis and Bochner (2006) see analytic autoethnography as an attempt to

> appropriate autoethnography and turn it into mainstream ethnography . . . watering it down and turning it into something it was not intended to be, [such that journals] . . . can feel justified [in] rejecting autoethnographic work simply because the author has not privileged traditional analysis and generalization. (p. 433)

Paradigmatic orientations and quality

A final issue to discuss here to better sketch the landscape of autoethnography is that of evaluative criteria. The purpose of this section is not to resolve philosophical debates about assessing research, but to outline some of the issues at the fringes of social science research, illuminated in debates prompted by autoethnography.

The topic of criteria requires addressing since the conversation between the evocative and analytic approach autoethnography occurs at the edges of social science where the former seeks to expand what it means to do research, while the latter seeks to constrain it. From a postmodern perspective, the very notion of criteria is a "foundationalist habit of thought" (Seale, 1999a, p. 471) that reflects the desire to "contain freedom, limit possibilities, and resist change" (Bochner, 2000, p. 266). Indeed, evocative and analytic approaches to autoethnography align with different research paradigms, which make the formation of a singular set of evaluative criteria difficult. McIlveen (2008) aligns the analytic approach to postpositivist and constructivist-interpretivist paradigms, and evocative with critical-ideological paradigms. Indeed, in the above discussion of analytic autoethnography, the use of validity procedures—such as analytic reflexivity and narrative visibility of the

researcher self (which together show and explain the researcher's influence on interpretation), and dialogue with informants beyond the self (suggesting triangulation)—reflect the critical realist ontology of postpositivism. Meanwhile, its apparent fit with symbolic interactionism (Anderson, 2006) suggests the relativism of constructivism (which denies the possibility of a shared set of criteria of quality). On the other hand, evocative autoethnography variously draws on critical, constructivist, and participatory paradigms depending on whether the intent of evocation leans towards providing sociological insight or towards catalysing social action. The experimentations with form in such autoethnographies also reflect a critical stance towards the discursive structures of academic writing itself.

Rejecting the notion of foundational criteria and seeking to attenuate interparadigmatic disputes, Tracy (2010) provides a set of eight best-practice criteria for qualitative research more generally: the topic is worthy of study, sufficient and abundant rigour, sincerity through reflexivity and transparency, credibility, resonance, provides a significance contribution, is ethical, and has meaningful coherence. Bochner (2000) suggests that a good narrative is simply one that "help[s] the reader or listener to understand and feel the phenomena under scrutiny" (p. 270). Similarly, Ellis' (2000) introspection on the way she evaluates autoethnographic research reveals judgements about the extent to which the work engages, evokes, and provokes her. McIlveen (2008) suggests three guidelines, that the autoethnography: is a faithful and comprehensive rendition of experience, transforms the author, and informs the reader. These guidelines draw on Guba and Lincoln's (1994; see also Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Starr, 2010) five criteria for authenticity: fairness (balance of different constructions and perspectives of those involved), ontological authenticity (enlarges and deepens the constructions of the researcher), educative authenticity (leads to an improved understanding of constructions of others), catalytic authenticity (stimulates action), and tactical authenticity (empowers action). Ellis et al. (2011) have also attempted to translate the conventional post/positivist criteria of reliability, generalisability, and validity for autoethnography. These are translated as credibility (could the author have had the experiences described?), verisimilitude (is the experience described believable, possible, coherent?), and generalisation (not to larger populations, but to the reader), respectively. Richardson (1997) deconstructs the idea of validity

altogether, proposing that the central metaphor of validity is not the triangle (i.e., as in triangulation), but crystal. Rather than triangulating some "more valid" singular truth, the use of multiple types of data, methods, interpretations, and frameworks is a crystallisation. The crystal is a multifaceted and multidimensional, growing and changing, reflecting externalities and refracting within themselves to create colours, patterns, and so on. "What we see depends upon our angle of repose" (p. 92): though readers gain a deeper, more complex understanding of the issue, it is still thoroughly and explicitly partial. These conceptualisations of criteria for new forms of social inquiry—of which autoethnography is one—reflect a shift in focus from methodological rigour (e.g., in postpositivism, the proper use of triangulation is used to reduce bias), to interpretive rigour and the notion of social inquiry as a form of practical philosophy characterised by "aesthetic, prudential and moral considerations as well as more conventionally scientific ones" (Schwandt, 1996, p. 68). Consequently, there is a new recognition and celebration of fluidity, emergence, indeterminacy, and uncertainty. Much like evocative autoethnography's rejection of abstract analysis, so too are the abstract, foundational, autonomous criteria of methodological rigor rejected and revised to recognise the fact that social inquiry has (and should have) an effect on readers and society. "The search for justification often carries us farther and farther from the heart of morality" (Noddings, 1984, p. 105). Here then lies the heart of the evocative–analytic debate: where the analytic autoethnographers seek criteria and methods to justify knowledge claims, evocative autoethnographers refuse to be judged on such criteria and instead prioritise connecting with readers through writing practices to let the work validate itself.

Intermission

To summarise, broadly speaking, autoethnography is the recognition and use of the researcher's experiences and subjectivity to understand social or cultural experience. However, there is great latitude with how this approach is enacted. On one end of the continuum, the self becomes the focus in research that seeks to challenge hegemonic ways of knowing and writing. Here, the goal is to evoke a sense of the experience in the reader so that they can engage with its message, and be moved to action. On the other end, the

focus is on understanding the cultural group of which the researcher-subject is a member. Research within this analytic tradition gives autoethnography a more conventional flavour in emphasising analysis and generalisation. Debates between proponents of the evocative and analytic approach reflect a central concern for what social science research is, and can be.

Doing autoethnography

The construction of a PhD thesis, and indeed any research project, is not a linear process beginning with a review of literature, to the outline of a methodology and creation of method, to the collection of data and subsequent analysis. Rather, elements can run in parallel, decisions can be made on incomplete information, and knowledge can be revised as the project progresses. Though I have above outlined an understanding of autoethnography, this understanding was not fully formed until late into the PhD, contrary to the traditional timeline. Much of the early work was spent developing the concept of *perezhivanie*, leaving less and less time for elaborating autoethnography as a methodology. I assumed that there was really not much to know: simply collect data regarding my own experiences in language learning, then analyse it. Much of what I had come to assume about autoethnography was from articles written in the evocative style. I considered the articles that advocated for an analytical approach to be more of a knee-jerk resistance to radical change rather than principled arguments in defence of strict boundaries for what could pass for social science research. Though I was drawn by the somewhat rebellious spirit of evocative autoethnography, my conceptualisation of autoethnography in practice was in fact far more analytical, perhaps due to an inability to shake off a postpositivistic perspective of research. By the time I had needed to read further on autoethnography to write this chapter, I had already, in my mind, connected it with *perezhivanie* and had begun to "collect data". Starting data collection prematurely was necessitated by the time constraints of the PhD, and I justified to myself that I would never be satisfied with my knowledge of the methodology anyway, so that I ought to, as a pragmatic matter, just begin and work it out along the way. However, without the right language to discuss and concepts to understand aspects of the process that I had not

anticipated, I became paralysed when it came time to think about analysis. The known unknown, which I later realised was the concept of *reflexivity*, became a source of uncertainty and despair, a hazy fog that kept me from moving forward. It is only in retrospect and looking back at the data I had collected, that I can put words to the experience. The remainder of this chapter discusses first connection made between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography, the empirical study, and issues that arose during data collection. To be clear, the empirical study was carried out up until analysis, at which point it was abandoned. The issues that led to this break, along with the conduct of the study itself (rather than the data per se) would later serve as a point of reflection. It is for this reason that, although the data created is no longer central to the thesis, the empirical study will be briefly discussed here to give context to the complications that arose. These complications were later the basis for a number of constructive insights that led to answers for the research questions, in providing way to understand, at a deeper level, the way in which an autoethnographic approach supports investigation of *perezhivanie*, and conversely, the way in which *perezhivanie* explains the data arising from autoethnographic methods.

Connecting perezhivanie *and autoethnography*

As I had envisioned it, the connection between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography seemed quite simple. Autoethnography—understood as a research approach that encompasses a range of methods and tools to collect data—provides a rationale for generating a detailed account of one's experiences. *Perezhivanie* then provides a cultural-historical, psychological explanation of what these experiences, and changes over time, indicate or reflect with respect to the individual's development. Thus, *perezhivanie* would be an explanatory principle for autoethnographic data. This use of *perezhivanie* as an explanatory principle was the linchpin for the validity of what was, in my case, introspective data. Recall in Chapter 2, that Vygotsky objected to the use of introspection as an empirical method. The objection raised was not to the introspective *method* per se, but to introspective *methodology* in which it is assumed that what is observed is a direct (i.e., accurate) reflection of the real world. It is for this reason that Vygotsky proposes the

indirect method, which does not preclude introspection, but instead suggests that the data needs further explanation, in the same way that the working of a thermometer needs to be explained for an observation of the movement of mercury/alcohol in the thermometer to register as an (indirect) observation of changes in temperature. What then, does the concept of *perezhivanie* explain?

An analogy I have contemplated but never used is that *perezhivanie* is like visual perception. In the latter case, what a person sees is determined both by internal/personal characteristics (like attention, the structure and health of the eye, etc.) and external/environmental characteristics (the object the eye is directed at, ambient light, etc.). *Perezhivanie* is much like visual perception, except that it encompasses something greater than visual phenomena, instead including anything that arises in consciousness—this may be perceptual, but also cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, relating to the personality, and so on. Whatever it is that has *actually* arisen in consciousness in a concrete situation; not the characteristics, that the individual is only assumed to have, in and of themselves, as Vygotsky argues. In "The problem of the environment" (1994), Vygotsky does not explicitly say that *perezhivanie* is related to consciousness—but gives a range of specific examples that show that different kinds of characteristics (cognitive, attitudinal, emotional) can be identified as playing the decisive role in the *perezhivanie* in each instance. The link to consciousness is made elsewhere, when he writes that "experience [*perezhivanie*] is . . . a unit of consciousness . . . a unit in which the basic properties of consciousness are given as such" (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 382)[8]. It is also supported by his concurrent work on word-meaning and sense, which he saw as being on the plane of thinking that was itself within the broader sphere of consciousness. He describes sense as "the aggregate of all the psychological facts that arise in our consciousness as a result of the word" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 276). Thus, it is possible to view *perezhivanie* as a kind of sense, related not to thought, but to consciousness: it is all the

[8] This translation from the original Russian publication is given by Veresov (2016, 2017), who clarifies that the term here translated as "unit", was incorrectly translated as "unity" in the in the English-language *Collected Works* (see Vygotsky, 1998, p. 294).

psychological facts that arise as the result of a situation (rather than just "the word"), to form one's experience of that situation.

The rich or thick descriptions of experience encouraged by autoethnography are thus appropriately broad for an examination of *perezhivanie*. By allowing a broad scope for writing to enable adequate description of a person's relation to their environment, subsequent analyses can answer questions about what was developmentally relevant or significant. For example, to experience the same situation differently (perceptually, having a different attitude, different cognitions, etc.) indicates some kind of microgenetic (i.e., moment-to-moment, day-to-day, rather than over a person's lifetime) development: one day I find myself mentally translating a foreign word to understand it, and the next I notice that I automatically had a sense of the meaning without having to consciously and mentally translate the word into English. Or perhaps a type of language problem flusters and frustrates me and is salient in my experience one day, but becomes routine and or passes by unnoticed on another occasion. What development—what change in consciousness—has taken place? What might have been internalised? Furthermore, extending beyond just cognitive and affective aspects of learning, I wanted to allow for a scope of other kinds of issues in my own research: How was I prioritising language learning? Do I see it as fun, or a chore? Did I trust that the process would be beneficial for language development? Was I dedicated to it? These were the kinds of questions I hoped to generate and answer by studying my own experience of language learning, and tracking it over time. With this premise of the empirical study outlined, we can now turn to its details to contextualise the issues that subsequently arose from it.

The abandoned empirical study

Being situated as a study of second language acquisition, I sought to follow the technique used in my MA study but expand some of the parameters. Though there is no definitive set of methods for doing autoethnography, it is typically done by "retrospectively and selectively [writing] about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or possessing a particular cultural identity" (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 276). It is through analysis that the personal becomes a source of insight into aspects of the culture

or cultural identity. However, I was less interested in the kinds of sociological issues that other second language autoethnographies and autobiographical analyses have examined (see, e.g., Simon-Maeda, 2011; Steinman, 2005; Terui, 2012; Yoshimoto, 2008), and more interested in second language learning and development at the microgenetic scale of moment-to-moment experience and interaction, owing to my academic history in (applied) linguistics rather than ethnography or sociology. This required *introspection* rather than *retrospection*.

The goal would be to capture my own experience in learning Mandarin online as a second language by using a learning journal. The journal would be written to a private Wordpress blog, to take advantage of formatting features for organising observations and ideas (for easier identification and retrieval later), and also to take advantage of its accessibility over multiple devices, allowing me to add to it outside of my interaction with the language learning website. Having a journal to allow writing in my own words would be crucial both for autoethnography (Spry, 2001; Tracy, 2010) and in understanding psychological processes more generally (Smedslund, 2016). The journal could then undergo a content analysis as with diary studies (Bailey, 1991; Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; see, e.g., Curtis & Bailey, 2009), and also analysed as a narrative construction as in Narrative Analysis/Inquiry (Atkinson, 1997; Barkhuizen, 2011; Pavlenko, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2007). Additionally, the entries could themselves inform the creation of more engaging, evocative narratives in the final writing stage as I both reflect on my experience and analyse what they might mean at a personal (rather than theoretical) level. My previous study also employed screen-capture software (Quicktime) to record on-screen activities while also recording any utterances (through the computer's microphone) I may have produced while learning. However, these were not used in any capacity, and so, I reasoned, they would be similarly unnecessary for triangulation in this study, given the amount of data I was already anticipating to be produced over the data collection period, and given the shift in focus (even if I had not stated this explicitly) from "how do I mediate learning" to "how do I experience learning". The research questions I had sought to answer, at least up until the halfway point of my candidature, were:

> RQ1: How do I mediate my learning, and why?
> RQ2: How does mediation change over the course of development?

> RQ3: How does the kind of mediation I use change the way I experience the language and language learning?[9]

Furthermore, I did not want to undermine the project of (what I, at the time, believed to be) evocative autoethnography by using triangulation as means to justify the research, recalling Ellis and Bochner's belief that it is a mistake for autoethnographers to write defensively rather than let the work speak for itself (Jones, 2004). To use triangulation would also be to imply the work be judged within the boundaries of postpositivistic research when, as discussed above, evocative autoethnography did not fit that paradigm (Denzin, 2012).

The new understanding of *perezhivanie* I had developed, which encompassed consciousness more broadly rather than specific aspects within it, led to a less rigid approach to what I would attend to in my language learning. Rather than specifying sensitising questions, which previously limited my attention to the ways in which my language learning was mediated by the tools available, or to my emotional reactions or understanding, I opted instead to have no such questions to allow for an expanded scope of what could be considered relevant. Thus, contained in the resulting journal, are aspects of my experience that I found to be salient, along with reflections and personal stories that arose during the course of my learning. This approach reflects a more holistic understanding of experience. Necessarily, I allowed myself the freedom to conduct my language learning with no restraints beyond having to pursue some kind of language learning online for approximately six months. Rather than determining the (web)site beforehand, or creating a fixed schedule for learning, the decisions regarding these issues would themselves form part of the journal. For example, the site(s) I choose, the amount of time I spent learning (or not) and the way that language learning was made to fit into my life, together with my rationalisations and reflections upon these choices, reveal potentially important aspects of my relation to language learning that would otherwise be

[9] These were the research questions as stated in my Confirmation report (at one year into candidature) and in the report for the Mid-candidature review (at two years into candidature). It can be seen here that the third research question already implies (and thus subsumes) the first two.

overlooked. Although I was concerned that the absence of a schedule might permit times in which no data would be produced, I reasoned that this absence of data could itself be informative of my *perezhivanie* (e.g., potentially indicating indecisiveness, lack of confidence, fatigue, etc.). Additionally, this would more closely reflect the real ways in which I, and casual language learners (i.e., as opposed to those taking formal courses, or those who learn only incidentally without much conscious awareness) actually engage in the process of learning, and also reflect the fact that my language learning is not isolated from other areas of my life.

I estimated in my original 2014 research proposal that I would be able to begin data collection in the second year of candidature from March 2015. This date was revised before the confirmation period concluded, and then finally delayed until December 2016. I struggled with uncertainty about what exactly it was I wanted to achieve with an autoethnography, how to conduct it, and what use it might be for future job prospects. Furthermore, it seemed to be to be a trivial use of the methodology, considering the kinds of studies I associated with autoethnography (e.g., Ronai, 1992, 1995) had dealt with more serious issues. Studying my own online language learning simply did not feel legitimate or useful, perhaps validating some of the harshly worded criticisms of autoethnography that Campbell (2017) had identified. I could not imagine analysis as being anything more than superficial. As an autoethnography, it did not have the potential to be particularly evocative or moving given the relatively mundane subject matter (and I certainly did not possess the literary skills needed to write evocatively). Regardless, the time constraints of candidature meant that I needed to press on. I began the data collection period in November 2016 with the website, Busuu, switching to Memrise after a few sessions, and concluding on June 18, 2017 upon completing a self-directed course on Memrise. Within these 7 months, I had active sessions on 33 days, which resulted in 38 individual journal entries. Exported as PDF documents for easier access, these entries totalled 122 pages (excluding any screenshots) and approximately 42,000 words. During this time, issues arose that left me uncertain as to what I could do with the data. Though the data regarding my experiences in language learning could now certainly be given further analysis as originally intended, they are not germane to the present discussion. What I wish to focus on here are the internal struggles I had in relation to conceptualising,

understanding, and doing the research itself, which led me to seek (or at least become receptive to) a new direction for the thesis.

Struggling against data and understanding the research

Here I discuss three of the main issues that lingered under the surface of my research: the distinction between my personal/academic life, the authenticity of the study, and the researcher–subject relation.

In the early stages of data collection, I gave priority to collecting data rather than working on any other theoretical development. Eventually, I needed to clarify my understanding of autoethnography and gathered some autoethnographic studies and articles about the methodology, to get a better sense of what autoethnographic research could and should entail. I began with a search of *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* journal, an according to my notes, most, though not all, of my readings around this time were from that journal: Denzin (2001), Elizabeth (2008), Lee (2008), Naidu (2014), Pitard (2016), Rambo (2015), and Warren (2016). At this time, I was less interested in the subject matter or methodological discussions, and more so in the styles of writing being used. Seeing the confident use of the active first-person voice, and the level of personal revelation present in these texts empowered me to at least try to be more honest in my writing. In previously writing purely about the experience of language learning, and now beginning to do the same in this study, I began to feel the pull of issues I wanted discuss with regards to learning, that I had also felt I was suppressing from my writing. Thus, I started to write with less hesitation and self-censorship, and to be more honest with myself, as well. In doing so, I began to externalise some of the tensions I was experiencing, that previously seemed irrelevant or inappropriate to include in the journal.

For example, I reflected on the way in which I separated my academic and personal life:

> **Reflection**: I wonder, though, whether I need to physically converse to get some practice. My partner and her family speak Chinese, but I feel weird talking to her in Chinese given that we both communicate in English. I can explain to her why I'd need to, but I feel hesitant about bringing her into this study, and this relates to ethical concerns in Autoethnography. I feel that

> committing that side of my life to this academic side is like solidifying my identity as an academic, that this is who I am, and I'm not sure that is who I am: Am I the kind of person that uses whatever personal resources, contacts, relations, are necessary to achieve my "work" goals; or am I someone who compartmentalises different areas of their life? I think i'm [sic] the latter, at the moment. Perhaps I'm not committed to this, as a life, as an identity, as I thought? As a thought experiment: I feel comfortable sharing aspects of my experiences here, but less comfortable sharing details about the things I do, or the people I know, outside of this learning situation. (Log entry #5, Jan 29 2017)

My partner and her parents, as well as my parents, are all able to speak Mandarin Chinese to varying degrees, and thus my frequent interactions with them could have been valuable, low-stakes opportunities to practice the language—but I had never taken full advantage of these opportunities. I thought of my academic research as something I could compartmentalise—and perhaps this led to the lingering feeling I have that I am not an academic (in my mind, someone who reads new research literature in their spare time), but just someone who does academic work and leaves it at the office, so to speak. It is (only) something I *do*, rather than something that I *am*.

This also connected with concerns I had about the authenticity of what I was doing. First, as Ellis et al. (2011) noted, researchers generally construct autoethnographies from retrospective accounts, rather than from undertaking some activity for the sake of writing the account. Realising that I was not really using my Mandarin-language resources outside of the language learning website, I felt that I was not a "genuine" language learner—surely if I were committed to learning, I would use every opportunity I had to learn the language. I nonetheless rationalised this as being legitimate, since the decisions I made in the learning process were still very real. All I needed to do was note these concerns down and analyse them later; perhaps they reveal something about how I viewed language learning (e.g., as secondary to doing research). Second, there was a practical reason. I had not specified exactly how or when I would record my journal, but what felt appropriate to me was to make notes or comments after each question or exercise, while the experience and thought process was still fresh in mind. In doing so, I could gain insight into the ways in which I mediated my learning—the thoughts, memories, and strategies I drew on to complete the tasks. However, the constant need to type interrupted the flow of progress

through the exercise on the website (Memrise). Though it was a necessary evil, it became tiresome. It took much longer to complete each exercise when having to type notes than if I did not have to type at all. Towards the end of the data collection period, I began switching between typing at the end of each set of questions, and typing only after completing a larger set. I could not resist the temptation, however, to type very short reminders to myself (sometimes just one or two words), worried that I would later forget something important. It is for this same reason that I often find it difficult to read academic journal articles: when reading, I become distracted with well-worded summaries or ideas, or insights about my own work, leading me to write notes and copy passages in fear of forgetting by the time I finish reading through the article. Returning to language learning: how real could my experience of the process be if it was constantly being interrupted? There was a clear inclination toward realism and fidelity to the actual experience, despite evocative autoethnography's permission for and even encouragement of the use of poetic license. Finally, despite the radical subjectivity of autoethnography, which suggests the validity of one's own experiences as objects of research, I could nonetheless not help but feel that there was something wrong about studying my own learning. How could I be "objective"? Again, I reasoned that who I am was a real configuration of experiences, and that my experience was worth studying, if at least to help dispel the idea that being trained as a linguist somehow taints the language learning process—surely there are people out there who are not linguists but may have some cursory knowledge of linguistics: should they be excluded too? And surely, there is no singular aspect of my being, or singular identity, that is omnipresent and preanalytically omnirelevant (as both Firth & Wagner, 2007, and Vygotsky, 1994, have argued).

Oscillating between consideration of my learning as a learner and my research as a researcher also brought to mind the distinction between my dual identities:

> **Reflection**: Does [sic] my researcher-characteristics come into play here? Do the things I notice about the learning come to play a role in shaping my perception of the learning later? Now that I am aware of a kind of deficiency in the way words are tested, does this spawn new theories or research questions in my head that will affect the way I view language learning, in ways that may differ from a non-researcher? (Log entry #22, April 13 2017)

I had intended for the empirical study to be a straightforward process: undertake language learning as a language learner, then afterwards, put on my researcher hat, so to speak, to analyse the data as a researcher. However, these identities were not so easy to demarcate in reality. It is not as though they were discrete entities that could each be switched on and off at will: both (and other) identities inhabit the same body and share the same pool of knowledge and experiences both past and present. Initially, my choice to investigate autoethnography was partly a way to acknowledge and have theoretical justification for the necessary and unavoidable subjectivity of the researcher in doing research. However, I could not seem to shake the contradictory postpositivistic notion that a clear distinction between researcher and subject was both necessary for doing "good research" and possible. Thus, when analysis necessitated a discussion about my *perezhivanie*, I could not seem to resolve a clear understanding of what part of me the "my" referred to. I could not see a defensible conceptualisation of myself-as-learner that was both stable and distinct from myself-as-researcher, for analysis. That is, I understood that aspects of my researcher identity were constantly, to varying degrees present, even when doing language learning, at times coming to the fore (e.g., when I began to reflect on the research), and yet I had the unshakable instinct to try to compartmentalise it. At the same time, I felt close to falling into the trap of infinite regression and "excessive self analysis and deconstructions at the expense of . . . developing understanding" (Finlay, 2002, p. 212). It would be all too easy to reflect on my experience, then reflect on the reflection in asking whether this was valid, and so on *ad nauseum*, eventually losing sight of the original analytical purpose. All of this became an insoluble amorphous cloud—intangible and with no clear problem statement from which to proceed—concealing what I had to believe was some semblance of a solid core of my thesis.

In the end, what I had was an account of language learning that mostly listed interesting mnemonic devices and associations, explanations of errors that were made, some researcher-reflections sprinkled in between, and some introductory paragraphs that captured some of the thoughts I had between each session. When it came time to analyse, I was preoccupied with a heavy feeling that I had to solve the problem of reconciling my thoughts and methodological doubts as a researcher, with my experiences as a language learner. To what extent could I separate them? Did I need to? Though getting a better

sense of the casual, liberating discursive style of autoethnography helped me to be more honest about my experiences and hold back less from writing, it brought me into conflict with issues that I needed to consider, and which were now threatening to derail the study. It was not until later that I would find the concept of *reflexivity* as one part of the solution. The second part of the solution, dialectics, is outlined in the next chapter. Following this, I explain in Chapter 5 how the tensions described in this chapter were resolved.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the autoethnographic approach to research in terms of its foundations, concerns, and internal debates. Tensions between the evocative and analytic styles of autoethnography illuminated fundamentally different perspectives on the purposes of social science and the methods for achieving them. Following this discussion, I tentatively connected *perezhivanie* to autoethnography within the empirical study that was proposed for this thesis. Specifically, I suggest that the concept of *perezhivanie* can be used as an explanatory principle for the data elicited in autoethnographic research. Finally, I examined the difficulties and questions that emerged during data collection, which begins to guide my inquiry in a new, unexpected direction, to be explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: From definition to concept of *perezhivanie*: The underlying dialectics

In Chapter 2, I had shown that my understanding of *perezhivanie* was contextualised within the domain of SLA research and consequently by its potential to respond to some of the epistemological and methodological issues raised by Firth and Wagner (1997, 2007). The strategy taken in explicating the concept in Mok (2015) was one in which I looked closely at Vygotsky's argument as laid out in "The problem of the environment" (1994). By contrast, in this chapter, I chart a shift in my focus deeper towards the foundations that underlie *perezhivanie*, namely, the philosophy of dialectics. It is this philosophical foundation that would later shape a new conceptualisation of the relation between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography (Chapter 5).

As I will show in this chapter, my turn towards dialectics was motivated by the desire to clarify Vygotsky's use of the term "prism", built on ideas garnered from a few fortuitous academic encounters, and which was crystallised in the book chapter "On the concept of perezhivanie" (Mok, 2017). The presentation of this publication is followed by "Understanding development through the perezhivanie of learning" (Veresov & Mok, 2018), in which a more confident discussion of dialectics is used to shed light on its value for understanding development within SLA research. To conclude this chapter, I sketch out other aspects of dialectics that were omitted from the publications due to space constraints.

Introduction to Mok (2017)

Toward the end of my first year of candidature in 2014, I was invited to write what was intended to be the first chapter for *Perezhivanie, emotions, and subjectivity* (Fleer et al. [Eds.], 2017). According to the book proposal in which the various chapters had already been outlined, I was to be making sense of the numerous characterisations of the *perezhivanie* concept to provide "a critical analysis of existing approaches to perezhivanie". This was a milestone for me: my second ever publication, and the first in a book. I had always thought books to have a certain gravitas in that they felt more

considered (given the higher barrier for entry to produce a book with a well known publisher) and were physical manifestations of knowledge—there is really only one chance to publish and it needs to be perfect so that the book can stand alone in the wild. It was also something that once published, I could proudly display on my bookshelf as a trophy and lend to my non-academic friends as proof and validation of my academic status: "Here! Look! I'm a published author!". In the case of this book, it was also to be the first volume in a series, *Perspectives in Cultural-Historical Research*, which would hopefully be a landmark series for the cultural-historical and activity theory (CHAT) community, and for newcomers hoping to gain more insight into CHT. Additionally, perhaps due to my conceptual focus, and perhaps due to the interests of my PhD colleagues, I had felt a kind of buzz and excitement surrounding the concept of *perezhivanie*. Thus, I felt a great responsibility and duty to ensure that my chapter had something interesting to say, or at least be useful as a review of literature for new scholars.

By now, I had unknowingly oriented myself with the stream of scholarship within the CHT community that sought to clarify misconceptions and misinterpretations of Vygotsky's work, to restore significance to terms that had either been omitted or whose meanings were assumed and never questioned. My first real exposure to this exegetical movement was through Veresov (2009), who argued that *Mind in Society* (1978)—the West's first introduction to CHT—presented a "cocktail-like compilation" (Veresov, 2009, p. 279) of Vygotsky's ideas that led to oversimplifications and fragmentations. The well-known concept of ZPD, onto which researchers of different theoretical persuasions had latched, was a case-in-point, being the subject of numerous clarification efforts (e.g., Chaiklin, 2003; Valsiner & van der Veer, 1993; Veresov, 2004). Over the past decade, the exegetical current has gathered momentum in projects aiming to provide a complete and more accurately translated collection of Vygotsky's published works (e.g., van der Veer & Yasnitsky, 2011; Vygotsky, 1935/2011 [A. Kozulin, Trans.], 1966/2016 [Veresov & Barrs, Trans.],; Yasnitsky, 2012; Yasnitsky & van der Veer [Eds.], 2016) and unpublished notes (e.g., Zavershneva, 2010a, 2010b; Zavershneva & van der Veer, 2018). Reflecting on what I understood to be the sociocultural approach to SLA, it seemed that the exegetical work that was necessary for a deeper understanding of Vygotskian concepts was put aside in favour of more practical empirical work producing actionable pedagogical knowledge.

Given the breadth of research in sociocultural SLA, it is likely that this was a gross mischaracterisation of the field, but it was my belief nonetheless.

A first stop for those seeking more information about *perezhivanie* is likely Blunden's (2014a) online collection of quotations and conversations—it is (still) one of the top results on Google when searching "perezhivanie". The collection exemplified the potential for confusion and misunderstanding of this one word, owing both to issues in translation and the purposes for which the term was used. Slight differences in interpretation could lead to radically different conclusions. It is this simple insight that would structure the bulk of my book chapter. But beyond this collation of interpretations, what deeper mysteries could be excavated to provide something new for the audience? I had, by then, already provided an exegesis of *perezhivanie* in Mok (2015). However, the article was limited to a discussion of the concept as explicated in "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994). Two academic presentations and one lingering issue provided the inspiration to dig deeper.

First, on the second day of the ISCAR 2014 Congress in Sydney (on October 1st), Seth Chaiklin—a well-known figure in the CHAT community—gave what felt like an impromptu talk on dialectics. It was memorable for the lack of polished slides typical of many of the other presentations during the congress. Instead, he had on the screen behind him, quite confidently, a single white page with just three or four lines of text: restatements of the basic laws of dialectics. To a room that seemed to be at capacity, he admonished those who were using the term "dialectics" to erroneously refer to something akin to mutual dependence, or who simply left their understanding of dialectics unspecified. This, to the ISCAR audience who were, by and large, scholars of Vygotsky. The very act of picking out a seemingly widely held misconception of a fundamental idea resonated with me and piqued my interest, in the same way that counter-intuitive facts are often interesting by virtue of being contrary to what one might otherwise think. I realised back then that I did not really understand dialectics, but accepted that I ought to be cautious in my use of the term (or avoid it altogether). It was a sign to me that some very basic ideas relating to Vygotsky were being misunderstood in a rush to use his ideas in practice. However, since I was not then discussing dialectics explicitly, the thought just sat at the back of my mind.

Second, after the congress, I was part of a committee tasked with organising a symposium on *perezhivanie* at Monash University that was to be a collaborative effort with colleagues from the Brazil branch of ISCAR. On the first day, I was part of a presentation session together with Nikolai Veresov and Michael Michell, the latter of whom I was not familiar with, though my colleagues at Monash seemed keen to hear from him. We were grouped together because our interests were theoretical rather than empirical. However, Michael's presentation stood out, as he dug back into the archives of Vygotsky's previous work as an art critic, linking his later use of *perezhivanie* with its appearance in Stanislavsky's theory of acting and in Tolstoy's theory of art. This was a complete revelation to me, as I had come to know Vygotsky only through his more well known instrumental period, and knew little of his work prior to psychology, despite a number of colleagues having mentioned to me his first major work, *The Psychology of Art* (Vygotsky, 1971), as something worth investigating.

Third and finally, I had an unresolved uncertainty regarding Vygotsky's use of the term "prism" in discussing *perezhivanie*. Specifically, it was an unstated difference of interpretation regarding Veresov's (2017a) conceptualisation of *perezhivanie* as the way in which the (dramatic) interaction between the ideal and present form of development is experienced. That is, *perezhivanie* is, if I may use the terms here for clarification, the "internal" experience or manifestation of a comparatively "external" social relation (as per the genetic law, discussed in Chapter 2). For me, *perezhivanie* was both a prism and the refraction of the environment within the prism. I envisioned the prism as a metaphor for the mind: a beam of light (the environment) "enters" the mind, and the structure and contents of consciousness, whatever happens to be elicited by the beam of light at that point in time, changes how the light behaves inside, and thereby changing what *perezhivanie* (experience) the individual has. I used this conceptualisation perhaps because I feel I can better grasp the concept if I temporarily use the computational input–output metaphor of the mind, and also perhaps I tend to picture the traditional science class demonstration of refraction using a glass triangular prism (think Pink Floyd's classic cover for their *The Dark Side of the Moon* album). I vacillated between viewing our interpretations as different, and viewing them as saying the same thing in different but words. Being uncertain, however, meant that there was something to be clarified, whether

this was something about the specific wording, the use of metaphor, or some hidden premise—perhaps I just wanted an interpretation and wording that was my own. I could not quite put my finger on what, though. I decided it was something to do with the metaphor, specifically Vygotsky's conspicuous use of the term "refract".

Further research into refraction revealed two things. First, that Vygotsky used the metaphor of the mirror to discuss the study of consciousness when he argued that "a science about mirror phantoms is impossible, but the theory of light and the things which cast and reflect it fully explain these "phantoms" (Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 326). Here, he was arguing that consciousness (a mirror image) could not be studied empirically since it was a "phantom", but that an appropriate theory (of light and reflection) can explain why it appears as the consequence of two objective processes (the object that is reflected and the way in which a mirror casts a reflection). Second was González Rey's (2009) mention of Lenin's theory of reflection, which I had admittedly overlooked on my first readings of his article. González Rey understands Vygotsky's refraction metaphor as a way to conceptualise the mind as active rather than passive, since a prism changes the light that enters it (due to its composition), while a mirror merely reflects exactly what it is given. This was to support his developing theory of subjectivity, the mind as an emergent production rather than an internalisation of the external.

Combined, these three inspirations—Chaiklin's advice regarding dialectics, Michell's insights regarding Vygotsky's academic past, and my uncertainty regarding Vygotsky's prism—would provide the basis for the parts of my chapter that would be the new contributions to knowledge. The historical connection from Vygotsky to Stanislavsky to Tolstoy also suggested that this particular context of understanding *perezhivanie* as related to Vygotsky's work as an art critic was one line of interpretation. Interpretations focusing on works during and after the instrumental period would be another. And examinations of the concept post-Vygotskian Activity Theory would be a third. This realisation—that different contextualisations of Vygotsky led to different interpretations, different flavours of *perezhivanie*—would provide an organising principle for what were seemingly disparate, if not contradictory, accounts of *perezhivanie*. As I undertook further research, I also became more intrigued with dialectics. Heeding Chaiklin's warning, I wanted to clarify how dialectics might have applied to Vygotsky's refraction metaphor,

and connecting the dots to Lenin, I also wanted to understand how *refraction* was derived from Lenin's *reflection*. In doing so, I came to have a better understanding of materialist philosophy, and its explanation for consciousness, owing to an epiphany regarding the meaning of "reflection". Rather than reflection in the sense of *throwing back* (e.g., a mirror reflects an image), it was reflection in the sense of *embodiment* (e.g., the quality of craftsmanship is reflected in the price). Extended to refraction, consciousness reflects (embodies) the social relations that shaped it, while also participating in changing the nature of the reflection (i.e., it refracts). Looking back at early drafts of the chapter, it is clear that I was excited about and keen to explore this issue: the first draft of the publication contained a 1700-word discussion of reflection theory, which was later cut down to 780 words due to space and scope constraints. The final draft of this chapter, after some internal revision and crosschecking, was submitted to the publishers in June 2016, with publication in August 2017 in time for the ISCAR 2017 congress[10].

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Chapter 2
On the Concept of Perezhivanie: A Quest for a Critical Review

Nelson Mok

Abstract Vygotsky's concept of perezhivanie was only partly developed within his lifetime, and this fact, together with the apparent significance of the concept, has provided the impetus for attempts at further understanding and substantiating the concept. This introductory chapter provides an overview of interpretations of perezhivanie. I begin first with a brief history of its origins in Stanislavsky, dialectics and reflection theory. Next, I discuss three aspects of Vygotsky's work (and work built on its foundations) that have been related to perezhivanie in attempts to illuminate its meaning: his early interest in emotion in *The Psychology of Art*, the concepts of social situation of development and word-meaning and its interpretation within Activity Theory. The interpretive landscape that is revealed provides a point of departure for theorists seeking to understand and use the concept.

2.1 Introduction

The history of the study of the human mind and consciousness is marked with a desire to delineate the boundary between cognition and emotion. The better known *instrumental period* of Vygotsky's work appears to give a precedence to cognition that has been amplified in subsequent interpretations, perhaps beyond Vygotsky's intentions. It is important, then, to look to the last period of Vygotsky's work, in which he (re)turns to issues of emotion raised earlier in his career. Of particular interest is the concept of perezhivanie, which ostensibly unifies emotion and cognition, and the individual with their environment, in a single unit to better conceptualise the process of human mental development.

The concept was central to a lecture delivered by Vygotsky at the Herzen State Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad sometime between 1933 and his death in 1934. The stenographic record of this lecture was published in 1935 under the editorship

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of one of his students, M.A. Levina, in *Foundations of Paedology*, a collection of Vygotsky's lectures that would serve as a foundational textbook for future students (Korotaeva 2001). The extent to which this book was edited, revised, or censored, as was common for works published in the Soviet Union is a matter for textological analysis, but regardless, the lecture on perezhivanie was translated to English and appeared in *The Vygotsky Reader* 60 years later in 1994. Given both the difficulty of adequately translating perezhivanie, and its centrality in the lecture now titled "The Problem of the Environment",[1] the editors of the *Vygotsky Reader* left the term intact alongside its approximate translation as *emotional experience*, an issue I return to later in this chapter.

Perezhivanie appears to capture an essential part of the cultural-historical approach to development. However, the temporal, cultural, sociopolitical and linguistic gaps that separate Vygotsky from his Western audiences have led to divergent interpretations of the concept. Vygotsky passed away before fully developing and integrating perezhivanie into his broader theoretical system. Thus, the task has fallen to Vygotskian scholars, who have situated the concept alongside different facets of his larger body of work, resulting in the emphasis of different aspects of the concept. It is the purpose of this introductory chapter to elucidate these interpretations, drawing on the theoretical and philosophical lineage of Vygotsky's work where it has been overlooked, to lay a foundation for the conceptual clarification (in Part I, this volume), conceptual development (Part II, this volume), and empirical operationalisation (Part III, this volume) in following chapters.

To sketch the landscape of interpretations, I begin first with a history of the word itself in the Russian language, leading to its role in the work of Stanislavsky. Next, I elucidate one of the intellectual foundations from which Vygotsky's work emerges and, moving to Western interpretations, discuss attempts at both linguistic and conceptual translation. Finally, I discuss three aspects of Vygotsky's work (and work built on its foundations) that theorists have used to illuminate the concept of perezhivanie: his early interest in emotion in *The Psychology of Art*; in relation to the concepts of social situation of development and word-meaning; and within the context of Activity Theory. Each of these branches of interpretation and interconnection illuminates different facets of the concept of perezhivanie.

2.2 The Stanislavsky Connection

Though perezhivanie is an everyday Russian word, its theoretical meaning can be traced to Tolstoy. In *What is Art?* (1896/1996), Tolstoy describes the proper activity of art as the conscious expression of felt experience, such that others are *infected* by the art and experience (*perezhivayut*) the same emotions (p. 51). The theatre

[1]Originally titled "Проблема среды в педологиии" [The problem of environment in paedology].

director Stanislavsky likely drew on Tolstoy when attempting to legitimise acting as a kind of science, within the Stalinist political environment, by using the objective methodological language of "hard" sciences (Pitches 2005).

Stanislavsky used perezhivanie in at least three senses. First, it denoted the internal psychological side of acting, in opposition to *voploshchenie*, the external physiological side (Pitches 2005). Second, it described a form of theatre, the essence of which Stanislavsky sought to uncover so that actors could be trained to achieve it. In this context, perezhivanie is contrasted with *remeslo* (craftsmanship) and *predstavlenie* (representation). In the theatre of perezhivanie, the "life of the human spirit" is created by the actor anew with each performance, who is able to be present, active and completely engaged with the stage reality (Beck 2014, p. 216; Carnicke 2009, p. 136) and can thus be said to be truly experiencing the life of the character. By contrast, in the theatre of *remeslo,* clichés are used to convey emotion, while in *predstavlenie*, though the life of the character is experienced during rehearsal, fixed forms are often presented onstage. Third, perezhivanie refers to the tool—at least in Western interpretations (Carnicke 2009, Chap. 8)—for actors to achieve the theatre of perezhivanie. Since emotions are aroused by physical action, physical imitation is used to bring about the appropriate emotion, drawing on the actor's real-life past experiences. Known as the *Method of Physical Actions*, this technique is often contrasted with the earlier technique of *Affective* (or *Emotional*) *Memory*, in which sensory impressions are recalled to generate the appropriate emotion (see Larlham 2014).[2]

The nature and extent of Stanislavsky's influence on Vygotsky's conceptualisation of *perezhivanie* is uncertain. Theorists have variously understood Vygotsky as either directly adapting the term (Brennan 2014; Hakkarainen 2010; Smagorinsky 2011a) or independently developing the concept (Burkitt 2002; van Oers 2012). Others have argued for similarities between Stanislavsky's *understatement* and Vygotsky's *sense* (Daniels 2010; Mahn and John-Steiner 2008). What is clear, however, is Vygotsky's familiarity with theatre and the work of Stanislavsky: Vygotsky's intellectual career began as a fine arts reviewer (van der Veer and Valsiner 1991); proceeding with his first major work, *The Psychology of Art*, a dissertation which attempted to lend the study of the psychology of aesthetic reaction a scientific credibility; and two years before his death, Vygotsky returned to issues of aesthetics and emotion in "On the Problem of the Psychology of the Actor's Creative Work" (Vygotsky 1999), where Stanislavsky's work is discussed at length. It is in part because of these works and interests that a connection—at least historical if not conceptual—is often drawn between Stanislavsky and Vygotsky.

[2]There is debate as to whether Stanislavsky revised the latter by substituting it with the former or if this narrative of his theoretical development is a Western invention (see Carnicke 2009, p. 150; Whyman 2008, pp. 62–63). Regardless, Stanislavsky is quoted as advising his students in the last months of his life that: "One must give actors various paths. One of these is the path of action. There is also another path; you can move from feeling to action, arousing feeling first" (Vinogradskaia, as cited in Carnicke 2009, p. 173), indicating that both techniques existed in parallel.

2.3 Reflection Theory and Dialectical Materialism

For understanding Vygotsky's conceptualisation of perezhivanie, it may be tempting to take his definition of the term in the *Psychological Dictionary* (Vygotsky and Varshava 1931; for a discussion, see Veresov, this volume) as a definitive answer. However, much like the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD; see Chaiklin 2003; Valsiner and van der Veer 1993; Veresov 2004), further work is required to understand perezhivanie's place within cultural-historical theory so that the core conceptual content and its methodological consequences can be separated from its use in specific examples and its use as a (mere) rhetorical device.

Take, for example, the metaphor of refraction used by Vygotsky to explain perezhivanie:

> it is not any of the factors in themselves (if taken without reference to the child) which determines how they will influence the future course of his development, but the same factors *refracted through the prism of the child's emotional experience* [perezhivanie] (emphasis added, p. 340)

Though the meaning of refraction in this context is often taken as self-evident, its philosophical and methodological significance can only be appreciated when understood as a continuation and specification of the Leninist theory of reflection that, at the time of Vygotsky's writing, had become a central tenet of Soviet philosophy. Given the complexity of this theory, only an abridged account of this theory's development can be provided here.

The posthumous publication of Lenin's conspectus of Hegel's *The Science of Logic* in 1929 (in *Lenin Miscellanies IX*; republished in *Philosophical Notebooks* from 1933) occasioned renewed interest in reflection theory. In these notes, Lenin reformulated his earlier "mirror-copy" version of reflection theory in dialectical materialist terms. This was inspired through a *materialistic* reading of Hegel's dialectic *idealism*, and through drawing connections to Marx's earlier materialistic inversion of Hegel for Marx's work on economic theory (Anderson 1995). According to this version of reflection theory, consciousness (for which Lenin uses the term "sensation"; Kirschenmann 1970, p. 95) and reality are understood in a dialectical manner, as two parts connected in a unity rather than being truly distinct. Rather than accessing reality from the outside, as it were, consciousness and reality in fact transform into each other, constantly in movement and/or contradiction. It is through what we term cognition that reality is transformed into consciousness; and conversely, through practical activity, consciousness is transformed into reality. Indeed, this material basis for consciousness is also established as a general property of *all* matter (see Lenin 1909/2014, Sects. 1.1 and 1.5): all matter (inorganic, organic, living) in some way *reflects* the conditions that gave rise to its specific organisation (the objects/phenomena that have acted upon it); consciousness is merely the form that reflection takes when matter takes on a highly complex organisation (Anderson 1995; Kirschenmann 1970; Payne 1968; Sayers 1985, Chap. 1).

The rationale for Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory is the need to create an intermediary language to translate between "the most general, maximally universal science" (Vygotsky 1997, p. 330) of dialectics, and the concrete subject matter of psychology. While there existed a "Marxist psychology" at the time, Vygotsky argued it was a blind application of dialectical materialism that, therefore, could provide no insights about psychology in particular: "we cannot … study the psychological differences between people with a concept that covers both the solar system, a tree, and man" (p. 329). With this in mind, we can thus view his refraction metaphor as a specification of the general philosophical thesis of reflection to account for issues particular to psychology. It is in refraction, but not reflection, that the concrete and productive contribution of consciousness in determining (or perhaps in cultural-historical terms, *mediating*) the developmental effect of the environment can be taken into account (in Part III, this volume, it is argued that this idea is further developed through the concepts of subjective configuration and subjective sense). Mirrors do not themselves require further analysis if their images are exact reflections, but since consciousness is part of the reality that is "reflected", then consciousness itself (the prism) needs to be accounted for in any concept used to analyse the effect of the environment (the light reflected) on human mental development (for further discussion of the prism metaphor, see Veresov, this volume). It is in this sense that the environment can be understood as being refracted through the individual. Indeed, the reverse is true: there is also a refraction when consciousness transforms into reality through practical activity (Sayers 1985, Chap. 1), an idea that is mirrored in the "activity system" unit of analysis in Activity Theory, in which human activity is shaped by available mediating artefacts and social organisation.

The philosophical heritage of this element of the perezhivanie concept is often overlooked in Western interpretations of Vygotsky's work. Understanding the basis of refraction in reflection theory sheds light not only on the context within and philosophical bases from which Vygotsky constructed his cultural-historical theory, but also on the ways in which he translated general philosophical tenets for psychology. The following section provides an overview of some of the attempts at linguistic and conceptual translation by Western audiences.

2.4 Linguistic and Conceptual Translation

One path to understanding perezhivanie in the West has been to seek an appropriate translation to convey the sense of the concept in familiar terms. This, however, has proven difficult. Stanislavsky's translators have variously used "the art of living a part", "to live the scene", "sensations", "living and experiencing", "experience", "experiencing", "emotional experience", "creation" and "re-living/living through a role" (Carnicke 2009, Chap. 7) for the conceptualisation of perezhivanie in acting theory. Meanwhile, Vygotsky's translators have used "experience" (in "The Crisis at Age Seven", Vygotsky 1998), "lived experience" (drawing on the German

equivalent, *Erlebnis*; Blunden 2009), "inner experience" (Zavershneva 2010) and "emotional experience" (in "The Problem of the Environment", Vygotsky 1994). Researchers have also used "intensely-emotional-lived-through-experience" (Ferholt 2010, p. 164) and "experiencing" (in Leontiev 2005, translated by Favorov). A complication particular to Vygotsky's *Collected Works* is that it is unclear when "experience" is translated from perezhivanie and when it is from *opyt* (referring to an accumulated body of knowledge/skills). Even if the original term were identified as perezhivanie, it would still be necessary to discern whether it was used with its everyday or technical meaning.

Scholars from other language backgrounds have also sought translations in their own languages. González Rey (2009b) uses the Spanish *vivencias* as a direct translation of perezhivanie, Sato (2010) draws parallels with the Japanese philosopher Mori's concept of *keiken*, and the editors of the *Vygotsky Reader* (1994, R. van der Veer and J. Valsiner Eds.) suggest a similarity to the German *erleben*, drawing comparisons to Dilthey's concept of *Erlebnis* (which can be traced back to Goethe, with whom Vygotsky was also familiar).

Parallels have also been drawn to the conceptual languages of other theoretical and philosophical frameworks. For example, Vygotsky and Dewey have been linked in various ways: Blunden (2009) argues that Dewey's *experience* is "more or less similar" to perezhivanie, while Glassman (2001) proposes a similarity between Dewey's *experience* and Vygotsky's conceptualisation of *culture*. Others (Clarà 2013; Jóhannsdóttir and Roth 2014; Roth and Jornet 2014) have proposed fundamental similarities between Vygotsky and Dewey (e.g. the shared basis in Hegelian philosophy) that allow for mutual theoretical enrichment.

As Roth and Jornet (2013, 2014) have argued, Dewey's and Vygotsky's theories of experience and perezhivanie, respectively, share essential characteristics. For both Dewey and Vygotsky, experience (perezhivanie) is a category (i.e. a minimal unit of analysis) of thinking that defines the indeterminate and emergent aspects of practical activity and interaction that are difficult, if not impossible, to predict from the outset. While *an* experience denotes a completed and temporally discrete event known and understandable only in retrospect, experience/perezhivanie refers to the ongoing transaction of that activity, the interplay between practical, intellectual, affective and situational aspects, that affects the individuals involved. It is transactional, Roth and Jornet argue, precisely because they construct each other and feed back into the situation (e.g. manifesting itself to participants), transforming the course of the activity as the activity itself emerges. Thus, it is the purpose of the category of experience/perezhivanie to capture these indeterminate aspects together in an irreducible, integral entity as they are coming into being, rather than when they have done so. Experience/perezhivanie, therefore, provides the starting point for a more holistic (i.e. non-reductive) and concrete analysis of learning, an examination of how/which experiences become developmentally significant. By contrast, Razfar (2013) argues that many aspects of both theories—their ideologies, philosophies and ontologies—do not align, which, at best, requires a re-examination of their similarities, and at worst, entails their incommensurability.

The idea that the developmental significance of an environment can only be understood in relation to a specific individual's characteristics is also present in Gibson's (1979/1986) notion of *affordances* (for a history of the concept, see Jones 2003). An affordance refers to what a particular object offers an individual, defined in relation to that individual with their specific capacities and capabilities. Thus, a set of steps affords ascent, but not for an infant who has not yet learned to walk. For both Vygotsky and Gibson, the conception of learning moves beyond the transfer paradigm—in which learning is the acquisition of knowledge—and towards a situated cognition view in which learning is expanding action possibilities (i.e. affordances) in larger systems of activity (Roth and Jornet 2013). As with Dewey, the links drawn between Vygotsky and Gibson vary.

Van Lier (2000, 2004, 2008) connects affordances with Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory more generally in his ecological approach to language learning, though without using the term "perezhivanie" explicitly. Daniels (2010) links affordances to Vygotsky's *social situation of development*, arguing that Vygotsky provides the understanding of psychological formation that is missing in Gibson's work. By contrast, Michell (2012) argues that Gibson's understanding of perception as being direct and unmediated is incommensurable with Vygotsky's view that it is indirect and sign-mediated, differentiated and complexified through cultural mediation. Where for Gibson, individuals see new affordances through adaptation (becoming better attuned to already-existing affordances of value-rich ecological objects), for Vygotsky, it is through transformation (*perception itself* changes through mediation).

Much like metaphors, these efforts towards linguistic and conceptual translation have been useful for illuminating facets of the perezhivanie concept. However, it is in examining the concept in the context of Vygotsky's larger body of work that crucial connections, to both the purpose and constituent concepts of cultural-historical theory, can be made.

2.5 Perezhivanie in Context

In this section, I look at three approaches to contextualising perezhivanie: in relation to Vygotsky's early work on art, aesthetics and emotional psychology; other cultural-historical concepts; and in activity-theoretic terms. An overview of these approaches provides a guide to the refinements and operationalisations of the concept post-Vygotsky.

2.5.1 Art, Aesthetics, and Emotional Psychology

Theorists who examine perezhivanie through the context of Vygotsky's earlier work tend to view perezhivanie as a return to interests in intelligent emotional processes with the benefit of a more developed understanding of psychology. In this

context, Vygotsky's better known "instrumental period", in which the internalisation of object-mediated activity was central (González Rey 2009a), is viewed as having overlooked the role of emotion. Perezhivanie, then, is seen as a concept that restores the role of emotion and affect to psychological development research, allowing for a more holistic view of consciousness, and shifting focus from the unit of the instrumental act to the unit of the psychological system (Daniels 2010). Capturing the unity of thought and emotion (Brennan 2014; Chen 2014; Fleer and Hammer 2013; Gajdamaschko 2006),[3] perezhivanie avoids simple categorisation of mental processes as either cognitive or affective, thus avoiding the need to propose extraneous interactions to explain their relation to each other. Rather, thought and emotion are deeply and inherently interconnected, an idea Vygotsky (1987) made explicit when he wrote that "thought has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness" (p. 282), and which is supported by modern neurobiological research (see, e.g. Immordino-Yang and Damasio 2007).

The view that perezhivanie is a return to an earlier interest in emotion (González Rey 2009a; Vadeboncoeur and Collie 2013) leads to a view of perezhivanie as a process at the end of which an object comes to take on a developmental significance. This line of thought begins with Vygotsky's (1971) *The Psychology of Art*, particularly his work on catharsis, draws on Stanislavsky's understanding of perezhivanie as a tool for actors, continues with Vasilyuk's (1991) theoretical developments and reflects the connotations of the word in everyday Russian.

According to Benedetti (2007), Stanislavsky used perezhivanie to denote a tool, "the process by which an actor engages actively with the situation in each and every performance" (p. xviii). More specifically, it can be used to describe the re-living of past-lived experiences as a means to engage with and convey emotional subtext (Robbins, 1 December 2007). This conceptualisation likely informed Vygotsky's (1971) understanding of catharsis in *The Psychology of Art*. In the experience of and engagement with art, "intelligent emotions"—emotional responses elevated by one's imagination (Smagorinsky 2011a)—can be provoked. Here, perezhivanie captures the role of affect in interpreting one's experience. It refers to a "meta-experience" (Smagorinsky and Daigle 2012), an experience of experience that is both cognitive and emotional. Since what counts as an appropriate expression of a particular emotion is socially situated and conventional rather than innate, this meta-experience is also grounded in shared cultural experience (Smagorinsky 2011a). Through this meta-experience, an individual can deeply reflect on and have a raised awareness of past-experiences, leading to tensions between conflicting emotions—what Veresov (2014) has identified as "dramatic collision"—that are resolved in catharsis. It is in catharsis that there is an explosive discharge of emotion and a generalisation of personal emotions to a "higher plane of experience"

[3]Blunden (2014) clarifies that the unity to which perezhivanie refers is an original, rather than synthetic, unity. That is, it is not a concept that combines two abstractions—thought and affect—but is in fact a concept that names the already existing unity, from which those very abstractions have been made. This also aligns with Dewey's notion of an experience as being an original unity (see Blunden 2009).

(Smagorinsky 2011a, p. 332), transforming an individual's perception of themselves, others and the world (Cross 2012; Marjanovic-Shane et al. 2010). In the same way that Stanislavsky's actor engages with the situation in each performance, so too does Vygotsky's viewer engage with art at each viewing: in both cases, past experience can be re-experienced. Thus, Smagorinsky (2011a) argues, Vygotsky sees the dramatic nature of art in the development of personality, and the psychological nature of personality in art, both of which are required for understanding the development of consciousness. It is likely for this reason that the notion of drama in art was later used to characterise the internal and external conflicts of everyday life that lead to a different kind of catharsis and generalisation: human mental development. That is, human mental development as the resolution of "drama" in the domain of psychology is analogous to catharsis as the resolution of emotional conflict in the experience of art.

Vasilyuk is, in the literature, assumed to have elaborated Vygotsky's perezhivanie (Clarà 2013), defining the concept as "*a special inner activity or inner work*" (Vasilyuk 1991, p. 15) in which an individual withstands, overcomes and copes with a (usually painful) critical event or situation in life—a crisis—integrating it into their personality, which constitutes development (Blunden 2014; Levykh 2008a; Sannino 2008).[4] This conceptualisation of perezhivanie as a mental activity echoes Stanislavsky's notion of perezhivanie as a tool in which past-lived experience is re-lived on stage. It also aligns with Vygotsky's perezhivanie in catharsis, though contrasts with his later view of perezhivanie as a mental "representation of me-in-the-environment" (Clarà 2015, p. 40). For this reason, Blunden (2014) has suggested that using "'perezhivanie' for the experience and 'catharsis' for the working over" (p. 22)—the latter being necessary for development following a crisis.

2.5.1.1 The Primacy of Emotion

This particular understanding of perezhivanie as being informed by Stanislavsky raises two issues. The first is that the resulting operationalisation of perezhivanie strongly emphasises emotion. This is particularly evident of work following Mahn and John-Steiner (2008; see, e.g. Abdul Rahim et al. 2009; Antoniadou 2011; Blair 2009; Cross 2012; Dormann et al. 2013; Garratt 2012; Golombek and Doran 2014; Mi-Song 2010), who revitalised the concept for investigating how the building and sustaining of confidence in interaction supports learning. For Mahn and John-Steiner (2008), perezhivanie describes the affective and emotional lens through which interactions in the ZPD are perceived, represented and appropriated. This is supported, as stated earlier, by Vygotsky's conceptualisation of emotions as

[4]This understanding of perezhivanie as only what is developmentally significant (here, a crisis that has been overcome) draws with parallels with Dewey's concept of *an* experience (as opposed to the *category* of experience, discussed above).

forming part of the "sphere of consciousness within which all other mental activity occurs" (Beatty and Brew 2004, p. 330). Indeed, emotion permeates all aspects of consciousness, as "every idea contains some remnant of the individual's affective relationship to that aspect of reality which it represents" (Vygotsky 1987, p. 50).[5]

Though useful for restoring balance to an otherwise cognition-dominant approach to research, there is the risk of this kind of interpretation leading to a reduction of perezhivanie to only emotion, when Vygotsky's anti-reductionism (see, e.g. Matusov 2007) makes clear that perezhivanie is to be holistic and synchronic (i.e. for understanding at a particular point in time). In the case of second language learning, for example, a learner may lack the confidence to take the kinds of risks that allow for further practice and language development. This lack of confidence is not purely affective, but may be intimately linked to cognitive ability (including motor skills), self-perception of their abilities and their manifestations in concrete situations (e.g. a moment of nervousness or distraction may influence a learner's confidence), among other aspects. As Vygotsky (1994) writes:

> *what is important for us to find out is which* [of the child's] *constitutional characteristics have played a decisive role in determining the child's relationship to a given situation* … in another situation, different constitutional characteristics may well have played a role. (emphasis in original, p. 342)

That is, though the pervasiveness of emotion (whether or not differentiated from affect) makes it important in an understanding of the individual–environment relationship, there is a crucial difference between presuming the primacy of emotion in a given perezhivanie *before* analysis (e.g. via "investment", Andoniadou 2011; confidence, Blair 2009; motives, Clarà 2013; or mood and stance, Stone and Thompson 2014) and establishing its centrality *after* analysis. Though needs and desires may motivate particular behaviours and subsequently frame experience, it is not necessarily emotion—only one of many aspects of the psyche—that plays the "decisive role" in determining perezhivanie.

This is why in Vygotsky's (1994) discussion, the perezhivanie of different children appear to be characterised by different salient characteristics. In the example of three children under the care of their sometimes-abusive mother, the youngest child is *overwhelmed*, the second child has a simultaneously positive and negative *attitude* to the mother, and the eldest child's precocious maturity is explained by his ability to *understand* the situation. In another case, a child who is unable to *comprehend* the bullying occurring to him is consequently unaffected by it, and in another, a hypothetical child whose linguistic generalisations are concrete rather than conceptual "interprets and imagines the surrounding reality and environment in a different way" (p. 345). Thus, it is clear that the "decisive" determinant of a given child's perezhivanie is a matter of empirical discovery. Through subsequent analysis, the extent to which this psychological determinant has developed in the individual can also be investigated.

[5]It is worth noting that this statement echoes the dialectical law of reflection discussed above, wherein an object reflects within it the processes that gave rise to it.

Theorists who have assumed the primacy of emotion in understanding perezhivanie have also drawn on related words in everyday Russian for understanding the particular kind of emotion that is relevant. Echoing Vasilyuk, it is, in general, argued that perezhivanie refers specifically to the overcoming of an *emotionally negative* experience (see, e.g. Levykh 2008a; Robbins, 1 December 2007), though Kotik-Friedgut (2 December 2007) argues it can refer also to emotionally *positive* experiences (e.g. happiness, victory). Other examples of words with the *pere-* prefix in Russian suggest a broader, sometimes affectively neutral meaning, indicating movement or transition (Veresov, personal communication).[6] Similarly, Roth and Jornet (2014) trace the Proto-Indo-European root *per(e)-* to verbs indicating various senses such as: to dare, put at risk, try (as in "ex*peri*ment"), to put oneself in danger (as in "*peri*lous") and limit (as in "*peri*meter").

In these contexts, perezhivanie refers to the overcoming of a particular kind of emotional experience. However, another interpretation is possible: if perezhivanie is understood dialectically as a struggle between contradictory forces (e.g. between individual capabilities and environmental demands), then it is this struggle itself that is emotional(ly negative), both in its genesis (the experience of the contradiction/disssonance) and its resolution (as the new development contains an emotional imprint of the process of its coming to being; Levykh 2008b).

In this section, I have provided an overview of a range of interpretations of perezhivanie as focusing on emotion in experience (not to be confused with more general issues of emotional development; see Part II, this volume). The extent to which non-technical connotations of the perezhivanie informs, or should inform, its technical usage is a matter for further discussion beyond the scope of this chapter. In the next section I examine understandings of perezhivanie as a component in Vygotsky's system of concepts.

2.5.2 *Perezhivanie's Relation to Other Cultural-Historical Concepts*

A second approach to understanding perezhivanie is to view it alongside other cultural-historical concepts such as the *social situation of development*, and word-meaning and *sense*. Since Vygotsky was unable to fully explicate the relationship between these concepts, it has been the task of researchers following in his footsteps to do so.

[6]For example: *perekrestok* (crossroads), *peregruzhen* (overloaded), *perepolnen* (overcrowded), *peremeshchenie* (transition), and *perestroika* (reconstruction).

2.5.2.1 Social Situation of Development

The concepts of perezhivanie and social situation of development both conceptualise a dynamic relationship between the individual and their environment. Thus, to understand the relationship between these concepts—their origins, similarities and differences—illuminates the conceptual content of both (see, e.g. Veresov, this volume, for a more substantial analysis of this content), and their places within Vygotsky's theoretical system. Vygotsky had, at best, only implied a connection between the two concepts. In discussing "the problem of age", Vygotsky (1998) wrote: "one of the major impediments to the theoretical and practical study of child development is the incorrect solution of *the problem of the environment* and its role in the dynamics of age (emphasis added, p. 198). It is the phrase "the problem of the environment", that alludes to the subject of his later lecture in which perezhivanie is explicated. However, in specifying that he seeks to understand the problem of the environment in the specific context of its role in the "dynamics of age", he goes on to define "the social situation of development", providing a crucial clue for understanding how perezhivanie and social situation of development are related.

The social situation of development captures a *dynamic* relation because it defines a set of relations between the child/individual and their environment such that, if either change, then so too, does the social situation of development. Conceptually, it is used to delineate psychological age periods, which are book-ended and defined by the emergence and (completed) development of a particular psychological functions (or set of functions), or aspect(s) of personality (either of which constitute the "neoformation" of that period). Additionally, the social situation of development specifies a culturally particular relation between the child/individual and their social reality defined by two crucial aspects of the age period. First, there is contradiction (e.g. between social demands/norms/requirements and the abilities/needs/desires of the individual) that constitutes the motivating force for development. Second, within this particular relation, the child encounters the *ideal form* of development—the psychological function expected to develop—the completed development of which both resolves the contradiction and also, therefore, marks the end of the age period (Bozhovich 2009; Karabanova 2010; Vygotsky 1998). Subsequently, a new period begins marked by a new contradiction, new ideal form, and overall, a new child–environment relationship (e.g. the child can now use speech to communicate their needs)—that is, a new social situation of development.

Bozhovich's (2009) research has explicitly connected the social situation of development and perezhivanie concepts, with many researchers maintaining her distinction (at least conceptually, if not terminologically; Daniels 2010; Esteban-Guitart and Moll 2014; Fleer and Pramling 2015; Grimmet 2014). From the perspective of Activity Theory, Bozhovich rejects Vygotsky's conceptualisation of perezhivanie, instead substituting the term "internal position", which is in contrast to "objective/external position" (the social situation of development). The latter refers to the imposed demands and afforded resources of a social context,

while the former refers to the individual's own needs and desires. It is when an external position aligns with an internal position (e.g. a child is required to communicate using speech, and also has the desire to do so) that it serves as a "true factor" in development. Thus, the external position (social situation of development) is mediated—refracted—through the psychological system of the individual (internal position).[7] Following Bozhovich, researchers have argued for perezhivanie as a unit of analysis for investigating development within the social situation of development (Adams and Fleer 2015; Bozhovich 2009; González Rey 2009a; Grimmet 2014). However, it should not be misunderstood as applying *only* to understanding the social situation of development. Rather, perezhivanie is best understood as a unit—or perhaps more appropriately, stable "reference point" (Brennan 2014, p. 288)—for conceptualising the developmental role of the environment in general, of which the social situation of development is a particular kind, useful for characterising psychological age.

That is, though social situation of development and perezhivanie concepts share some similarities, they serve distinct analytical purposes. The social situation of development characterises relations between *children* within a particular culture and the cultural environment itself. Thus, theorisation grounded in this concept relates to *normative* claims about, for example, the expected neoformations and particular contradictions that characterise a specific age period for a particular culture. To investigate the progress, process, and course of development of a particular child, however, requires the use of the perezhivanie concept, in which the actual interactions between child and their environment (regardless of whether this is characterised as a social situation of development) are crystallised, reflecting that child's past and current experiences, personality, attitudes and so on, as manifest in a concrete situation (see, e.g. Fleer and Pramling 2015). Indeed, as Vygotsky (1998) writes: "the forces of the environment acquire a controlling significance because the child experiences them" (p. 294).[8] These "forces of the environment" can be characterised in terms of a social situation of development—in which case, analysis provides an understanding both of the individual and of normative

[7]It is unclear, however, whether the external and internal positions are both components of the social situation of development (as Karabanova 2010, has argued), or whether social situation of development only refers to external position.

[8]Karabanova (2010) gives a different translation as: "child's attitude to surroundings, and vice versa, the way surroundings affect a child, are regarded through his emotional experience and activity, thus surroundings acquire a leading force through child's perception"; while in the original Russian, it is "что среда определяет развитие ребенка через переживание [perezhivanie] среды… отношение ребенка к среде и среды к ребенку дается через переживание [perezhivanie] и деятельность самого ребенка; силы среды приобретают направляющее значение благодаря переживанию [*perezhivaniyu*] ребенка" (Vygotsky 1984, p. 383).

psychological age periods, that is, of *actual* development relative to *potential* neoformations—but it would be equally valid not to do so.[9]

To sum: though the concepts of social situation of development and perezhivanie are mutually informing, they characterise the child–environment relationship for different purposes and from different perspectives. The former, generally speaking, allows for theorisation of what is potential and culturally expected, while the latter reveals what is actually occurring. In a broader sense, we can see that the concepts are applications of the language of cultural-historical theory to particular issues (culturally constructed psychological age periods, and consciousness, respectively), in much the same way that cultural-historical theory is itself a specification of dialectical materialism for psychology.

2.5.2.2 (Word-)Meaning and Sense

In another of Vygotsky's well known works, *Thinking and Speech* (Vygotsky 1987), the unit of word-meaning provides the basis for understanding the development of verbal thought (i.e. thought mediated by the sign system of language). For many researchers, this work has provided insight into Vygotsky's thoughts on the development of consciousness, and thus by extension, the concept of perezhivanie. This connection can be made for a number of reasons.

First, they are methodologically analogous. Both concepts are described as units of analysis: empirically discoverable parts of the whole. Understanding how word-meaning is used to inform an understanding of the development of verbal thought should also provide insight into the way in which perezhivanie relates to and provides insight into, the development of consciousness (Valsiner and van der Veer 1993).

Second, two of the chapters of *Thinking and Speech* that elaborate the unit of word-meaning were written around the time (circa 1934) Vygotsky was also developing perezhivanie. It is likely, then, that the two concepts were either parts of a new approach to understanding psychological development, or two connected points in a singular line of inquiry. González Rey (2009a), for example, has argued that this phase in Vygotsky's work[10] was leading toward the development of the psychological concept of *sense* (which appears briefly in the last chapter of *Thinking and Speech*).

[9]This distinction between the investigation of potential/expected (social situation of development) and actually manifest (perezhivanie) development is, of course, identified in Bozhovich's distinction between external and internal position, respectively. However, her characterisation of Vygotsky's perezhivanie appears at odds with Vygotsky's intended conceptualisation, for reasons discussed in the last section of this chapter. Thus, I have instead borrowed terminology from Chaiklin's (2003) discussion of the ZPD, in which he distinguishes *objective/normative* (corresponding to the social situation of development) and *subjective* (corresponding to what a child can actually imitate and thus what is actually developmentally significant) ZPDs.

[10]From examining the Vygotsky family archives, Zavershneva (2010) ascertains that this new period in Vygotsky's thinking began "not later than July 1932" (p. 52).

Third, in concluding *Thinking and Speech* (1987), Vygotsky suggests that what lies beyond of the scope of the book is "a more general problem, the problem of the relationship between the word and consciousness" (p. 285), that is, language in the larger context of "the motivating sphere of consciousness" (p. 282). The same concluding chapter makes reference to Stanislavsky, suggesting that Vygotsky had either begun developing perezhivanie or had the seeds of the concept in mind.

A final link can be found in "The problem of consciousness" (Vygotsky 1997, Chap. 9), notes of Vygotsky's talks that mirror the structure of *Thinking and Speech*. In it, perezhivanie is linked to meaning and his work on verbal thought when Vygotsky identifies "the relation between activity and emotional experience [*perezhivaniyu*] (the problem of meaning)" (p. 130)[11] as an issue to be addressed in his work.

As with the concept itself, there are multiple interpretations of the manner in which perezhivanie relates to Vygotsky's discussion of word-meaning. Before examining some of these interpretations, it is necessary first to address issues in understanding word-meaning itself.

2.5.2.3 A Note on the Meaning of (Word-)Meaning

Of particular interest are at least two unstated interpretations of the relationship between word-meaning (*znacheniya slova*) and *meaning* (*znacheniya*) that are differently assumed by theorists: either word-meaning and meaning are equivalent (as with works following Mahn and John-Steiner 2000, 2008; e.g. Cross 2012), or word-meaning is a larger whole of which meaning (understood as lexical definition) is a part, (e.g. Robbins 2001, Chap. 3).[12] The consequences of these two

[11]Otnosheniye deyatel'nosti k perezhivaniyu (problema znacheniya).

[12]Support for the first interpretation can be found in Vygotsky's (1997) notes, when he alludes to this distinction: "Meaning [*znacheniye*] is not the sum of all the psychological operations which stand behind the word [i.e. not *sense,* as defined in *Thinking and Speech*]. Meaning is something more specific-it is the internal structure of the sign operation" (p. 133). However, it is nonetheless evident that while Vygotsky uses Paulhan's meaning and sense distinction in *Thinking and Speech*, he disagrees with Paulhan's characterisation of meaning: "Word meaning is not a simple thing given once and for all (against Paulhan)" (p. 138). Therefore, Vygotsky either uses Paulhan's *meaning* with a different definition, or subsumes both meaning (redefined as lexical definition) and sense within his own word-meaning construct. Indeed, Vygotsky (1987) writes that: "The actual meaning of the word [*znacheniye slova*] is inconstant …. Isolated in the lexicon, the word has only one meaning [*znacheniye*]. However, this meaning [*znacheniye*] is nothing more than a potential that can only be realised in living speech …" (p. 276). A possible interpretation of this apparently contradictory statement is that word-meaning is inconstant because it changes when the potential, abstract lexical meanings (i.e. dictionary definitions) of words are made concrete (i.e. used to refer to specific objects of discussion, rather than the entire class of objects to which a lexical definition would refer) in actual speech, and thus change from one context to another (including in inner/private speech contexts).

interpretations relate to other statements in *Thinking and Speech*. First, meaning is described as a relatively stable zone *within* sense,[13] "the aggregate of all the psychological facts that arise in our consciousness as a result of the word" (Vygotsky 1987, pp. 275–276). Second, in inner speech—highly abbreviated, non-verbalised, self-directed speech—sense predominates over meaning. Finally, word-meaning is described as existing on the plane of verbal thought (rather than, for example, the deeper and broader planes of thought or consciousness).

Where word-meaning and meaning are equivalent, it follows that sense and inner speech are associated with a broader plane than verbal thought—that is, consciousness—from which other psychological facts (e.g. emotion and personality) can be elicited by the word. Where word-meaning and meaning are differentiated, then both sense and meaning can be understood as parts of word-meaning, which, together with inner speech, are all situated on the plane of verbal thought. Though sense draws its "psychological facts" from beyond word-meaning in consciousness (e.g. motives; Vygotsky 1997, p. 136), it is nonetheless "contained" within word-meaning. This disagreement potentially stems from issues in translation. For example, it is unclear in the original Russian manuscript, except to proficient Russian speakers, whether *znacheniya slova* is best understood as (a word's) *meaning* or word-meaning. Additionally, the use of "word" in "word-meaning" is likely a synecdoche (Kozulin 1990, p. 151; or, similarly, a metaphor, Robbins 2001, Chap. 3)—that refers to language and its psychological and semantic structure as a whole, not particular words, which may confuse some readers unfamiliar with Vygotsky's writing style.

The context of writing also warrants consideration: the fifth and seventh chapters of *Thinking and Speech*, which focus on (word-)meaning, were written three years apart (in 1931 and 1934, respectively), during which Vygotsky apparently embarked on a new direction in his research (González Rey 2009a).[14] Thus it is possible that the use of (word-)meaning is not necessarily consistent across these chapters. Indeed, in the fifth chapter, word-meaning is distinguished from

[13]The origins of the meaning–sense distinction in the work of Paulhan raise two further questions. The first is whether the distinction was fully developed and understood by Paulhan himself, as it is disregarded as being insignificant in his later work (Kellogg, 12February 2015). The second is whether Vygotsky's usage of the distinction is in fact better explained as originating from the work of Volosinov (who distinguished between *thema* and *meaning*, corresponding roughly to actual and potential meaning, respectively), whose work was closely read by Vygotsky (Kellogg, 11 February 2015).

[14]The new direction for research can possibly be traced back to notes written on the back of library cards, examined by Zavershneva (2010), that reveal Vygotsky's intention to begin to direct his attention inwards, to investigate the dynamics of meanings by way of "semic analysis" (p. 42).

object-relatedness[15] from a functional perspective, in relation to the development of conceptual thinking in children, and strongly reflects Frege's distinction between sense (*Sinn*) and reference (*Bedeutung*), respectively (Wertsch 1978, p. 20), though Vygotsky does not make this connection explicit.[16] By contrast, in the seventh and final chapter, Vygotsky's discussion is structural and in the context of fully developed conceptual thinking and inner speech. Here, he draws on Paulhan, either to further refine his own definition of word-meaning by contrasting it with sense, or to introduce a new distinction within word-meaning itself.[17] Having made explicit the issues in interpreting word-meaning, we can now return to the present task of connecting the concept with perezhivanie.

2.5.2.4 Word-Meaning and Perezhivanie

Perhaps the most tantalising statement connecting word-meaning and perezhivanie is one that appears at the end of *Thinking and Speech*: "the word is a microcosm of consciousness, related to consciousness like a living cell is related to an organism, like an atom is related to the cosmos. The meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (Vygotsky 1987, p. 285). As with many other aspects of Vygotsky's work discussed in this chapter, differing interpretations of this connection have emerged. In this case, these differences appear to align with differing understandings of the term "microcosm".

On one interpretation, word-meaning is a microcosm of human consciousness *en toto* (Leitch 2011). That is, word-meaning is the unit that captures the structures and contents of consciousness, thereby reflecting an individual's concrete lived experience (e.g. the meaning and significance ascribed to an experience; e.g. Fleer 2013), and thus is able to serve as a unit for analysing consciousness (Connery 2006; Leitch 2011). This interpretation is premised on the constitutive role that

[15]Vygotsky (1987) later quotes R.Shor: "in what is commonly called word meaning, we must distinguish two features…the meaning of the expression…and its object relatedness" (p. 152). This can be differently interpreted as making a distinction between: (1) two parts *within* word-meaning; (2) two *functions* of or within word-meaning (i.e. nomination/indication and signification); (3) the whole (where meaning means word-meaning) against a part (object relatedness) of itself; (4) lexical definition and object-relatedness, both of which are parts of word-meaning; or (5) between structure (meaning) and a function (object relatedness).

[16]Additionally, both Frege's *sense* and Vygotsky's word-meaning are, respectively, described as the *mode* of presentation.

[17]Before the writing of the last chapter, Vygotsky (1987) has either not distinguished between sense and meaning, or has taken the two terms to be contained within word-meaning, for example: "We were able… to observe how that which is perceived is isolated and synthesised, how it becomes the *sense or meaning* of the word, how it becomes a concept" (emphasis added, p. 164) and "the greatest difficulty for the adolescent and one that he overcomes only at the end of the transitional age is the further transfer of the *sense or meaning* of the developed concept to new concrete situations" (emphasis added, p. 161).

Vygotsky assigns to language. Through activities such as speech, the meaning inherent in signs (i.e. language) generates sense, which either constitutes consciousness or effects interfunctional change (i.e. between processes of consciousness) within it (Vygotsky 1997, Chap. 9). As a result, this sense-creating activity of meanings is said to create the semantic structure of consciousness (Vygotsky 1997, Chap. 9), with word-meaning becoming the locus of thinking (Leitch 2011), mediating the entirety of consciousness (and not merely its expression in speech; Michell 2012). As Vygotsky wrote in notes from 1932: "The first word is a change in consciousness long before a change in thinking" (Zavershneva 2010, p. 44). Accordingly, in this context, perezhivanie is understood as an abstracted construct reflecting the larger system of the individual-in-environment (Connery 2006). To borrow Connery's (2006) metaphor, the window of word-meaning permits insight to the house of perezhivanie. However, Zinchenko (1985) has argued word-meaning is insufficient as a complete unit of analysis as it does not also contain the motive force for its transformation (motives, needs, desires, etc.), which, indeed, Vygotsky had argued lay beyond the plane thinking (and therefore, word-meaning), in the realm of consciousness.

On another interpretation, word-meaning is understood as a particular "privileged case" (Wertsch 1985 p. 194) of the semiotic organisation of consciousness (Vygotsky 1987, p. 43). That is, word-meaning, as a part of consciousness, is characterised by the same kind of generalisation and semiotic organisation that exists in the broader whole of consciousness. It should be clarified that, in this context, generalisation is not understood as in the context of verbal thought (i.e. forming abstracted concepts), but instead as the "exclusion from visual structures and the inclusion in thought structures, in semantic structures" (Vygotsky 1997, p. 138). Generalisation is thus a kind of abstraction from reality, shaped and determined by the activity of one's consciousness (Vygotsky 1997, Chap. 9). Thus, generalisation as a general principle explains not only the process by which concepts are formed in verbal thought, but also explains the non-intellectual means by which features of the environment can be said to be significant (or not) for an individual. While the meaning of a situation can be grasped at the *intellectual* level (e.g. to consciously understand), other factors such as an individual's current stage of development, needs, desires, abilities and attitudes can also make a situation "meaningful" to that individual in a non-intellectual (i.e. non-conscious) sense (Blunden 2014). As Vygotsky (1997) writes: "Meaning does not belong to thinking but to consciousness as a whole" (p. 138).[18] On this interpretation, the process of generalisation found within word-meaning on the plane of thought (which leads to an investigation limited to thinking; Smagorinsky 2011b) is a particular example of generalisation that, on the plane of consciousness, is found in perezhivanie. Where word-meaning is understood to be subsumed within sense, it is also possible to

[18]Note that this quote from Vygotsky also supports the first interpretation of word-meaning as a unit of analysis for consciousness *en toto*: the meaning attached to signs shapes consciousness.

interpret sense as being equivalent to (or even beyond) perezhivanie, as González Rey (2009a) and Lantolf (2000) have argued.

Further insight into this issue can be found in examining Vygotsky's use of the term "microcosm". Though not often used, it appears in "The historical meaning of the crisis in psychology" (Vygotsky 1997, Chap. 15), in an argument for new methodology:

> When our Marxists explain the Hegelian principle in Marxist methodology they rightly claim that each thing can be examined as a microcosm, as a universal measure in which the whole big world is reflected. On this basis they say that to study one single thing, one subject, one phenomenon *until the end*, exhaustively, means to know the world in all its connections. (emphasis in original, p. 317)

Vygotsky contends that psychology requires explanatory principles that explain what meaning observed facts have in the context of psychology.[19] Thus, while he disagrees with Pavlov's behaviourism, he commends his method: Pavlov studied the particular case of salivation in dogs, but this was grounded in an identification of what salivation has in common with other homogenous phenomena, and what dogs have in common with other animals. Thus, the degree to which salvation in dogs (the specific case) informed an understanding of the general biological principle of the reflex, was predetermined. To identify a microcosm (for Pavlov, salivation in dogs; for Marx, commodity value), then, is to understand what further analysis of the microcosm will reveal in relation to the macrocosm (Pavlov, the biological reflex; Marx, bourgeois society). This is why Vygotsky (1997) writes: "*to know the meaning is to know the singular as the universal*" (emphasis in original, p. 136).

This conceptualisation of microcosm owes much to Hegel (whether directly or through Lenin or Marx), who argues that microcosms are essentially concrete instantiations of the universal *macro*cosm of which it is a part, and reflect relationships and as-yet undifferentiated differences of that macrocosm (see, Lenin 1925/2003b; Stern 2009, Chap. 12). To simplify the relevant arguments from Hegel: if nature is considered a macrocosm—a dialectic that contains within it, not-yet-manifested differences (e.g. between organic and non-organic matter, animals, etc.)—then an animal can be considered a microcosm of nature. An animal is a specific instantiation of the essence of nature (its laws, matter, etc.), and because it is manifest in such a way, it also contains within its definition what it is *not* (e.g. an animal is not inorganic). Thus, reflected in the animal are the conditions of the macrocosm (e.g. laws of evolution, organisation of matter) that gave rise to the animal, as well as a relation to that which is external to it (Hegel 1970/2013, p. 108). Considered together, the individual animal is said to be a microcosm of the whole of nature.

[19]This point is also made while using the metaphors of reflection theory discussed earlier in this chapter: "When we know the *thing* and the *laws of reflection of light*, we can always explain, predict, elicit, and change the [mirror image]. And this is what persons with mirrors do. They study not mirror reflections but the movement of light beams, and explain the reflection" (Vygotsky 1997, p. 327).

Returning to Vygotsky, it can be plausibly argued that the word is indeed a microcosm of consciousness to the extent that its manifestation reflects the semantic nature of consciousness. However, it does not fully capture aspects of consciousness beyond the plane of thinking (e.g. motives, needs, desires, personality) that appear to be accounted for in perezhivanie. Rather, in being a concrete starting point for investigation, it can only indicate other aspects within the macrocosm to which the microcosm is related (in virtue of *not* being the microcosm), but which are not otherwise captured in the microcosm. The centrality of word-meaning therefore owes not only to it being a particular manifestation of the semantic nature of consciousness, but also to its potential to be studied "until the end", to reveal its relation to other aspects (e.g. personality, affect) within the dialectic macrocosm of consciousness that can then form the basis of further investigations (with, e.g. perezhivanie as the new unit of analysis).

2.5.3 Activity Theory

In this final section, I turn briefly to the activity-theoretic interpretation—or, as I argue, *mis*interpretation—of Vygotsky's perezhivanie, as exemplified in the influential work of A.N. Leontiev.[20] Activity Theory is built on the premise that Vygotsky's theory of the cultural mediation of human mental development is incomplete. Like the concept of mediation, perezhivanie is subsequently interpreted within the broader context of activity (as opposed to consciousness), with Vygotsky's conceptualisation found to be lacking and/or contradictory.

According to Leontiev (2005), Vygotsky argues that the effect an environment has on a child's development is determined by the child's "degree of comprehension of the environment and on the significance it has for him" (p. 17). This comprehension, in turn, rests on the development of word-meaning, conceptualised as "the specific form in which the development of the child's consciousness takes place" (p. 18). Development consequently occurs through interaction between meanings—between the developing word-meanings that constitute consciousness, and the social meanings that are manifest in the ideal forms of development in the environment. Although Vygotsky specifically argues aspects of personality like motivation, needs and desires are beyond the plane of thought (where word-meaning, in one interpretation, is situated) and located in the deeper plane of consciousness, Leontiev interprets Vygotsky to be grounding the concept of perezhivanie in *thinking* (i.e. in the ability for generalisation, word-meaning) rather than consciousness. Consequently, the absence of personality in the concept of perezhivanie renders it a false (i.e. incomplete) unity of person and environment, and therefore, an inadequate unit for its analysis.

[20]And also echoed in the work of Bozhovich (2009), discussed earlier.

This interpretation of Vygotsky, I argue, is uncharitable, relying on an understanding of word-meaning as a microcosm of consciousness *en toto*, as previously discussed. Leontiev's interpretation of Vygotsky also assumes that the following example fully captures the type of psychological processes—that is, only cognition—that determine perezhivanie:

> The situation will influence the child in different ways depending on how well the child understands its sense and meaning. For instance, imagine a family member is dying. Obviously, a child who understands what death is will react to this differently than a child who does not understand at all what has happened (Vygotsky 1934, as cited by Leontiev 2005, pp. 16–17)

However, as previously discussed in this chapter, it is clear in Vygotsky's writing that, while cognitive processes like generalisation and understanding may play the decisive role in determining perezhivanie, it is not always the case. It is a matter of empirical discovery whether the decisive role is played by cognition, emotion, personality or any number of kinds or combinations of psychological processes. Even in the example of the three children from the same family, Vygotsky identifies different kinds of psychological processes as being salient in the determination of their perezhivanie: being overwhelmed, positive and negative attitudes and the ability to understand. Indeed, on a more charitable reading of this example, it is possible to find underlying aspects of personality, needs and desires, as contributing to the determination of perezhivanie. The eldest child's "precocious maturity [and] seriousness" (Vygotsky 1994, p. 340), for example, may contribute to his experiencing his situation as one which requires him to play the role of protector to his siblings—arguably, this perezhivanie is, at most, only *partly* determined by an intellectual understanding. In the same way that some theorists erroneously emphasised emotion as the sole determinant of perezhivanie, Leontiev has here emphasised cognition. Leontiev's alternative to Vygotsky's perezhivanie as a word-meaning-based intellectual process is to situate it in activity. Rather than being a primary fact of consciousness,[21] perezhivanie is instead a secondary and derivative fact determined "by the content of the [practical, material] activity through which I realise [my] relationship [with the object]" (Leontiev 2005, p. 26). That is, perezhivanie is secondary, since it relies on word-meaning, which develops in childhood rather than existing from birth. For Leontiev, practical activity appears first, then later, thinking and perezhivanie.

Subsequent work in Activity Theory has attempted to return perezhivanie to the domain of consciousness. Clarà (2015), for example, has argued that perezhivanie is synonymous with *appraisal* in emotion theory, and is a representation in consciousness of an object's relation (un/desirable, harmful, valuable, dis/like) to the self as an individual with a particular history, aims and so on. Accordingly, the ability for an object/situation/event to affect the individual (i.e. the object's agency) is mediated through this "feeling" (i.e. emotion). The converse situation—one's

[21]The primacy of experience in consciousness is an interpretation also shared by Rubinstein (see, Fakhrutdinova 2010).

effect on the environment—is instead mediated through cognition. Together, cognition and emotion are both implied in activity, since activity is constituted by both objects and subjects, and their respective agencies (Clarà 2015).

2.6 Concluding Remarks

The concept of perezhivanie does not stand alone: it exists within the rich conceptual system of cultural-historical theory and emerges as part of a new direction in Vygotsky's work. It is also necessarily informed by Vygotsky's theoretical and philosophical heritage, and alludes to (or crystallises) ideas scattered throughout his prolific career. Post-Vygotsky, the concept encounters issues of translation, interpretation and appropriation for differing domains of research. These issues are magnified through the particular research agendas of individual theorists seeking to develop, understand and use the concept. What emerges is thus a complex landscape of refinements, reinterpretations and differing operationalisations, each shedding light on different facets of the concept. This chapter begins the process of charting this varied landscape to illuminate the difficult terrain that lies ahead for researchers seeking to use the concept. It is by developing this foundation that perezhivanie's potential for particular research agendas can be explored (e.g. emotion; Part II, this volume), and its shortcomings addressed through new conceptual systems (e.g. subjectivity; Part III, this volume).

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Introduction to Veresov & Mok (2018)

Earlier in 2016, Nikolai[11], my PhD supervisor, had been invited by James Lantolf to contribute a chapter on *perezhivanie* to Routledge Handbook that James was co-editing. Nikolai then asked me to co-author, given that the book was about second language development. This was a great opportunity since, in my mind, a handbook had an even higher status than a book—a reference book akin to a dictionary or encyclopaedia—a first stop not only for established scholars, but also for students new to the field.

In this handbook chapter, with Nikolai's deep theoretical expertise and my new interest in spreading an understanding of dialectics, we devoted a section (pp. 3–5) to outlining the principles of dialectics that were relevant to *perezhivanie*. I believed that this was a key for conceptual understanding, not just because it was central to the concept, but also because dialectics was typically glossed over sociocultural SLA research. Despite earlier broad readings of sociocultural SLA research, I had not then gained much of an understanding of dialectics. It could be that I had not looked hard enough for an explanation. It could also have been likely that dialectics was just not that crucial to the task of producing practical pedagogical knowledge, and thus this philosophical side of CHT never needed elucidation.

By the time we came to write this chapter, I realised that I had now felt like an outsider to SLA. I had completed the MA and even begun some of the research for the PhD, within the context of SLA. However, my candidature was as part of the faculty of Education and surrounded by colleagues primarily investigating early childhood education. Thus, writing this handbook chapter felt like a return to an old friend, with new worldly knowledge of dialectics to share (from having delved further into Vygotskian scholarship), which I could now express via some of the same SLA talking points used in Mok (2015).

[11] Nikolai Veresov. For clarity, I use "Nikolai" when referring to his role as my supervisor, and "Veresov" when referring to his publications.

Nikolai and I worked on this chapter in earnest in August 2016 and submitted the first draft the next month. It was reviewed, proofed, and then submitted for the final time in March 2017 and published June 2018[12].

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6

Understanding Development Through the *Perezhivanie* of Learning

Nikolai Veresov and Nelson Mok

Introduction

The development of Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory was in response to the lack of a theoretical and methodological language specific to the study of the uniquely human cultural development of higher mental functions. In the period from 1928 to 1931, when Vygotsky focused his efforts on understanding the sociogenesis of higher mental functions, he developed the foundational concepts of sign, mediation, and internalization. Together with the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and private speech, these concepts have formed the basis for the sociocultural approach to second language acquisition. However, from 1931 to 1934, Vygotsky shifted his focus to analyzing the structure and (re)organization of consciousness, understood as a dynamic, semantic system that includes not only cognition, but also emotional and personal dimensions. From this period emerged the concepts of *perezhivanie* (approximately translated as "emotional experience" or "lived experience"), the social situation of development, neoformations, and word-meaning. This period was also marked by a shift from analysis by elements, to analysis by units. This chapter explicates the concept of *perezhivanie* as understood during this period, as well as its consequences for SLA research. Specifically, we seek to discuss 1) the potential to understand development through investigating the *perezhivanie* of learning, and 2) ways in which the concept can be applied to investigating L2 learning. To do this, we begin with a foundation in the historical and philosophical context from which the concept emerges, briefly examining its implications and interpretations, before examining its particular theoretical and methodological contribution to SLA research.

Introducing *Perezhivanie*: Theoretical and Methodological Contexts

The theoretical and methodological contexts from which *perezhivanie* emerges inform its usage within cultural-historical theory and its potential application to understanding L2 learning. In this section, we examine these two contexts.

Theoretical Context: Perezhivanie *as a Concept*

From 1928 to 1931, Vygotsky approached the understanding of human mental development through conceptualizing the sociogenetic process by which higher mental functions come to be (Vygotsky, 1997). The theoretical approach is embodied in the fundamental concepts developed during this period—sign, mediation, internalization, the concept of higher mental functions—and which inform the theoretical language of what has come to be known as the sociocultural approach. From 1932 to 1934, however, Vygotsky had shifted from an understanding of development as the sociogenesis of individual higher mental functions, to an understanding of development as the systemic reorganization of interfunctional relations in human consciousness (Vygotsky, 1994, 1998). This followed "the emergence of a new theory of consciousness as a dynamic, semantic system" (Zavershneva, 2010, p. 35) from around 1932. Higher mental functions (e.g., logical memory, abstract thinking, voluntary attention) were no longer viewed as concrete and separate functions, but instead, as psychological systems: higher order unities of lower and higher functions (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 43).

This new systemic and holistic approach to consciousness became the central line of research for Vygotsky. From this perspective, development is characterized by "qualitative neoformations" (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 189). Here, "neoformation" refers to a new construction of an individual's consciousness and mental functions that emerges through the reorganization of the whole system of functions in consciousness during the process of development (Vygotsky, 1998, Chapter 6). The new approach required the development of theoretical concepts specific to particular educational issues so that research based on such concepts would speak to the object of study. For example, in the study of learning and development in educational settings, Vygotsky developed the now well-known concept of the ZPD as a tool and method of investigating development in learning (Vygotsky, 1935). In examining the development of thinking and speech in children, he elaborated the concepts of word-meaning and private speech (Vygotsky, 1987). Another of the concepts developed during this time was that of *perezhivanie*.

The concept of *perezhivanie* can be understood through two texts written during this time: "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994) and "The problem of age" (Vygotsky, 1998, Chapter 6). First, *perezhivanie* is given the phenomenological definition as "how a child becomes aware of, interprets, and emotionally relates to a certain event" (Vygotsky, 1994, pp. 340–341). Here, *perezhivanie* is not merely an emotional experience but a complex psychological phenomenon, a unity and nexus of different psychological processes such as awareness and interpretation, among others. Second, *perezhivanie* is also given a methodological definition as a concept which "allows us to study the role and influence of environment on the psychological development of children in the analysis of the laws of development" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 343). It permits such a study since it is in its "refraction" through an individual's *perezhivanie* that the influence of particular aspects of the social environment in which the individual participates is determined (and therefore, empirically identifiable). Just as the ZPD is a concept for analyzing development in learning, here, perezhivanie emerges as the tool for analyzing the role of the environment in development.

Methodological Context: Perezhivanie *as a Unit of Analysis*

The shift to the study of psychological systems also necessitated the development of new tools of analysis. These systems were understood as complex *unities* of psychological functions, and greater than the sum of its constituent parts. That is, they could not be understood

as analogous to a machine, in which the parts, elements, and processes are separated and only extrinsically connected. Rather, the psychological system—a living, *developing* system—has properties and interrelations not deducible from the analysis of its parts. Thus, Vygotsky proposed, analysis of such a system required an analysis by *units*, rather than *elements*. While both units and elements are parts of a whole, it is only the unit that retains characteristics of, and can therefore give insight to, the whole. The well-known example is that of the analysis of water: its capacity to extinguish fire cannot be easily explained through analysis of the elements of hydrogen (which burns) and oxygen (which sustains combustion), but instead must be explained through an analysis of the unit of the molecule, in which oxygen and hydrogen are in a unity (Vygotsky, 1987, p.45). For understanding the development of verbal thinking, Vygotsky (1987) introduced the unit of word-meaning, in which thought and speech were in a unity. For understanding the social situation of development, Vygotsky identified *perezhivanie* as the unit of analysis.

The *social situation of development* is a concept which is not related to the development of any *single* separate higher mental function (e.g., thinking, memory, voluntary attention), but instead takes the individual and environment as a single complex unity rather than two separate parts (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 198). The social situation of development defines what could potentially develop during a particular period relative to a particular person and the forces that motivate this development. It is in its unit of analysis, *perezhivanie*, that characteristics of the environment (i.e., the objective external conditions being experienced) and individual characteristics (i.e., how it is being experienced) are both represented (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 342). Though many people can share the same objective *social situation*, it is their experience—their *perezhivanie* of this situation—that will determine each individual's unique *social situation of development*. Thus, in the experimental study of an individual's *perezhivanie*, a researcher is able to identify 1) which characteristics of the environment affected development, and 2) which personal characteristics participated in a particular *perezhivanie*. Therefore, though different people may learn in a given social situation, the developmental outcome of their learning differs depending on how this situation is refracted in their *perezhivanie* to create their unique social situation of development. In the following section, we briefly discuss aspects of Vygotsky's philosophical foundation that warrant such an approach.

Perezhivanie *and Dialectics of Developing Systems*

Though a full explication of dialectical materialist philosophy and its place in the Soviet science of the time is a complex matter beyond the scope of this chapter, we can briefly summarize the two components. First, "dialectical" refers to the dialectical epistemology of understanding phenomena as containing a unity of contradictory aspects, the resolution and synthesis of which constitutes development of those phenomena. The "materialist" component refers to a material monistic ontology, in which the world is understood as consisting only of matter or matter in motion. Thus, the mind is understood as a higher form of the organization of matter, and which has a basis in the material facts and phenomena of culture. Two aspects of the dialectical conceptualization of development are relevant here to understanding the role of *perezhivanie* in Vygotsky's work: contradiction and qualitative reorganization.

According to dialectics, development requires the contradiction of internal contradistinctions, the resolution of which constitutes development. To study development dialectically is to identify these unified oppositions in the developing system. The mind, for example, is

understood as developing through the resolution of contradictions (e.g., between the desires of or demands imposed upon a person, and their ability to fulfill those desires and demands) within the cultural world. Development is also transformative. Though there exist different types of transformation, it is only *qualitative* reorganization that it is considered development from the point of view of dialectics. For example, as a caterpillar enters the pupa stage in preparation for its metamorphosis into a butterfly, its cells begin to rearrange within the cocoon. However, this is only a *quantitative* change, a *reconfiguration*. It is only at the point at which this reconfiguration results in the *qualitative* transformation into the butterfly form—which behaves and is structured differently to the caterpillar—that it can be considered development, according to dialectics. Thus, although the human mind can undergo many quantitative changes, it is at the crucial moments in which *qualitative* changes occur, marked by the reorganization of the entire psychological system by new mental functions, that there is development in a dialectical sense. For instance, within the context of second language acquisition, it is possible to view the accumulation of lexical knowledge as a quantitative change, with more developmentally significant qualitative change occurring once the target language becomes a tool for thinking—first in private speech, then in inner thought—as it begins to reorganize the whole psychological system.

Here, we can follow the example of the three children from "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994) to show the relationship between *perezhivanie* and the dialectic tenets of contradiction and qualitative reorganization in complex developing systems. The example is of three children from a family where the mother drinks and suffers from several psychological and behavioral disorders. The children were living in conditions of dread and fear due to these circumstances; however, their development was each disrupted in different ways despite being in the same situation. The youngest child developed a number of neurotic symptoms of a defensive nature (e.g., attacks of terror, enuresis, a stammer, depression, etc.). The second child was in a state of inner conflict expressed in a simultaneously positive and negative attitude toward the mother: "a terrific attachment to her and an equally terrific hate for her, combined with terribly contradictory behavior" (First author's translation from Russian, Vygotsky, 2001, p. 74). Finally, the third and eldest child "showed signs of some precocious maturity, seriousness and solicitude" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 340). He understood the situation, pitied his mother, and took a special role of the senior member of the family, the only one whose duty it was to look after everyone else.

Though the three children were in the same social situation, the developmental impact of this situation differed for each of them as they developed in different ways. That is, their social situations of development differed. Although the existence of a contradiction (which is the moving force of development) and qualitative reorganization (which constitutes development) within their social situations of development is inferred, it is only through examination of *perezhivanie* that we can come to understand the specific personal and situational characteristics that determined these aspects of the children's social situations of development at a particular moment. Accordingly, Vygotsky (1994) explains their different *perezhivanie* of the situation. The first child experiences the situation as an "inexplicable, incomprehensible horror" (p. 341). The second experiences a clash between his attachment and fear of his mother (which is expressed in his attitude toward her). And the third experiences the situation as a "misfortune which has befallen the family and which *required him* to . . . try to mitigate the misfortune" (p. 341, emphasis added). It is through such an analysis that it becomes possible to understand their developmental paths in terms of the contradictions that motivate the differing qualitative reorganizations in each child. For example, the eldest child experiences a contradiction between his role as a child and the new demand, created

by the situation, for him to become a caretaker for his siblings, leading to the qualitative reorganization of his psychological characteristics (i.e., his precocious maturity, seriousness, and solicitude). In the context of learning, understanding a learner's *perezhivanie* leads us to an understanding of the dialectics of development in terms of 1) what contradictions within the learning situation provoke a learner's development, and 2) what qualitative changes (i.e., forms of development) have occurred.

Implications of Perezhivanie *for SLA Research*

Given that the new approach to understanding development is manifest in the concept of *perezhivanie* through these particular characteristics, we can now outline two of its contributions to sociocultural theory.

First, the sociogenetic nature of human mental development entails that the forms of development that later appear in an individual must first exist in that individual's environment. Specifically, it exists not in the concrete circumstances that are also identical for others who are in the same situation—that is, the social situation—but instead exists in the concrete circumstances *relative to a particular individual's unique characteristics*—that is, it exists in their social situation *of development*. When made visible for analysis, *perezhivanie* is the unit by which we can come to understand what this social situation of development constitutes for a particular individual. It is in understanding the social situation of development that we are able to discover the dialectical contradiction that exists and that constitutes the moving force for new development to occur. We are also able to identify the neoformation that appears to the individual and which will define that social situation of development. That is, when this neoformation, a qualitative reorganization, has developed in the individual, the social situation of development will also change, even if the objective social situation has not. As a simplified example, the development of phonemic discrimination in the L2 may characterize one social situation of development, motivated by the contradiction between the need to discern different spoken words, and the inability to do so. As this ability develops, a new social situation of development, perhaps characterized by the development of intonational awareness, emerges, driven by new contradictions that now exist only as a result of the ability to discern phonemes.

Second, *perezhivanie* allows us to more closely examine the reflexive relationship between learning and development and to do so in a holistic manner. Learning leads development, but subsequent development changes the nature of learning. The nature of an individual's learning is thus dynamic; the way in which they learn and view their environment changes with development. While the concept of the ZPD can be used to assess the development in terms of particular mental functions, *perezhivanie* considers development in terms of neoformations, thereby accounting for qualitative changes to consciousness as a whole—that is, it includes not only mental functions, but also affective, cognitive, personal dimensions, and so on, and the way in which their interrelations have changed. Thus, through *perezhivanie*, we are able to understand the relationship between an individual's consciousness and the environment, and the ways in which this changes with development.

Issues in Interpretation

Difficulties in translating the word "perezhivanie" to English and the differing theoretical paradigms and interests from which the concept has been approached have led to a variety of interpretations. In this section, we briefly introduce two of the predominant kinds of interpretations: *perezhivanie* as emphasizing emotion, and *perezhivanie* as emphasizing cognition.

The editors and translators of the volume in which Vygotsky's discussion of *perezhivanie* first appears note that the translation of the term into English as "emotional experience" or "interpretation" are both inadequate for conveying the idea expressed by *perezhivanie* (Vygotsky, 1994, R. van der Veer & J. Valsiner Eds. & Trans., p. 354). Some theorists have nonetheless understood "emotional experience" as reflecting the emotional focus of *perezhivanie*. There are three sets of reasons why such an interpretation has been taken. The first is that the concept can be seen as a means to balance the otherwise cognitive focus of research in particular domains. We discuss this in further detail the context of SLA research, below. The second is that *perezhivanie* is often linked to Vygotsky's earlier work in *The Psychology of Art* (1971), in which the role of affect in interpreting one's experience of art is theorized. Understood in this way, *perezhivanie* refers to the role of affect—itself sociocultural in origin—in framing and shaping one's experience of art such that conflicts can emerge between this "meta-experience" (Smagorinsky & Daigle, 2012) and other emotions. It is in catharsis that this conflict is resolved through a transformation of the individual (Smagorinsky, 2001). Confusingly, Vasilyuk, uses "perezhivanie*"* to instead refer to this catharsis, defining it as "a special inner activity or inner work" (Vasilyuk, 1991 p. 15) through which an individual withstands and overcomes a usually painful experience. Finally, this notion that *perezhivanie* is related to specifically *painful* emotional experience is rooted in links drawn with the everyday Russian verb *perezhivat*, meaning "to be able to survive after some disaster has overwhelmed you" (Robbins, 2007, December 1).

Conversely, A. N. Leontiev, from the perspective of activity theory, interprets Vygotsky's conceptualization of *perezhivanie* as emphasizing cognition. On Leontiev's reading, the effect an environment has on a child's development understood as being determined by the child's "*degree of comprehension* of the environment and on the significance it has for him" (Leontiev, 2005, p. 17, emphasis added). Since this comprehension is based in the development of word-meaning (i.e., the ability to generalize and form concepts) and thus located on the plane of thinking rather than the broader plane of consciousness, it is inadequate for capturing the entire relationship between an individual and their environment. For example, aspects of consciousness beyond the plane of thinking such as personality, relevant for understanding the effect of the environment on development, are not accounted for. As an alternative, Leontiev proposes that *activity* is the correct unit of analysis for capturing this relationship: from practical activity, word-meaning and thought emerge, and from thought, *perezhivanie*. Two brief points from Vygotsky's texts should dispel this interpretation. First, in the discussion of the three children mentioned above, descriptions of their experience are not strictly limited to cognition. The first child experiences an "incomprehensible horror"; the second, a clash between "his strong attachment, and his no less strong feeling of fear, hate, and hostility"; and the third experiences the situation as "a misfortune which has befallen the family" (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 341). At most, these examples are only *partly* related to thought. Second, in concluding his discussion of word-meaning, Vygotsky (1987) indicates that the plane of thought in which word-meaning exists "has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotion" (p. 282). He would later define *perezhivanie* as a unit of *consciousness*, not thought (Vygotsky, 1998, Chapter 11).

Perezhivanie Researching L2 Development

If *perezhivanie* is understood as a logical product of the dialectical materialist philosophy used by Vygotsky, then its relative absence from SLA research can be seen as a continuation

of what Firth and Wagner (1997, 2007) had earlier argued was a tenacious resistance to the full implications of the general shift in the 1970s and 80s toward social-cultural perspectives (including Vygotskian sociocultural theory). Indeed, as Swain (2013) has noted, many scholars who have adopted Vygotsky's work to date have done so with a focus on cognitive aspects of his theory, divorced from, and in contrast to emotion, reflecting the behaviorist and structuralist origins of SLA. This is despite modern neurobiological research that shows the guiding role of emotional processes in cognition (e.g., Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007), a finding anticipated by Vygotsky (1987) when he writes of the origins of thought in the sphere of consciousness.

This neglect of emotion in domains influenced by rationalism and cognitivism, including that of SLA, has also provided the impetus for the recent emergence of the concept of *perezhivanie*. Its introduction can be traced back to the work of Mahn and John-Steiner (2002), who emphasize its relation to emotion, interpreting *perezhivanie* as describing "the *affective processes* through which interactions in the ZPD are individually perceived, appropriated, and represented by the participants" (p. 49, emphasis added) or as relating to the experience of emotional aspects of interaction. While useful in examining issues of cognition, this conceptual focus on affect and emotion over-corrects the cognitive imbalance, instead emphasizing affect rather than its unity with cognition and other aspects of consciousness to which *perezhivanie* is related.

Through the concept of *perezhivanie*, researchers have generally been directed to the theorization of previously-overlooked emotional aspects of interactions and experience. Irrespective of whether, or the extent to which, the concept ought to emphasize emotion, it has provided a more complete understanding of the role of one's consciousness in the process of learning. There is a danger, however, that the concept becomes a mere substitute for the word "emotion" (or some combination of otherwise disparate "factors") and suffers the same theoretical fate. As Swain (2013) argues, emotion, in the SLA literature, has been understood as an independent variable. She explains, "emotions influence language learning, and the reverse relationship, that language learning may influence emotions, is rarely considered" (p. 197). Though *perezhivanie* refers to one's experience of their environment as informed by past experiences and present characteristics, an understanding of the content of this experience is only half the picture; relatively less-theorized is what kind of development a changed experience reflects. Consequently, much of the research using *perezhivanie* relates to understanding how an individual experiences their environment, and/or how this experience can be supported or made more optimal to encourage learning (e.g., Brennan, 2016; Chen, 2014; Cross, 2012; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002). In sum, the focus has been on understanding the mediating role of *perezhivanie* for learning, overlooking the ways in which *perezhivanie* provides evidence of the development that occurs as a result of learning.

Perhaps due to an uncertainty as to how *perezhivanie* is to be used in understanding language learning and language learners, there are, currently, only a handful of studies examining L2 learning with the concept at the center of analysis. In examining the content-and-language-integrated-learning (CLIL) classroom, Cross (2012) uses *perezhivanie* to conceptualize the personal affective historical foundation upon which learners appropriate the tools in the environment for facilitating their learning and subsequent development. Closely following Mahn and John-Steiner's conceptualization, Garratt (2012) examines the affective perceptions by ESL students of peer-to-peer text chat, while Kang (2007) theorizes the role of past and immediate experience, and self-evaluated identity, in shaping (and being shaped by) learners' *perezhivanie*, conceptualized as a learner's cognitive

and affective perception of their environment. Finally, Mok (2013) uses *perezhivanie* in an autoethnographic study of his learning of Mandarin as an L2 to understand the experience of both the language and of the learning process and the way this experience changes over time with development.

Overall, *perezhivanie* has provided a means to address the underlying cognitivism of SLA, and like Firth and Wagner's (2007) use of conversation analysis (CA), guide analyses that are participant-centered. Such an approach shifts the focus away from how language can be *taught*, and instead provides insight into the process of L2 *learning* from the perspective of the learner themselves rather than from that of the researcher. Furthermore, this holistic perspective does not consider the learner or the environment as independent entities that have an external relation to each other, but rather as intrinsically related, requiring both to be considered together as a unity. The next section discusses some of the methods used by researchers to investigate *perezhivanie.*

Methods for Researching *Perezhivanie*

Setting aside conceptual issues regarding *perezhivanie*, we can now turn to the methods by which *perezhivanie* can be made visible for analysis. Broadly speaking, contemporary research using *perezhivanie* uses either observational or self-report methods, or a combination of both for the purposes of triangulation or enriching datasets. Here we briefly discuss these methods, their limitations, and issues of validity.

Observational methods have been crucial for researchers examining *perezhivanie*, especially in early childhood research where the research participants—children—may be pre-verbal or unable to communicate their experiences to the researcher. Such methods rely on an understanding that behavior is shaped by, and thus evidence for, the individual's experience of the world. Some researchers take this notion further in arguing that thought and emotion are in fact distributed in interaction and activities, thus making them available for analysis and subsequent interpretation. For example, Roth (2008) and Stone and Thompson (2014) analyze verbal and non-verbal features as expressions of emotive states and stance-etaking, respectively. However, as Brennan (2016) argues in her study of early childhood teachers, the expression of an emotion may not match how it is being felt. We return to this issue of validity shortly.

Self-report methods ostensibly allow for analysis of *perezhivanie* from a perspective that is closer to the learner than can be achieved in observational methods. By self-report methods, we intend to refer to a range of related methods that require the research subject to express or recount their experience as rich, thick descriptions for analysis. Such methods include, but are not limited to written or spoken reports, narrative and diary studies, interviews (e.g., stimulated interviews; Cross, 2012) and discussions, dialogue journals (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002), and autoethnographies (Mok, 2013). As with observation, there is the validity issue of the disjuncture between the experience (i.e., the *perezhivanie* itself) and the expression of that experience, and this is compounded by a number of factors (Polkinghorne, 2007). First, a research subject is only able to convey aspects of experience of which they are cognitively aware and can access through introspection. For example, an individual may not yet fully understand a particular affective experience and its effect on behavior (Bouchard et al., 2008). Second, this expression is further restricted by the limits of language and the linguistic ability of the subject. As Vygotsky states, "*the thought is a cloud from which speech is shed in drops*" (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 134, emphasis in the original), and the transition

from thought to speech is a heavily mediated, indirect process (Vygotsky, 1987). Third, the subject may be unwilling to express their true feelings and understandings so as to project a particular personal or professional identity to the researcher, especially where rapport and trust has not yet been adequately established. Finally, the produced texts are not reflections of reality, but instead (co-)constructions mediated by interactions with and cues from the interviewer/researcher.

These issues are especially pronounced where the elicited text is considered only for its content, or what Pavlenko (2007) describes as a narrative's "subject reality." If the construction of the narrative is considered part of the subject's ongoing experience in the environment rather than, as it were, an outside, objective reflection of it, then the text can also be analyzed in terms of its "text reality," that is, how the subject presents themselves through language in the text. Subsequently, this additional layer of analysis may consist of understanding what is emphasized or omitted, the words and concepts that are chosen to describe experience, the way in which the narrative is structured, and so on. For example, in the process of collecting self-report by early childhood teachers, and in light of her understanding of other studies that confirm the centrality of emotion, Brennan (2016) argues that her subjects appeared to be omitting emotion from their accounts. Though she formulates various hypotheses for this omission, which contradicts her theoretical expectations, she concludes that it is difficult to access accurate recollections of past experiences since "recall involves the past, which is always understood through the person's perspective of the current experience and often changed understanding of the phenomenon" (p. 8). These filtered, refracted, and mediated accounts, we argue, do not hinder analyses of experience, but in fact, form part of a dialectical analysis. If, as Brennan subsequently hypothesized, professional discourses were mediating these self-reports, then the next questions might be, why, and to what extent these discourses contribute to that individual's *perezhivanie* in general, and their *perezhivanie* of past experience. This idea of one's experience of experience is echoed in Smagorinsky and Daigle's (2012) conceptualization of metaexperience (which they argue is *perezhivanie*)—the framing of experience into a meaningful text of events such that the individual has an awareness of an experience *as an experience* (in contrast to just having the experience itself).

In addition to this disjuncture between a subject's experience and their reporting of this experience, a second and final disjuncture—between the report or observation and its interpretation by the researcher—must be addressed so that claims of validity can be made. Though this issue is not particular to SLA or sociocultural theory research, it is significant in light of the need to infer an individual's cognitive or affective activity from observed behavior or elicited narrative/self-reports. Beyond the creation of a logical trail from observation to conclusion, or the use of mixed methods for triangulation (see, e.g., Denzin, 2010, for a discussion), researchers can benefit from employing reflexivity to gain awareness of, and make clear to readers, their own *perezhivanie*, which shapes the research project and informs analyses. In much the same way that the object of study is understood dialectically, so too does reflexivity allow the research project itself to be considered as a dialectic, constituted by the unity of oppositions and contradictions between, for example, the researcher (e.g., their values, beliefs, interests, expectations, theoretical understandings, etc.) and their object of research, or between the research method and the data it produces. It is through the sublation and synthesis—that is, qualitative reorganization—of these oppositions and contradictions to higher levels of conceptualization that new insights and knowledge are produced (for different stratifications of these levels, see, e.g., four levels of reflective analysis, Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2010; and dialectical-interactive methodology, Hedegaard, 2008).

By taking these methodological issues into account, researchers examining the experiential data of *perezhivanie* can better justify the conclusions drawn from analysis. The concept of *perezhivanie* is useful at each step. It provides a way to understand the nature of an individual's learning and its relation to their development; it conceptualizes the way in which learners' accounts of this *perezhivanie* is itself mediated; and finally, the visibility of the researcher's own *perezhivanie* in the final analysis supports a justification of their dialectical interpretation of elicited data.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to 1) discuss the potential to understand development through investigating the *perezhivanie* of learning, and 2) to examine how the concept can be applied to investigate L2 learning. We have done this through situating the concept within the theoretical and methodological contexts of Vygotsky's works to highlight its potential to contribute to the sociocultural approach to SLA. Theoretically, *perezhivanie* embodies both the principles of dialectics as well as Vygotsky's shift from an analysis of isolated higher mental functions, to an analysis of the structure and (re)organization of consciousness. Thus, it is also informed by other concepts that emerged during this time as part of the same approach to understanding development (e.g., the concepts of the social situation of development, neoformations, and word-meaning). Methodologically, the concept emerges as an example of the kind of analysis by units (rather than elements) that Vygotsky had argued was necessary to adequately capture what was unique about the process human mental development. *Perezhivanie* allows researchers to approach development holistically, to understand consciousness as a system of dynamic interfunctional relations, and to study the interrelations of an individual and their social reality, understood as their social situation of development. Importantly, it provides a means by which we are able to understand how and why learners in the same situation of learning may nonetheless have differing developmental outcomes. These differences relate not just to cognitive activity, but also the emotional and personal dimensions of the learner, from their perspective.

However, the theoretical positions from which *perezhivanie* has been read have led to divergent interpretations as to the specific contents of the concept. From the perspective of activity theory, we have argued that the interpretation of *perezhivanie* as pertaining to cognition is incorrect. We have also argued that readings of the term to emphasize emotion—while an important step in redressing the dominant focus on cognition—have perhaps overstated the role of emotion in understanding *perezhivanie*. A particular issue with this approach is the potential for *perezhivanie* to become a mere substitute for "emotional factors" in cognitivist research. An additional methodological consequence of such a view is a potential to overlook the ways in which *perezhivanie* does not merely shape learning, but also provides evidence of development that occurs as a result of learning. Finally, we also address a number of issues in the common methods used (in SLA and elsewhere) to make *perezhivanie* visible for analysis, and argue for the use of the concept at the meta-methodological level to understand the process of producing and interpreting data so as to supplement initial analyses and to bolster claims to validity.

In bringing to light the various issues that surround the concept of *perezhivanie* as well as its theoretical, methodological, and philosophical connections to the broader body of Vygotsky's work, we hope to provide a basis for, and inform, future developments of the

concept. In the same way that the concepts of sign, mediation, internalization, the ZPD, and private speech have provided fruitful directions for research, so too, can *perezhivanie* form a part of the theoretical toolbox of the sociocultural approach. Moving forward, it becomes crucial to delineate the unique contribution of the concept to our understanding of the relationship between learning and development in SLA.

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Further Reading

González Rey, F. L. (2009). Historical relevance of Vygotsky's work: Its significance for a new approach to the problem of subjectivity in psychology. *Outlines, 1*, 59–73.

González Rey views *perezhivanie* within the context of Vygotsky's discussion of sense, situating it within attempts in psychology more generally to elaborate the notion of subjectivity.

Mok, N. (2017). On the concept of *perezhivanie*: A quest for a critical review. In M. Fleer, F. L. González Rey, & N. Veresov (Eds.), *Perezhivanie, emotions and subjectivity: Advancing on Vygotsky's legacy*. Springer.

This chapter takes a closer look at the philosophical context of *perezhivanie* and the various theoretical links that researchers have made with other works and interests of Vygotsky.

Smagorinsky, P. (2001). Vygotsky's stage theory: The psychology of art and the actor under the direction of "perezhivanie." *Mind, culture and activity, 18*(4), 319–341.

Smagorinsky discusses *perezhivanie* and Vygotsky's earliest and latest works regarding emotion in formal drama (e.g., theater) and in everyday drama.

Veresov, N., & Fleer, M. (2016). Perezhivanie as a theoretical concept for researching young children's development. *Mind, Culture and Activity*, (4), 325–335. doi:10.1080/10749039.2016.1186198

This paper examines the significance of *perezhivanie* for understanding young children's development from the perspective of cultural-historical theory more generally.

Vygotsky L. S. (1994). The problem of the environment. In J. Valsiner & R. van der Veer (Eds. & Trans.), *The Vygotsky reader* (pp. 338–354). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

First transcribed and published posthumously by one of Vygotsky's students, this subsequent English translation provides much of theorists currently understand about Vygotsky's conceptualization of *perezhivanie*.

A shifting focus to dialectics

The two above papers reflect my growing engagement with dialectics. Though I did not want to enter the perilous world of philosophical scholarship and debate, I believed that explicitly discussing the dialectical foundations of *perezhivanie* could be my contribution to knowledge, especially in the context of SLA. This shift in perspective might not have crystallised had I not been invited to write the chapter for *Perezhivanie, emotions, and subjectivity*. It should be noted that this shift was to an *explicit awareness* of dialectics and its meaning; earlier in Mok (2015) I had already, unbeknownst to myself, come to view the emergence of CHT as itself the result of a dialectical process of development. (Though equally likely, this view only seems to be dialectical because it mirrors Vygotsky's own dialectical conceptualisation of the tension between materialist and idealist psychology). To conclude this chapter, I offer a brief overview of dialectical logic to account for elements left out of the above chapters.

The laws of dialectics

Though the notion of dialectics can be traced back to Ancient Greece, the version that is of concern here has its origins in Hegel, being transformed by Engels and Marx, and subsequently forming the foundation for Vygotsky's work. For Engels (1878/1996, "Negation of negation"), dialectics is "the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought" and thus a kind of process ontology. This is in opposition to formal, analytical logic—what Trotsky (1939/2007) calls "vulgar thought" and Hegel (1969/1997), "ordinary thinking"—which seeks to define phenomena as static abstractions. In understanding the essence of phenomena as being found in its motion and development (rather than what it is observed to be at a particular point in time), dialectics rejects the notion that the appearance of a phenomenon is identical to its essence. As discussed in Chapter 2, it seeks to explain concretely, rather than describe abstractly, giving concepts a richness or "succulence" that more closely reflects living phenomena (Trotsky, 1939/2007). The two positions—concrete explanation and abstract description—are readily exemplified in biological classification. On one hand is Linnaeus' classification of organisms by external, observable characteristics, and on the other is

Darwin's theory of evolution, which explains the then-unobserved mechanism (DNA) and process (natural selection) that relates seemingly different organisms to each other.

Engels summarises Hegel's dialectics in three laws:

> The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa;
> The law of the interpenetration of opposites; [and]
> The law of the negation of the negation. (Engels, 1925/2001, Chapter 2)

Though Engels uses the dialectics built by Hegel, the two differ in that Hegel derives the laws from thought and imposes them on an understanding of nature, while Engels sees the laws as being inherent in and derivable from nature. However, the ontological disagreements between idealism (Hegel) and materialism (Engels, Marx, Lenin, Vygotsky) are of no concern for the present discussion, as the fundamental laws premises of dialectics are shared. Here I discuss these three laws briefly, using examples primarily from the physical sciences to illustrate the basic idea, before turning to a discussion of their use in Vygotsky's work for understanding human psychological development.

Transformation of quantity into quality (also known as the law of change)

This refers to the idea that purely *quantitative* changes can eventually lead to *qualitative* change (Engels, 1878/1996, "Quantity and quality"). The archetypal example is that of water: water can have heat energy added to or removed from it (quantitative change) while still remaining a liquid, but at a certain point, this will change the state of the water (qualitative change) into a gas (steam) or solid (ice), respectively. Kuhn's notion of the paradigm shift also reflects this law: in science, a given theory will inevitably encounter anomalies, but when these become insurmountable or unexplainable, a radical metamorphosis to a new paradigm, which gives an explanation for those anomalies, can occur.

Interpenetration of opposites (also known as the law of contradiction)

This refers to the idea that, in all phenomena, there is a coexistence of opposing tendencies in tension with each other—Lenin (1925/2003) asserts that this doctrine is the essence of dialectics. This is perhaps the most radical departure from formal logic, since rather than trying to avoid and exclude contradictory ideas, dialectics views the inherent contradictions that explain movement (i.e., development and change) as essential to the phenomena. For Hegel (1969/1997), this meant that a concept or idea defines its opposite. For example, the idea of pure Being (existence), considered on its own, he argues, is empty and equal to Nothing (non-existence); it is tautologous, and says nothing interesting. However, it is in the concept of Becoming that these two contradictory ideas are in unity: to exist is to move towards non-existence (e.g., life implies death), to exist is the opposite state to non-existence. That is, Being only has meaning in relation to its opposition, Nothing (not-Being)[13]. Both are understood as "moments" of (i.e., within and inherent to) Becoming.

Engels (1925/2001, Chapter 3), proceeding materialistically, argues that contradiction is inherent in nature and human society and thus reflected in thought. Fundamentally, motion is an inherent attribute of matter, and the basic form of all motion is attraction and repulsion (understood in the general sense as movement toward or away, rather than as the product of a force). Attraction is only possible when compensated by repulsion elsewhere, otherwise movement is unidirectional and eventually comes to a stop. Thus, for example, the nuclei of atoms, which contain positively charge protons that otherwise repel each other, are held together by the strong nuclear force. Gravity pulls objects toward the centre of the Earth, but the opposing Normal force explains why objects do not simply fall through the ground. In evolution, there is the conflict between the processes of heredity (preservation of genetic material) and adaptation (the loss of genetic

[13] Marquit (1981) discusses the features of dialectical opposites as being both mutually *conditioning* and mutually *excluding*. Using this example, Being and Nothing imply each other and in a sense "cause" each other's existence (mutually conditioning) while also excluding each other (mutually excluding). Since they both have in common a description of existence (though opposing), they can be said to have an "*identity in difference*" (p. 308)

material through natural selection). In these examples, a contradiction (i.e., conflict, struggle) arises between two mutually exclusive (i.e., they are contrary) aspects or moments of a particular phenomenon (i.e., they are correlative; see also, Planty-Bonjour, 1967). It is the understanding, rather than avoidance, of these inherent and *dialectical* contradictions (i.e., conflicting, contrary, and correlative) that allows for a closer approximation of a reality that is in "eternal motion" (Trotsky, 1939/2007).

This law also denies the applicability of abstract identity (i.e., A=A) to nature, since every cell and every organism is at the same time identical with itself, yet constantly becoming distinct from itself through constant physiological processes and molecular changes. The law of identity is thus only valid within very small limits. The law of dialectical contradiction, "A *and* not-A" is asserted, and becomes crucial part of understanding the phenomena in full. So too, in propositions do we find contradiction. Lenin uses the example "Fido is a dog": Fido is an individual, and "dog" is a universal, and here they are the same. One does not exist except through the other. The idea of Fido as an individual only exists as a particular instantiation of "dog", and conversely, "dog" refers to the essential attributes of Fido that connect it with other instantiations of "dog". And of course, the concept of "dog" is meaningful only within a web of other concepts that define non-dogs, animals, and so on (Lenin, 1925/2003). The law of contradiction is less a thesis against the validity of formal logic, and more a thesis against the attitude that formal logic takes to contradiction. Whereas formal logic takes contradiction in thought to be an error to be avoided through careful reconstruction of abstract premises, dialectical logic sees contradiction as a natural part of the world, including in our understanding of it, and must therefore form a part of how we think about the world if we are to do so more fully[14].

[14] To phrase this differently, dialectical logic is a truer reflection of ever-changing reality, in accounting for the oppositions that are the moving force for development, while formal logic, in "freezing" and abstracting from reality, can encounter the kinds of contradictions that lead to absurdities. To assert "it is raining here" and "it is not raining here" is an (impossible) logical contradiction to be avoided; and yet it is a dialectical contradiction that can be embraced, since they can both be true, though at different times, in different places, or for different rhetorical purposes (and indeed, the idea of raining is only meaningful in contrast to not-raining, within some higher concept). Contradiction, in dialectics, is perhaps better thought of as opposing tendencies or moments, to avoid the more familiar connotations of "logical contradiction".

Negation of the negation (also known as the law of development)

Finally, the law of the negation of negation explains development as a resolution of dialectical contradiction, and a return to the original state, though at a higher level. As Vygotsky (1993) writes: "Development as a historical complex which at every stage reveals the past which is a part of it. Development is the struggle of opposites" (pp. 282–283). I agree with Bernal (n.d/2008) that the best way to grasp this idea is through an example. Engels (1878/1996, Chapter 13) discusses a grain of barley. If a grain of barley falls to soil with conditions suitable for growth, then it germinates, and the grain as such soon ceases to exist; it is "negated" (quantitative change has led to qualitative change). The plant that emerges will similarly grow, and after fertilisation will produce more grains before dying; here, the plant, the negation of the grain, is itself negated. There is thus a return to the beginning, to the grain though now there are many grains, and because of genetic mutation and natural (or artificial) selection, they may also be genetically different, yet still, they are grains. The grain and the plant are both stages inherent in the life cycle of the organism, yet they contradict and struggle against each other, since they cannot be simultaneously manifest; one stage supplants the previous. Development is thus conceptualised not as a circle, but an upward spiral, returning to a starting point that is not quite the same as it originally was, and proceeds through the struggle of contradictions inherent to the phenomenon (Lenin, 1925/2003). Importantly, the different stages are connected: the genetic material that guides the plant's growth (and to eventually form new grains and die) is contained within the grain, and the new grains that emerge retain these genetic instructions (though may be mutated). This idea is reflected in Hegel's use of the term *Aufheben* (typically translated as "to sublate"), which means "to preserve, to maintain, and equally it also means to cause to cease, to put an end to" (Hegel, 1969/1997, §185). The idea of Being is negated by Nothing (and preserves something of the idea of Being: before being Nothing, it was Being; or being Nothing, it is no longer Being), which is negated by and sublated in Becoming (which overcomes yet preserves the idea of both Being and Nothing). The triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis is often ascribed to Hegel as representing this process, though he never used those terms (Mueller, 1958). However, it conveys the notion that a synthesis—the resolution of a contradiction, the negation of negation—is at a higher level of abstraction than what was sublated: replacing but preserving it. In the example of the grain, the new grain, builds on

a foundation of its genetic inheritance with potentially new mutations (which may be adaptations to the environment). At the very least, it is quantitatively different to the original grain, now being more numerous. Similarly, a scientific theory may gradually build up anomalies, triggering a shift to a new paradigm that negates it. However, the nature of this new paradigm is such that it reflects the ideas or problems of the theory it supplanted, whether explicitly, in inheriting those ideas, or implicitly, in refuting them.

Dialectics in Vygotsky's work

Together, the laws of dialectics explain how and why things change and evolve, and they do so by preserving the sense of interconnectedness and continual motion inherent in all phenomena. For Vygotsky, such an approach is necessary for the study of *human psychology* in particular, owing to the *irreversibility* of psychological processes (Valsiner, 2009). "Every experience changes a person in a way that cannot be completely undone" (Smedslund, 2016, p. 186), which makes precise empirical replication in principle impossible since initial conditions can never be repeated. For example, the same person, tested repeatedly using the same stimulus and experimental conditions, will nonetheless have memories of previous experiences. Thus, though the same individual is being tested, they are not, in a sense, identical across time. (Of course, methods involving aggregation can be used, but these only support views at the aggregate, not individual, level; Smedslund, 2016). Here we see the erroneous assumption underlying empirical psychology: that the individual is always equal to themselves, A=A. The dialectical approach accounts for the contradiction, that an individual can be both identical with themselves, yet at the same time, not be identical, being constituted at different times by contradictory aspects (i.e., both A=A and A=not-A). This is in the same way that Engels' grain of barley is understood in its totality to include both its temporary existence as a grain, as well as its potential for transforming into a plant. In accounting for this contradiction, dialectics provides a way forward in the understanding of psychological processes and development in recognising its inherent movement and historical change. It is on this basis that Vygotsky is able to develop his CHT: dialectics provides the framework for an explanatory psychological theory that links successive stages of

development together rather than merely being satisfied with isolated descriptions of those stages. However, dialectics could not simply be applied to the study of human psychological development, but required concepts that were dialectical yet also specific to the psychology (and thus, in a sense, a sublation of the general laws of dialectics together with the specific objects of investigation).

Several examples from Vygotsky's work reflect this need to specify dialectics. For example, mediation resolves the contradiction between an individual's desire to do something and their inability to do it. It does so by being the means by which the individual is able to satisfy that desire. The child's reaching for an object (wanting to grab the object, but unable to reach) becomes a pointing gesture (mediation) that allows their carer to bring the object to them. Here the ZPD can be thought of as the observable manifestation of a contradiction for which mediation will lead development. Similarly, the unit of "word-meaning" was Vygotsky's conceptual sublation of the ways in which two separate developmental lines—speech and thought—eventually become intertwined. Additionally, the development of concepts can also itself be understood as an interpenetration of opposites, since they consist in concrete, everyday experiences enriching and being enriched by the more structured, systematic, explicit (abstract, propositional) knowledge that is gained in education (Vygotsky, 1987, Chapter 6). Within a concept, both everyday and scientific understandings are sublated. The genetic law also reflects the law of the interpenetration of opposites (in this case, the social and the individual/psychological), as social relations become internalised as psychological functions. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 2, CHT is itself a sublation of the dialectically contradictory positions of materialism and idealism that also reflects some of the tenets of those positions (some being accepted, while others being implied in their rejection). That is, although materialism and idealism did not fully and satisfactorily explain the development of higher mental functions, they can be understood as historical moments on the path to doing so. The specific tensions that arose between the two positions are resolved when reconfigured within the broader whole of CHT (i.e., materialist monism in ontology, and idealism in a dualist epistemology), itself a new kind of materialism, now more closely reflect reality. CHT explains the emergence of higher mental functions as the result of cultural development, conceptualised as being built on a foundation of the relation and

contradiction between biologically inherited lower mental functions and material social activity. Given the dialectical nature of Vygotsky's thinking, how might *perezhivanie* be understood in terms of the laws of dialectics?

First, the concept itself captures a dynamic relation between the individual and environment, such that the concept can refer to different specific relations between the individual and environment at different points in time. Second, since a given *perezhivanie* is dependent on the specific characteristics that have been elicited or brought to bear in experience, the concept achieves a picture closer to lived experience than would a presupposition of the relevance of particular abstracted characteristics. Third, and additionally, the law of the interpenetration of opposites (aka the law of contradiction) is implied in the interconnection between personal and environmental characteristics. For example, the characteristics of a particular situation are experienced only to an extent determined by the personal characteristics—aspects of consciousness—that have actually arisen in a particular moment (in one moment I may be attentive to a particular feature of the environment, in another I may not, for whatever reason). That is, in *perezhivanie*, the environment is determined only in relation to the individual, and vice versa. Finally, for social relations that appear first as contradictions for the individual, they may eventually be internalised such that the same social relation is subsequently no longer experienced as a contradiction (negation of negation).

The language of dialectics enables the discussion of another nuance of the *perezhivanie* concept. By my understanding, *perezhivanie* is a concept that captures the opposition of individual and environment as experienced by an individual. It is within these experiences that there are conflicts between real (actual) forms (e.g., a child's monosyllabic speech) and ideal forms (e.g., the child's caregiver's fully perfected form of speech). Being dialectical contradictions, these conflicts are the *moving force* of development. This echoes Veresov (2017a) conceptualisation of *perezhivanie* as the subjective experience of objective social relations, and in which the real and ideal forms interact (though not necessarily contradict). However, Veresov goes further to distinguish between *perezhivanie*, which refers to experience generally, and "critical or dramatic perezhivanie" (p. 68), which refers to experiences in which there is conflict and contradiction. It is the latter kind of *perezhivanie*, but not the former, that can bring about qualitative change.

The point of nuance here is the kind of development that is of interest to cultural-historical psychologists. Veresov's distinction between *perezhivanie* and dramatic *perezhivanie* draws on the general genetic law, which explains the development of higher mental functions as qualitative, interfunctional changes that build on and build from lower mental functions, the result of which are potential changes to the way an individual experiences (becomes aware of, interprets, relates to) their environment. However, this conceptualisation does not account for the kinds of relatively ordinary *quantitative* changes that, though not significant, nonetheless change people in ways that cannot be undone (Smedslund, 2016) and which, dialectically, form the basis for eventual qualitative change (i.e., as per the law of transformation of quantity into quality). If we use the example of (Kuhnian) paradigm shifts in science, the question is whether the accumulation of anomalous observations (quantitative change) is considered development in the same way as the eventual paradigm shift (qualitative change). In a sense, the answer is "no", as the relation between scientists working within the paradigm and the world does not significantly change. At the same time, the answer may be "yes", as the accumulation of anomalies may effect, for example, increasing scepticism toward the paradigm, and thus do in fact change one's relation to the world. In the context of psychological development, whether quantitative change is to be considered distinct from the kinds of qualitative change that are most of interest to researchers (and whether specific terminology is needed to distinguish between the two), will likely depend on the purposes for which CHT and the concept of *perezhivanie* are operationalised, and requires further theorisation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the circumstances under which I shifted the context of my understanding of *perezhivanie* from SLA (as an answer to epistemological and methodological problems) to dialectical philosophy. The shift was due to a confluence of circumstances: two insightful presentations, an unresolved tension regarding Vygotsky's "prism" metaphor, and the fortuitous opportunity first to contribute to a book, then a handbook. The explicit understanding of dialectics—although here most certainly

incomplete—that was gained, provided a new lens through which to view Vygotsky's work, to begin to see the numerous manifestations of dialectical laws not only in his concepts, but also in his approach to developing those concepts. My conceptualisation of *perezhivanie*, at this stage, is one that has moved beyond the text in which the concept was introduced (as in Chapter 2), to better engage with—or at least acknowledge—its philosophical foundations. It is this knowledge of dialectics that allows for a better understanding of the tensions outlined in Chapter 3 (in the undertaking of an autoethnography) as productive dialectical contradictions that seek to be resolved. I discuss the next step to resolution, found through a deeper understanding of autoethnography, in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Understanding autoethnography through the lens of dialectics and the concept of *perezhivanie*

In this chapter, the connection between the two parallel lines of discussions so far—autoethnography, and *perezhivanie* and dialectics—comes to fruition. Having gained confidence in writing in a more personal, less detached style, and become more able to understand my own experiences, I develop the metamethodological idea that dialectics and *perezhivanie* can be used reflexively to conceptualise both the role of the researcher in and the nature of autoethnographic research. That is, I begin to move beyond the empirical study, to look at the process of doing research itself. This idea is developed in "A cultural-historical understanding of autoethnography: perezhivanie and dialectics" (Mok, under review). This paper is preceded by a discussion of the theoretical and practical concerns that crystallised a shift in thinking—some of which are reflected in a commentary written earlier (Mok, 2016)—that is also presented here. Following this, I discuss the notion of reflexivity, which, although a central methodological concern of autoethnographic research, became a significant theme only during the writing of Mok (under review).

Continuing from Chapter 3: Time to analyse

By the end of June 2017, I had all my data collected and was faced with the task of analysis. However, as I indicated at the end of Chapter 3, I was engulfed in a fog of doubt regarding my dual identities (learner/subject vs. analyst/researcher) and the authenticity and even usefulness of my research. I hesitated to start analysis, and instead gave myself permission to be busy with other work. I simply did not know how to proceed. I would have sporadic flashes of motivation in which I resolved to set out some question that I could use to interrogate the data to answer. I used the free-writing of lists of questions and thoughts in hopes to catch some nugget of brilliance and insight amongst the uninhibited stream-of-consciousness writing. Tossed together were questions about the significance of task errors, the construction of the log, the relationship between academic/personal identities, the use of my low-level Cantonese as an intermediary, the tools of the websites used, and

so on. I was stuck in a contradiction between the desire to analysis and inability to move forward. The empirical questions regarding how my learning changed with development over time, blended with methodological doubts about whether autoethnography, informed by *perezhivanie*, was viable as a research topic. Mostly, the empirical questions were uninspired restatements of themes from the MA study from which I now wanted to distance myself. The questions of methodology seemed difficult or impossible to answer with both the nature of the data, and with my lack of the conceptual tools needed to explicate, let alone understand, the issue. There was something there to be explored, and yet what this thing was, I could not adequately articulate for myself. I simply had no purchase on the problem and yet I needed to continue moving forward.

Furthermore, what was the relevance of SLA here? Though the study was initially motivated by concerns stemming from the field of SLA, I had always felt that this justification was shoehorned into the thesis just to justify the object of study. Apart from the discussion of Firth and Wagner (1997, 2007) and the influence of work by Lantolf and colleagues in sociocultural SLA, there was little reference to SLA both in the study and in my own understanding of the study. Though I had tried to press on despite this fact, the weak links to SLA were evident in discussion about the study, and were also noticed by others in evaluations of my study throughout the candidature. Being situated in the Education department also meant that the issue of language was not a particular point of expertise or interest, compared to relatively more general issues of CHT—and so SLA issues, as a contextualisation of the study, fell by the wayside.

Compounding this issue was a second struggle: the looming 2017 ISCAR congress. Abstracts were submitted a full year ahead of the conference, and I had been accepted for two presentations (one as part of symposium, and one on my own) shortly after. The submission of the abstracts was done with nervous excitement, and predicated on a belief that even though I was not then ready for a presentation, that I would be in a year's time. The need to complete a "data collection phase" and have some kind of analysis to present to the audience had been in the back of my mind since the submission of the abstracts. As the date of the congress approached, and the practical concerns of packing for the trip to Québec City, organising meals and other activities with my partner (who was accompanying me) made the congress an imminent reality. I began to feel its weight, and

along with it, the weight of my work as a PhD student. I grew increasingly worried and anxious about the future of my study and of what I would have to show for my years of research. My presentations at the congress would represent the culmination of the years I had spent as a PhD candidate, a test and validation of my future worth as an academic. Looking back now at early notes in the planning stages of the presentations, it seems I had little idea of what it was I wanted to—and indeed, *could*—say. What could be good enough for these lofty self-imposed expectations?

Fortunately, these two struggles—here understood in the sense of a dialectical contradiction—would be resolved with a confluence of two strands of thought together with the discovery of a paper that provided the inspiration for sublating (preserving, yet overcoming) them. The first strand of thought arose from my struggle to distinguish my identities as learner and researcher as I began to contemplate analysing my collected data. In reading about autoethnography, I had begun to notice the idea of reflexivity as central for conceptualising the role of the researcher in doing research. Specifically, that the researcher is deeply intertwined with the conception and ongoing conduct of research, and that reflexive writing practices are a means to make this subjectivity clear to the audience. I discuss this towards the end of this chapter.

Introducing Mok (2016)

The second strand of thought was first developed in a commentary I had written as a contribution to a special issue of IRECE I had co-guest-edited with Daniel Goulart (a colleague from a group of researchers in Brazil that was led by Fernando González Rey) that was published in June 2016. Intended to conclude the issue, I first provided a kind of typology of approaches to the *perezhivanie* concept. More importantly, however, was a discussion of analytical considerations—specifically "validity threats"—when using *perezhivanie*, based on Polkinghorne's (2007) discussion of the same in the context of narrative research. In short—and in different terms—I was advocating a critical and antirealist understanding of accounts of an individual's *perezhivanie*. The path from a lived experience to an interpretation of that experience is mediated first by the individual whose experience it is e.g., through a particular lens, phrased in certain ways, etc.), and

then again by the researcher who interacts with this account in collecting, interpreting, and analysing it. Thus, I used the concept of *perezhivanie* to conceptualise the ways in which a given experience is constituted not only by aspects of the thing being experienced (for the experiencer, the thing being experienced; for the researcher, the account of the experience), but also characteristics of the experiencer (i.e., the individual whose experience it is; and the researcher, respectively). The methodological discussion begins on page 240 of the paper (p. 140 of the present thesis).

Commentary: Understanding and using *perezhivanie* and *subjectivity*

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The task of understanding what Vygotsky means by *perezhivanie* is an exegetical one, hindered not only by differences in language and culture, but also by more concrete issues of incomplete and/or inaccurate translations of his works. However, the extent to which the use of the *perezhivanie* concept relies on this exegesis ultimately depends on whether a given researcher finds enough value in the concept as ostensibly defined in "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994) for addressing some theoretical or methodological concern, or whether they seek a more complete conceptualisation based within the cultural-historical theoretical system as a whole (whatever this is interpreted to be). In either case, and as exemplified in the contributions to this special issue, researchers have drawn links to different ideas both within Vygotsky's work and beyond it in other theoretical systems, giving rise to a varied palette of interpretations from which subsequent researchers can draw for various domains and purposes.

To conclude this special issue, I will outline and contextualise some of the salient considerations and challenges relating to use of the *perezhivanie* concept. Overall, the underlying issue in understanding the concept is establishing the system within which the meaning of the concept is defined since, like the sign in the semiotics, this meaning is one determined by its *relation* with other signs (here, concepts), and indeed, by the specific research context for which it is used. For the purpose of structuring this discussion, I separate issues primarily of theory, to those primarily of method and use of the concept. In the latter section, I also outline some further considerations relating to the empirical studies of childhood learning presented in this issue and argue for the use of *perezhivanie* metamethodologically to understand the process of research itself, as a starting point for addressing emerging issues.

Theoretical considerations

With the growing interest in the *perezhivanie* concept over the past decade from scholars in different fields, a number of different conversations have emerged, leading to a situation in which *perezhivanie* "is represented as a splattering of ideas that scholars have drawn upon in different ways to make sense of complex data" (Fleer, p. 109, this volume). Thus, it may be helpful to sketch out two of the potentially overlapping conversations and approaches that have emerged over the years, so that the different areas of concern can be untangled.

1. Building on Vygotsky, building from Vygotsky

First, there are two kinds of approaches to understanding and completing the concept, relative to Vygotsky. In the first group of approaches, Vygotsky is understood as having begun, but not yet been able to adequately describe, a new approach to psychology to supersede his earlier work. Thus, Vygotsky's work on *perezhivanie*, the social situation of development, and his writing in

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"Thinking and Speech" (Vygotsky, 1987), are seen as representing the beginnings of a new approach to human development, with theorists aiming to build on and complete this work. For González Rey, for example, this set of concepts, especially that of sense from "Thinking and speech", is seen as the beginning of a new approach to understanding human development, at the centre of which is a new conceptualisation of human subjectivity (see, González Rey, 2009; González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, this volume). From this emerges a new methodological apparatus to support the study of subjectivity: Qualitative Epistemology (see, e.g., Bezerra & Costa; Campolina & Mitjáns Martínez; Madeira Coelho; and Patiño & Goulart, this volume).

Theorists have also looked for similarities and differences to conceptual systems beyond Vygotsky to understand the *perezhivanie* concept and seek mutual theoretical enrichment. For example, links have been drawn to Dewey's conceptualisation of *experience* (e.g., Blunden, 2009; Clará, 2013; Glassman, 2001; Roth & Jornet, 2014), Gibson's *affordances* (e.g., Daniels, 2010; Michell, 2012; van Lier, 2008), and Stanislavsky's system of theatre (e.g., Smagorinsky, 2011). In this volume, *perezhivanie* is extended through the related concepts of metaxis (see, Davis & Dolan), and *soperezhivanie* (see, March & Fleer).

In a second group of approaches, *perezhivanie* is understood as having a basis in Vygotsky's earlier works, especially *The Psychology of Art* (Vygotsky, 1971), with fragments of the concept existing in different stages of development throughout his other writings (see, e.g., Michell, this volume). Thus, through deep textological analysis, it is assumed that the *perezhivanie* concept can be deciphered and subsequently fully developed. Vygotsky's descriptions of *perezhivanie* in "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994) and "The crisis at age seven" (Vygotsky, 1998) are therefore seen as explications of ideas that had only been alluded to throughout his academic career. Consequently, Vygotsky's last works are seen not as the beginnings of a completely new theoretical system per se, but a different part of the system he had developed during his instrumental period. In this approach, efforts are directed at consolidating Vygotsky's theoretical system, linking *perezhivanie* with other concepts like the social situation of development (Bozhovich, 2009; Veresov, in press) and word-meaning and sense (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2000, 2008; Robbins, 2001).

2+3. Perezhivanie *as phenomenon, conceptual tool, and/or rhetorical definition as intellect or affect*

A second, more philosophical discussion has also arisen from the work of Veresov (2004, in press), who distinguishes between two meanings of *perezhivanie* found in Vygotsky's writings on the topic. The first relates to its phenomenal status—*perezhivanie* as an experienced phenomenon, an object of study, whether understood as a process or a particular kind of experiential content. The second relates to its epistemic value—*perezhivanie* as a tool for making sense of data and for conceptualising and understanding the role of lived experience in the process of development by making that experience visible in analysis. Veresov's approach builds *from* Vygotsky to discuss both facets of *perezhivanie*, but does so more holistically. Rather than simply drawing links between *perezhivanie* and other mutually informing concepts, links are also drawn to cultural-historical theory's explanatory principles (e.g., the genetic[1] law of cultural development) and the approach to methodology (e.g., units of analysis) that arose in Vygotsky's later works.

By situating the *perezhivanie* concept within the broader context of cultural-historical theory rather than the more specific contexts of concrete research, a third understanding of the concept can be

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discerned: *perezhivanie* as a rhetorical definition. Although a relatively broader theoretical definition of *perezhivanie* is given in "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994), theorists using or analysing the concept have often focused on the ostensible definitions given in particular concrete examples through the text. Thus, for example, Bozhovich (2009) takes Vygotsky's example of the child being teased—who, unable to *generalise* the experienced emotions, is therefore not able to comprehend and be affected by the teasing—as indicating a primarily (and untenably) intellectual conceptualisation of *perezhivanie*. Elsewhere, Vygotsky also discusses examples in which the salient determining factor of *perezhivanie* is a particular attitude or emotion. The extent to which these narrow definitions are useful for researchers in similar research contexts—even if not using the cultural-historical theory framework—is a matter for further debate. However, the apparent existence of varying definitions echoes an issue that has earlier been raised regarding the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Namely, that narrow definitions were used by Vygotsky in a *rhetorical* manner.

As Valsiner and van der Veer (1993) write, regarding the ZPD:

> If we consider Vygotsky's use of the [ZPD] concept as a rhetoric mediating device for his disputes with his contemporaries, it may become easier to understand why the use of this concept occurs in different contexts, and why there was never a clear effort to clarify the term in theoretical ways. (p. 43)

Veresov (2004) has similarly argued that the definition of the ZPD used by theorists is often the one applied to the particular context of school education, narrowed from a broader context that would otherwise include contexts such as informal education and play. Such a narrow definition makes theoretical development elusive, as focus shifts to those particular contexts rather than on the deeper mechanisms by which the ZPD operates. Interpretations of *perezhivanie* as being primarily concerned with emotion (see, Michell, this volume) thus need to be tempered with an understanding of the possibility that Vygotsky's apparent emphasis on emotion may in fact be due to: 1) the process of analysis, in which emotions/affect/attitudes are revealed to be salient in those cases, or 2) a rhetorical means by which Vygotsky directs attention to a previous neglected area of research. That is, while emotion may constitute a part of Vygotsky's rhetorical efforts, such definitions may not in fact be representative of the concept per se. This, of course, leads to the third and final emergent discussion, of whether *perezhivanie* proper does in fact refer primarily, and pre-analytically, to emotion (as in work following Mahn and John-Steiner, 2000, 2008), intellectual processes (as in Bozhovich, 2009, or to an extent, Michell, this volume), or whether the aspect of consciousness that characterises particular *perezhivanie* is only determinable following analysis (see, Mok, 2015). The next section examines issues that emerge when *perezhivanie* is used in research.

Methodological considerations

Central to cultural-historical theory is the general genetic law of cultural development, according to which social and cultural interactions are not only a context within which psychological development occurs, but are also the very source of those developments (Vygotsky, 1997b). The concept of *perezhivanie* allows for a deeper interrogation of these social and cultural interactions—to the extent that they are relevant to an individual's development—and, as evidenced in this issue, allows for a theorisation of aspects of interaction and development previously hidden from view: emotion and subjectivity. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory became known to the West, through selected translated publications, at a time when there was growing dissatisfaction with cognitivism and positivist epistemology. The subsequent theorisations of emotion and subjectivity that

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necessarily formed a part of a response to these theoretical frameworks were constituted not in cognitivist, but rather cultural and developmental, terms. Thus, they are understood participate in the process of development not through mediating or constituting products of cognition, but instead through configuring the relationship between an individual and their concrete environment. Consequently, the concepts of *perezhivanie* and subjectivity constitute new interpretive lenses for analysing data generated with well-known qualitative, subject-centered methods such as verbal reporting, narrative analysis, and introspective interviews, alongside observational data. This brings us to some final considerations regarding these methods in the contexts of their justification in cultural-historical theory, and their use in childhood education research.

Verbal reports and narrative research

A straightforward means to gain insight into an individual's experiences and experience of their surrounding environment is through the use of verbal report data—whether spoken or written—collected through requests, interviews, and informal discussion. Due to the limited ability for children to express their thoughts and experiences through speech, researchers using these methods in this issue have instead examined the *perezhivanie* of the adults that create and constitute the developmental environment in which children are situated—for example, teachers (e.g., Davis & Dolan), family (e.g., Babaeff, and March & Fleer), and other adult figures (e.g., Fleer, Adams, Hao, & Gunstone). However, questions have been raised as to the validity of these kinds of reports as used in other domains. As Polkinghorne (2007) argues, there are two kinds of threats to the validity of research based on elicited narratives: the first arises from a disjunction between a subject's actual experience of meaning and their verbal expression of this experience, and the second is the gap between this expression and the researcher's interpretation. I briefly discuss these two areas in turn.

In the first case,

> validity threats arise in narrative research because the languaged descriptions given by participants of their experienced meaning is not a mirrored reflection of this meaning. Participants' stories may leave out or obscure aspects of the meaning of experiences they are telling about. The validity issue about the evidence of assembled texts is about how well they are understood to express the actual meaning experienced by the participants (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 480).

There are four sources for the disjunction between experienced meaning and its verbal expression (see also, Bitbol & Petitmengin, 2013, for a discussion on the reliability and validity of introspection data more generally). First, a research participant is only able to, at most, express "that portion of meaning that they can access through reflection" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 481). Thus, there is a gap between actual experience and the aspects of that experience of which the subject is cognitively aware. This is compounded secondly, by the limits of both language itself and the ability of a research participant in expressing the complexity and depth of lived experience. As Vygotsky writes, "*the thought is a cloud from which speech is shed in drops*" (emphasis in original, Vygotsky, 1997a, p. 134),

> the transition from thought to speech is an extremely complex process which involves the partitioning of the thought and its recreation in words. This is why thought does not correspond with the word … there is always a background thought, a hidden subtext in our speech. The direct transition from thought to word is impossible.… Meaning mediates

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> thought in its path to verbal expression. The path from thought to word is indirect and internally mediated. (Vygotsky, 1987, pp. 281-282)

Third, participants may be unwilling to fully express their true feelings and understandings so as to project a more positive self-image to the researcher, especially if the researcher is a stranger or where rapport and trust has not been adequately established. Finally, the texts produced by the participant are not simply productions, but rather (co-)constructions mediated, whether knowingly or otherwise, by interactions with (e.g., knowledge of the purpose of the interview, formality of the interview), and cues (e.g., body language, intonation in responses) from, the interviewer/researcher (Polkinghorne, 2007).

To address these issues, the notion of *perezhivanie* can be used not only to conceptualise a participants lived experience, but also to conceptualise their experience of providing accounts of those experiences to the researcher. That is, eliciting a narrative report of experiences from a participant does not remove them from their environment to provide the opportunity to reflect on experiences "from the outside", as it were, but rather, the elicitations of an interviewer form part of that individual's continuing lived experience. Consequently, a second potentially fruitful layer of analysis emerges. First, there is what the participant describes as being their experience. Second, by understanding how the participant has described their experience—for example, what is omitted, what appears to be important/salient to that individual, the specific words and concepts used, and so on—the researcher has the potential for greater insight into the personal characteristics of that individual to supplement their analysis. These two layers correspond roughly to what Pavlenko (2007) has described as a given narrative's subject reality (the content of what is said) and text reality (how participants construct themselves in the narrative), respectively.

Observational data, and the process of interpretation

Applicable to both narrative/verbal report data and observational data is a second kind of disjuncture: the gap that exists between the data and a researcher's interpretation. While this issue is not unique to cultural-historical research, it carries greater significance in research guided by the concept of *perezhivanie*, in which researchers seek to infer and understand an individual's cognitive and affective activity—for example their reasoning, understanding, the emotional dimensions of their experience, attitudes, and so on—from observed behaviour and/or elicited narratives. This inference requires a researcher to interpret the data to create knowledge, but this knowledge needs to be validated if a reader is to accept the claims made. Beyond supporting claims through providing a retraceable logic from data to the claim (see also, Denzin, 2010, for a discussion on issues around the use of mixed methods for "triangulation"), researchers can benefit from being aware of which epistemological stance they take.

Schwandt (2000) identifies three epistemological stances in qualitative inquiry: interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. Of particular interest here are the former two. From the interpretivists perspective, the meanings that an individual attributes to their actions, experiences, and words are inherent to those actions, experiences, and words, and in principle understandable in the same way by the researcher. That is, the subjective consciousness of the individual can, in a sense, be grasped by the researcher from the outside through appropriate analysis. Though there a number of methods for achieving this understanding, it is perhaps worth mentioning that this idea appears in Vygotsky's work, in which he states "real understanding [of speech] lies in the penetration into the motives of the interlocutor" (p. 136). By contrast, from the perspective of

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philosophical hermeneutics, an interpretation of data is understood as a product of a dialogue between the data and the researcher's own prejudices and perceptions—in short, "textual interpretations are always perspectival" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 483). This idea is not only echoed in González Rey's Qualitative Epistemology (see, González Rey & Mitjáns Martínez, and Patiño & Goulart, this volume), in which the knowledge developed in research is a constructive-interpretive process, but also by the very concept of *perezhivanie* itself, when applied to the researcher: different researchers can, due to differences in their personal characteristics, view the same data in very different ways.

To make evident the validity of interpretation, we can again use the concept of *perezhivanie* in a metamethodological way. If a reader is to understand the logical steps taken to draw a particular conclusion or inference from the data, it is necessary to make the researcher's own *perezhivanie* evident in the final report. Not only their understanding and approach to research at the epistemological level, but also, if an interpretivists perspective is taken, the means by which an understanding of the participant's subjective meaning is achieved. Conversely, if the hermeneutical position is taken, the various aspects of the researcher's personality, cognition, knowledge (including language and culture shared with the research subject), and affect that have shaped their interpretation of the data will need to be made clear.

To conclude

In this concluding special issue, I have attempted to make explicit, for researchers seeking to use the concepts of *perezhivanie* or *subjectivity* in their research, some of the kinds of theoretical conversations and approaches that have recently emerged, as well as methodological issues of validity that have arisen in this issue. In the latter case, I have provided a starting point for the metamethodological use of cultural-historical theory and specifically, *perezhivanie*, to understand the process of research and knowledge construction itself. Cultural-historical theory provides a set of tools to conceptualise and understand psychological functioning and development, however, as researchers that exist in the same world occupied by those we observe, those tools can be turned inwards to ourselves. For although it is possible to study the *perezhivanija* of others, we too, have our own *perezhivanija* as we perform and construct our research. Making clear this *perezhivanija* so that readers understand the meaning we ourselves have made of the concept as we use it in research is a way to ensure that our research is sound.

[1] Note that "genetic" here is used in the sense of *genesis* rather than relating to biological *genes*.

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The perezhivanie of the researcher?

Polkinghorne (2007) suggests that it is necessary to make clear the researcher's philosophical position when they analyse narratives, so that the reader can better follow the logic of the argument. In Mok (2016), I suggest that not only the philosophical position, but all the personal characteristics (which as I have argued has a scope beyond cognition and emotion, to include anything arising in consciousness), can and should be made explicit for the reader. Furthermore, it is not the characteristics per se, but the characteristics only to the degree that they were actually manifest. At one moment, I may adopt an ontological realist perspective, but in another moment I take a constructivist perspective. Paradigms may themselves be internally consistent, well defined, and systematic, but the actual *perspectives* taken in practice by researchers (for whatever reason, whether pragmatic, accidental, etc.) may be more partial, fluid, and sometimes contradictory. One moment I may feel a compelling desire to undertake a particular kind analysis, another moment I may feel ambivalence. However, this argument was only presented in an embryonic state in Mok (2016).

The fundamental idea that the concept of *perezhivanie* can turned back on the researcher is encapsulated here:

> To make evident the validity of interpretation, we can again use the concept of *perezhivanie* in a metamethodological way. If a reader is to understand the logical steps taken to draw a particular conclusion or inference from the data, it is necessary to make the researcher's own *perezhivanie* evident in the final report (p. 243; p. 144 this thesis).

It is in retrospect that I now understand that this was essentially a restatement of the argument for *reflexivity* in research.

Introduction to Mok (under review): Toward a dialectics of autoethnography

This idea that *perezhivanie* (which I now understood to be grounded in dialectical thinking) could be used to understand reflexivity (which I now understood to be central to autoethnography) led to a search for a way in which this relationship could be conceptualised in dialectical terms. I found this connection in Ben-Ari and Enosh's (2010) article on *reflective* (which they equate with *reflexive*) practices in knowledge construction. To summarise: they argue that the construction of knowledge is a dialectical process, motivated by contradictions (e.g., between theory and observation) that can be resolved by viewing them at a higher-level abstraction (which resolve those contradictions, e.g., a new theory, insight, or direction for further investigation). The contradiction between the researcher's theoretical knowledge and an unexpected observation, for example, motivates the development of theory in some way that incorporates or at least reflects both the theory and the new observation. I wondered then, if the process of constructing knowledge could be understood dialectically, could the entire research process be understood dialectically? After all, dialectics should apply to *all* phenomena, even the conduct of research itself. Is the conception of a study not just a sublation of the contradiction between researcher's desire to know, and their lack of knowledge? Using this as a springboard, I developed the idea further—though perilously close to the time of my solo presentation at ISCAR—by viewing the different stages of research dialectically, identifying where contradictions and struggles may appear, and what development or progression in the research process their resolution might entail. The idea was initially couched in terms of *perezhivanie*, rather than dialectics. Thus, I considered the combination of environment and subject to be represented in *perezhivanie*, understood as an object of analysis; the contradiction between a person's actual, lived *perezhivanie* and a subsequent account of that experience is revealed in self-critical analyses; reflexivity reveals the *perezhivanie* of the researcher and the way they shape the research (e.g., the theoretical lens used, methodological decisions, interpretation, etc.) and are in turn shaped by it; and finally, the audience has a particular *perezhivanie* of the text with the goal of good research writing being to "infect" them (in Tolstoy's sense) with the idea.

These ideas were rushed, however, and not well developed. After returning from ISCAR, it was already time to prepare for the presubmission seminar—the last administrative hurdle to assure the faculty that I would soon be ready to submit the thesis. To ensure success, I resolved to finish my fourth paper, in which I would further elaborate those embryonic ideas from ISCAR. Though the idea for a paper centred on autoethnography existed to various degrees throughout my candidature, I had only begun working on this particular paper in earnest from about October 2017 (before the presubmission seminar in November), and was submitted at the end of January 2018. I chose *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* journal as it seemed receptive to autoethnographic texts (having been the source for many of the studies I had found), and had numerous publications using dialectics from frequent contributor Wolff-Michael Roth.

A Cultural-historical Understanding of Autoethnography: Perezhivanie and Dialectics

Nelson Mok

Abstract: Autoethnography and Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept of *perezhivanie* both share a deep focus on and rich analysis of the individual. Drawing on my own experiences in my PhD candidature, I draw links between the two and the logic of dialectics, which underlies cultural-historical theory. After introducing these concepts, I propose a way to conceptualise four different aspects of autoethnographic research in terms of *perezhivanie* and dialectics: *perezhivanie* as an object of research, reflexivity, analysis, and audience reception. Each of these parts of research can be understood as emerging from and resolving dialectical contradictions, which are in turn reflected in (and in a sense, explain) the research. I hope that the explication of these synergies opens up new avenues for analysing and understanding the nature of autoethnographic research.

Key words: *cultural-historical theory; perezhivanie; dialectics; autoethnography; Vygotsky*

1. Introduction

I began my current PhD candidature a few years ago with the aim of examining the potential links between Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory—specifically his concept of *perezhivanie*—and autoethnography. Last year, I further explored the logic of dialectics—which underlies Vygotsky's theory—when I was invited to write about *perezhivanie* in chapters for two books. Combined with autoethnography's focus on the self, and the unfortunate long stretches of time I have had to reflect (and agonise over) my research as a natural consequence of doing a PhD thesis, I have begun to see most aspects of autoethnographic research through the concepts of *perezhivanie* and dialectics. My aim in this paper is to elaborate this particular way of seeing autoethnography, in hopes that it may be a productive addition to the toolbox for practitioners to think about the processes of research: from the researcher qua subject, to the researcher qua researcher. I'm reminded of a quote by VYGOTSKY (1987) that I recently rediscovered in my notes: "To perceive something in a different way means to acquire new potentials for acting with respect to it" (p.190). Seeing my own research in dialectical terms has helped me begin to address some of the struggles I have had in reconciling autoethnography and cultural-historical theory, on my journey to (hopefully finally) completing my PhD. This reconciliation of a struggle is, as will be later explained, itself a kind of dialectic movement.

To begin to understand autoethnography in the language of cultural-historical theory, specifically through the concept of *perezhivanie* and the logic of dialectics, is to open new roads to future explorations of other potential synergies that could enrich research in both the cultural-historical theoretic and autoethnographic research traditions. In light of an argument regarding reflexivity I make later in this paper, the following theoretical discussion is dotted with autobiographical asides in a kind of layered autoethnographic approach championed by RONAI (see, e.g., 1992; 1995; 1996; RAMBO, 2016).

2. Perezhivanie

There has been a recent growth in interest in Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*, especially in the past year, with the publication of two journal special issues (*International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 2016, 7[1], MOK & GOULART Eds.; *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 2016, 23[4], "Symposium on perezhivanie") and a book (*Perezhivanie, emotions, and subjectivity*, 2017, FLEER, GONZÁLEZ REY, & VERESOV, Eds.) discussing the concept and the work being done to understand and extend it. Needless to say, it would be difficult to do justice to the concept in this space; for the purposes of this discussion, the basics will suffice.

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory was first developed as a way to explain human psychological development—specifically, the development of the mental functions that are unique to humans (VYGOTSKY, 1997b, Chapter 1). Rather than naturally maturing through biological processes, these mental functions were instead understood to originate in (rather than being merely influenced by) the social and cultural sphere. His most well-known concept, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), was, for example, used to conceptualise the developmental effect of assistance with tasks that are just beyond a learner's competence, but not beyond their understanding (VYGOTSKY, 1987). In such a situation, a learner has the necessary preconditions for developing the socioculturally-situated ability to later complete the task on their own by internalising the assistance (i.e., the cultural means by which the more knowledgeable other completes the task) given. This theory was developed on the basis of a dialectical materialist philosophy, an approach that Marx (who inverted Hegel's dialectical *idealism*) had explicated in his economic theory in *Das Kapital*. The ZPD, is a *dialectical* concept, since it is a phenomena constituted by and emerging from unified yet contradictory aspects (e.g., a learner's desire to do something with their inability to do so), and it is *materialistic*, since development ultimately has its origins in concrete human activity (rather than, say, thought). This cultural-historical theory emerged through a critique of the state of psychological research at the time (VYGOTSKY, 1997a, Chapter 15), which Vygotsky saw as in need of a coherent set of explanatory principles to appropriately reconcile and unify—that is, explain and organise—the findings from the two then-competing approaches.

Towards the end of his life, VYGOTSKY (1997a, Chapter 9) turned his attention to understanding the broader phenomenon of human consciousness. Though he passed away before being able to complete his work in this area, the last chapters of his book, *Thinking and Speech* (1987), which were written during this period (MINICK, 2005; ZAVERSHNEVA, 2010), suggested the kind of analysis he would be undertaking. He sought to understand verbal thought (thought aided and enabled by language and the structures of language) through a unit of analysis he identified as word-meaning. Word-meaning was considered a *unit* of verbal thought, since it irreducibly represented the dynamics of verbal thought as a whole, while also being a part of verbal thought (rather than only being the latter, as in an "element"). It is within this unit that the intertwined development of thought (a mental/private phenomenon) and speech (a social/public phenomenon)—separated only as an artefact of analysis—could be understood in its full and unified complexity. It is in the final paragraphs of *Thinking and Speech* that Vygotsky alludes to a planned analysis of the broader sphere of consciousness (for which *Thinking and Speech* may have been a prolegomenon). At the same time, he had begun to develop the concept of *perezhivanie*, a *unit of consciousness*.

In working towards the problem of consciousness, Vygotsky returned to a concept he had encountered at the start of his academic career: *perezhivanie*. Translated only approximately in English as "lived experience" (BLUNDEN, 2014)[1], it refers to an individual's particular experience of (and thus, their relation to) a situation at a particular moment in time. That is, it captures not only *what* is being experienced, but also *how* it is being experienced, the idea being that it captures all and only those personal and environmental characteristics that *actually*—rather than theoretically—gave rise to a particular experience (VYGOTSKY, 1994). However, questions arose as to what kinds of "personal characteristics" count towards *perezhivanie.* On this matter, there have been two main approaches. The first, following BOZHOVICH (2009) is to say that *perezhivanie* is roughly how a person *understands* a situation—that is, how they cognitively relate to a situation through interpretation and generalisation/abstraction. The second, drawing on the connotations of the English translation of "emotional experience", and work by MAHN and JOHN-STEINER (2000, 2008), emphasises the ways in which *emotions* colour experiences of situations. New questions then arise as to

[1] The editors of the book in which Vygotsky's lecture on the topic is translated, use "emotional experience" (VYGOTSKY, 1994, VAN DER VEER & VALSINER, Eds.)

what kinds of emotional experiences count: are all experiences emotional in some way? Or only “significant” and strongly emotional experiences, which are understood to reflect moments of crisis? As I have argued elsewhere (MOK, 2015, 2017), both of these approaches incorrectly presume the relevance of a particular personal characteristic in determining *perezhivanie*. VYGOTSKY (1994) writes, “*what is important for us to find out is which of these constitutional characteristics have played a decisive role in determining the child's relationship to a given situation*” (emphasis in original, p.342). That is, what is relevant (and what contributes to a *perezhivanie*) is a matter to be determined through analysis rather than being presumed to have played a decisive role. In some cases, it may be cognitive, but others, it may be affect, a combination, or something else entirely.

Analysis of *perezhivanie* provides insight into the forms of development that exist in the environment for an individual not in absolute, but relative terms. Since, as Vygotsky argues, it is only those forms of development that are present in that individual’s (subjective) environment that can exert a force on their development (VYGOTSKY, 1994). As the individual develops, their experience of, and therefore relation to, the environment changes—and consequently, so too does their *perezhivanie*. In the context of learning to speak, a child may encounter fully-formed adult speech, but the inability to perceive words or understand grammatical structures means that these aspects do not exert a developmental force. Rather, the speech may first appear as sounds that are gradually discerned. With this ability to discern sounds, the child may begin to perceive words, other aspects of speaking, and so on. As they grow older, their relation to speech may depend as much on their willingness to listen, ability to be attentive or to participate, desire to learn, trust in the people speaking, and so on, as it does on their cognitive, perceptual abilities. That is, though the same fully developed speech is present in the child’s environment, they relate to it in different ways as they themselves develop, thereby changing the developmental form that is present for them.

The implication that the kind of essentialising and reductive labels that exist in research (and indeed, in everyday life) might not be that useful after all, is what resonated with me. At the very least, the concept of *perezhivanie* implies that the relevance of traits to which labels refer cannot be presumed, but must actually be determined in analysis and verified. I completed a MA thesis in Applied Linguistics several years ago, which was spurred by articles by FIRTH and WAGNER (1997, 2007), who argued against some of the cognitivist tendencies within the field of second language acquisition research. One of these was the presumed omnirelevance of “etic” labels—that is, labels from an outsiders view. For example, to identify a person as a “nonnative speaker” might have some analytical benefit, but is reductive, implying deficient communicative ability (compared to the ideal of the “native speaker”), when it is clear that these same people are often able to draw on other resources for communication and who may, in any case draw on different identities in concrete situations, contrary to this theoretical presumption. These labels, it seems, are pure abstractions, divorced from reality.

Over the past year as my candidature comes to a head, and in part due to the inward gaze necessitated by autoethnography, I have reflected on this idea in my own life to bring clarity to some of the nebulous feelings that have lurked in the background and which seem to motivate my research (though which I had never made explicit). Reading the deeply personal accounts of other autoethnographers—in which the authors expose their lives rather than sheltering behind the conventions of academic writing—gave voice to the nagging suspicion that there was a side to to doing research, and to being an academic, that was often left out of research writing. More interesting was the notion that this personal side, which is often only demanded of other people recruited as research participants, could be informative. In researching my own learning of a second language (Mandarin Chinese) through autoethnography, I found it liberating to be honest about the persistent concerns about my identity that seemed to inform my motivation for and progress in both language learning and in pursuing my research topic.

For example, I found myself able to explicate a discomfort with the labels and identities that I felt I needed to use to convey who I am to others. Being born in Australia to Cantonese parents, I am visibly Chinese, yet I could not speak enough Cantonese to feel comfortable blending in when I visited Hong Kong. Despite being raised in Australia, I still occasionally feel like a foreigner, not having the same demeanour or ways of speech that I associate with white Australians. Small-talk with non-academics about my research brings a mixture of anxiety and irritation with myself in being inarticulate. Though I have a MA in Applied Linguistics, and currently study within the Faculty of Education, I hesitate to say that I have studied linguistics, or that I am studying in the education department—since I would hardly call myself a linguist, nor am I, as many have assumed, training to be a teacher. Yet, to say I am studying "second language learning research methodology, specifically examining the use of autoethnography informed by cultural-historical theory" has rarely been met with any interest. Perhaps I have just not yet mastered my sales pitch. The point here is that I have found labels and presumptions to be limiting and ill-fitting, and the approach to research implied in the concept of *perezhivanie* seems to do away with such labels, instead focusing on what is actually (rather than presumed to be) important.

The concept of *perezhivanie* also appealed to me because, when I first encountered it, I saw a potential affinity with the form of autoethnography (a somewhat naive form, in retrospect) I was using at the time. Being a concept that was then only just being rediscovered, it also offered an opportunity for me to carve out a, hopefully fruitful, academic niche for myself. Its apparent importance also signalled to me that an understanding of the concept might shed more light on Vygotsky's thinking, and thus, on how to understand CHT in general. However, it was not until I had looked further into dialectics and dialectical materialism, and how others had understood its purpose, that I was finally set on the path to this latter goal.

3. Dialectics

Dialectics is a logic for understanding phenomena concretely, dynamically, and richly, in contrast to formal logic, which instead seeks understanding through abstractions away from reality into isolated concepts. By abstracting from reality, formal logic (deliberately) ignores the oppositional and contradictory relations unified within phenomena that dialectics sees as being the root of changes and development of that phenomena. To extend an example from VYGOTSKY (1997a): biology can formally define "life" as the characteristic of an organism with biological processes, and death as the opposite of this condition. However, to understand life dialectically is to understand that the inevitability of death is contained within the concept of life itself. Or as VYGOTSKY (1997a) wrote, quoting Engels, "To live means to die" (p.266).

To hold this kind of contradiction together in unity is fundamental to dialectics in understanding the nature of a world in motion. It is these contradictions—in which there is a struggle or interference of one on the other, not just mere opposition—that are the moving force for development. For example, a debate is not merely just a disagreement between two opposing sides, but a discussion about a common topic from two positions that cannot be simultaneously held that, with ongoing discussion, is resolved one way or another (e.g., one side may concede, a mutual position may be created, divisions might get worse leading to other actions, etc.), and in the process, changes the people involved. That is, a debate is not just "a debate" abstractly defined, but is a debate about some topic, between real people who hold certain contradictory positions about that topic, with a particular purpose, towards some (possibly not-yet-known) end, with a reciprocal effect on its participants as the debate progresses. From the perspective of dialectics, phenomena are defined within systems of relations. In debate, the affirmative side is related to the negative side in a particular way through the topic, and the

resolution of the debate, whatever this may be, both preserves and overcomes ("sublates") the opposing sides. That is, phenomena are not merely defined on their own and statically, but always in relation to other concepts and over time (i.e., from their beginnings to their ends). When contradictions are resolved, the resolution contains some trace of the contradiction that preceded it. Dialectics is, to borrow LINDQVIST's (1995) metaphor, cinematic rather than photographic.

Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory sought to specify the tenets of dialectics, "the most general, maximally universal science" (VYGOTSKY 1997a, p.330), for psychology. Following Marx and Spinoza, dialectics was given a materialistic, monistic ontology (contra Hegel's dialectical *idealism*). From this perspective, it is now possible to revisit the concept of *perezhivanie* to see why was formulated as it was. As a *unit of analysis*, it is a microcosm of what consciousness (as a whole) is, more generally. As a *unit of person and environment*, it challenged previous approaches in which personal characteristics and environment characteristics were considered in isolation, with their relation being established mechanically. To put it succinctly: just because an environment could theoretically lead to a certain kind development, it does not necessarily mean that it actually has. There needs to be a particular kind of internal struggle, which is captured in *perezhivanie*, for development to occur. Having appropriate models of a foreign language in the environment for the learning of that language would not matter for the learner who does not have the inclination or desire to learn the language, or the learner who is unable to hear or read the language. Though this seems to be a trivial point, it represents the argument against formal approaches that Vygotsky felt were inadequate for dealing with phenomena that develop, in favour of the dialectical approach.

On writing about Vygotsky's work, LEONT'EV (1997) notes that Vygotsky had an "inclination to discern two polar, struggling sides in a phenomenon when he analyzed it and to regard this struggle as the moving force of development" (p.19). This approach can be seen in his understanding not only of human mental development, but also of the nature of the field of psychology in his time. In identifying an apparent crisis in the field of psychology, VYGOTSKY (1997a, Chapter 15) argued that this was caused by the struggle between two approaches (behavioural and subjective psychology). Resolving this crisis required a "general psychology" that did not simply combine the two approaches (nor choose one as dominant), but organises and sublates them—that is, preserves yet overcomes them (Hegel, 1969/1997, §185)—at a higher level of abstraction. Dialectics is not merely an approach to understanding the phenomena that constitute the objects of research, but is in fact a view of the world—a world that includes the process of doing research itself. This idea crystallised for me after reflecting on my own autoethnographic research.

4. Autoethnography

I was introduced to autoethnography—writing about and reflecting on the self and one's own experiences to understand the cultural (ELLIS, ADAMS, & BOCHNER 2011; LOTHERINGTON 2007)—by the supervisor I had during my first attempt at a PhD. I had just failed to convince a progress review committee, 18 months into my candidature, that I should be allowed to continue pursuing my research project. With the option of either "taking a break" (i.e., drop out) or converting to a Masters, I chose the latter. My supervisor had, at the time, recently discovered autoethnography—though had only used it somewhat superficially due, I suspect, to the department's only begrudging support of even qualitative research more generally, and also because we were linguists, not ethnographers—and put it forward as an option that would allow me to quickly get back on track to finishing a now shorter thesis. LOTHERINGTON's (2007) account of her own language learning as an edu-tourist piqued my interest as I researched what autoethnography was. Here was something that looked "scientific" enough to

pass in my department, and yet was written unapologetically as a first-person narrative about her experiences. It was done in a way blended her perspectives as a language learner and as a researcher with particular knowledge about language learning, acknowledging the reality of who she was rather than trying to bracket it. Above all, it was more engaging than typical academic papers. I found myself immersed in her experiences, constituted not only by what she had experienced and how she experienced them, but also by her ongoing theoretical reflections—whenever they occurred. And more to the point of autoethnographic writing more generally (DENZIN 2000; NAIDU 2014), it caused me to reflect on my own experiences as I empathised with hers. The paper (and others I later read) made its point not purely intellectually, but also aesthetically. So rather than attempt to clarify the confusing theoretical hodgepodge that had led to my failure, starting afresh and building the theory on the basis of an autoethnographic method would allow for more clarity and focus both theoretically and analytically. Since I was studying only myself (my own language learning), there was no need to complete yet another laborious ethics application. Together with a proclivity for introspection (owing perhaps to the self-centred blogging of my embarrassingly angsty and moody teenage years), the potential to explore relatively uncharted methodological territory, and be in a sense, "radical", autoethnography quickly became appealing to me.

Autoethnography was something of a revelation for me. To see scholars arguing for a methodology that critically blurred the line between researcher and subject gave substance and voice to the latent unease I felt about the pretence of objectivity and "hegemonic ways of seeing" (NAIDU, 2014, para. 8) in traditional research. For studying second language learning, was there really any justification for separating language learners from the people that research them? After all, researchers are also people capable of learning second languages. Are researchers somehow outside of the world they study? Knowing theory does not necessarily mean that this knowledge is always present in mind (and so what if it was?). The legitimisation of this introspective methodology and emphasis on reflexivity further permitted me to direct my attention inwards to myself as a researcher and to question the relationship I had with my research. It wasn't until I had a better understanding of *perezhivanie* and dialectics that I had the means to begin addressing some of these issues. After all, *perezhivanie* captures a person's particular relationship with their environment and surely, it is no stretch of the imagination that researchers are people too: they similarly relate to their research, to their data, and to the process of analysis in ways that are particular to them.

5. The research process

I had only recently realised that I had become infected by Vygotsky's inclination for identifying "polar, struggling sides" in phenomena. It is hard not to when it is so evidently pervasive through his work: the struggle between two approaches to psychology (leading to his cultural-historical theory); between speech and thought (in the unit of word-meaning); between person and environment (in *perezhivanie*); between the cultural and natural lines of development (in psychological development); between theory and practice (praxis); and between what a child wants to do and what they are able to do only with assistance (in the zone of proximal development). However, it was only after reading BEN-ARI and ENOSH (2010; ENOSH & BEN-ARI, 2010) that I realised that the converse was possible: to use identifiable contradictions as a basis for their abstraction to a higher conceptual level from which to understand their relation. It is from here that I can now begin to stitch together the theoretical threads established so far. *Perezhivanie* provides a theoretical justification and means for examining experience in relation to development. It is informed by Vygotsky's use of *dialectics*, a particular way of understanding phenomena in their movement and transformation. *Autoethnography* has led me to consider perezhivanie and dialectics not just in terms of understanding the object of my research but, like Vygotsky's discussions of the field of psychology, also in terms of understanding the process of doing autoethnography itself.

Qualitative research is, after all, a process of transforming experience into knowledge, a process that consists of conceptual mediations and abstractions. In this following section, I outline various ways in which dialectics and the concept of *perezhivanie* can be used to understand and reframe research and research processes, and the potentially productive synergies these concepts have with conversations within autoethnographic research. Given the overlap between narrative research and autoethnography, the discussion oscillates between both.

5.1. Perezhivanie as an object of research

We begin at the bottom, with experience as the object of research. VERESOV (2017) argues there are two meanings of *perehzivanie* present in Vygotsky's texts. The first is *perezhivanie* as a phenomenon—the actual experience itself as it is lived; the second is *perezhivanie* as a concept as understood within a theoretical framework[2]. As a phenomenon, *perezhivanie* can be understood as a dialectical unit, constituted by two polar, contradictory opposites. On the one hand, are the innumerable possibilities of a person's characteristics in their experience of an environment. On the other, are the innumerable characteristics of an environment that could be experienced by a person. *Perezhivanie* here, is a person's *actual* experience: only those characteristics of the person and the environment that actually interact and intersect to give rise to that emergent experience are what constitutes their *perezhivanie*. For example, in terms of identity, a teacher does not experience the world through their teacher-identity at all times: outside of the classroom (or even within it), other identities may come to shape (or at least be useful in explaining) the way they experience and interact with the world.

Yet, in the context of research, this *phenomenon* of *perezhivanie* is explained by the *concept* of *perezhivanie*. The phenomenon is given for analysis through observation, narrative constructions, or other qualitative methods. However, its theoretical significance is understood only within the context of what *perezhivanie* means in cultural-historical theory (i.e., as indicating what is developmentally relevant). Thus, the *concept* of perezhivanie can be understood as a dialectical unit constituted by the unity of a theoretical concern for development, together with the phenomenon of experience. That is, the concept of *perezhivanie* explains what a given account of experience means, in developmental terms. An autoethnographic narrative account of a particular experience is, when understood as reflecting the author's *perezhivanie*, indicative of their relation to their environment (how they perceive, experience, and relate to it it, and what exactly they are perceiving, experiencing, and relating to), and thus, what is likely to be developmentally significant for them. (By contrast, for example, an uncritical understanding of a narrative account is ostensibly indicative of how the world "really is").

However, the inherently constructive nature of narrative texts means that they do not simply reflect the actual lived experience. Nonetheless, "the storied descriptions people give about the meaning they attribute to life events is … the best evidence available to researchers about the realm of people's experience" (POLKINGHORNE, 2007, p.479), whether or not the events are accurately described. This is not, of course, to say that narrative texts are completely fictional, but rather that stories are "constructed around a core of facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for the freedom of individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these 'remembered facts' " (LIEBLICH, TUVAL-MASHIACH, & ZILBER, 1998, p.8). However, in the same way that an experience of a situation may not reflect what "actually happened", so too can the expression of this experience in narrative not accurately

[2] This distinction has some similarities the understanding–explanation distinction ROTH (2002) uses (drawing on Ricoeur): *understanding* arises from bodily lived experience and can include pre-articulate and inarticulate aspects, while *explanation* is a kind of conscious articulation of that experience

reflect the experience. This constitutes a tension: between what is experienced (the phenomenon of perezhivanie) and what is expressed in text.

This tension can be understood dialectically, following BEN-ARI and ENOSH's (2010) approach to understanding the "reflective" processes in knowledge construction. To reflect upon the relation between experience and its expression, from a higher level of abstraction as contradictory sides of, or moments within, a singular unit, allows us to see the interrelations and differences. Understanding why these differences exist provides both insight into the kind of validity threats that may exist for a research project (POLKINGHORNE, 2007), as well as opportunities for generating new questions and directions for inquiry (or for the process of research/writing itself) that may help mitigate those threats and make the autoethnographic project more rich and robust. Where differences exist due to the limitations of language or the academic writing genre, for example, then other forms of expression can be used to better convey the richness and complexity of real lived experience. Autoethnographers are perhaps most cognisant of this issue, given the broad experimentation with form owing to the field's emergence from the crisis of representation, and from poststructuralism and postmodernism, which led to an acknowledgement that conventional ways of doing, thinking about, and writing research were narrow and limiting (ELLIS et al., 2011; HOLT, 2003). Thus, the many tools for expressing experience including "short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose" (ELLIS & BOCHNER, 2000, p.739) among others that similarly play with voice, perspective, structure, and linearity, can be viewed as tools for reconciling this experience–expression contradiction. These forms of expression—and forms of dialogue with colleagues, other research participants (if there are any), or even the self—may assist deeper explorations and explications of experience in cases where differences arise from a lack of awareness of deeper aspects of experience.

Differences could also exist due to a reluctance to share parts of one's experience publicly. In this scenario, further reflection and reflexivity may shed light on why this reluctance (or perhaps inability)—or what MEDFORD (2006) calls a "slippage" between Truth and truthfulness—whether it is deliberate or not, exists. For LEE (2007), this manifested as a deep reflection on the nature of confessions, while BRENNAN (2016), in an investigation of infant caregivers, realised that the memory-based nature of her participants' self-reports often meant that past-experienced affect was being reframed within professional discourses. The personal, social, and/or ethical reasons for the reluctance or inability to share aspects of an experience, whether or not these are overcome, can nonetheless be explored in the (auto)ethnographic text to provide the reader with an understanding of what might be omitted from the account of experience and why, leading to an increased trustworthiness of the text. Similarly, this reflexive process may help to identify those aspects of an experience for which further writing (and/or re-authoring one's narrative of the experience) may be therapeutic (see, e.g., ELLIS et al., 2011). This need to acknowledge the mediating role of an individual applies not only for the purposes of better understanding the relationship between experience and expression, but also, when this individual is the researcher, for understanding how the world is construed and investigated for a research project.

5.2. Reflexivity as a dialectic

It has been well established that a researcher's subjectivity, self-biography, social background, assumptions, positioning, political and ideological agendas, social location, assumptions, behaviour, presence, and so on, skew and shape all stages of the research process—from its inception, philosophical/conceptual framework and research encounters, to analysis and writing (BISHOP & SHEPHERD, 2011; FINLAY, 2002). This, combined with autoethnography's necessarily explicit awareness of the researcher, naturally leads to discussions of the role of

reflexivity in research. Here, reflexivity is understood to refer to tool by which a researcher examines and explains how they have influenced a research project (DOWLING, 2008; FINLAY 2002) as part of a commitment to honest, ethical, transparent, and rigorous research practice (BISHOP & SHEPHERD, 2011; FINLAY, 2002; PINI, 2004). Reflexive accounts, in whatever form and to whatever depth they are employed, provide readers with an opportunity to better understand the lens through which the research is conducted, meaning constructed, and conclusions drawn, and thus, allows the reader to better evaluate the validity and meaning of the work (STEIN & MANKOWSKI, 2004).

This section does not delve into the nuances of putting reflexivity into practice, but instead has the more modest task of reframing reflexivity in dialectical terms. The approach taken here again follows from BEN-ARI and ENOSH's (2010) dialectical understanding of reflectivity processes in the construction of knowledge in research. In their view, the first step of knowledge construction in qualitative research begins with the dialectical contradiction between a researcher's expectations (e.g., their theoretical background, knowledge of the phenomena being observed, review of literature, etc.) and their actual concrete observations. These contradictions are then reconciled in the form of new understandings of (for example) the context, that may give rise to further questions. This new understanding, characterising the researcher's understanding, then participates in contradictions with the understandings of insiders to the phenomenon. The dialectical movement again proceeds upwards as these contradictions are reconciled at a higher level of abstraction, eventuating in the integration of all the knowledge generated within the context of an understanding of the researcher–participant relationship, and within broader social, political, and historical contexts.

We can follow this kind of approach and zoom out, as it were, to view the process of doing research itself as, in part, reflecting a researcher's *perezhivanie*, and thus reflecting a particular relationship between the researcher and environment. Specifically, it is how a researcher dialectically relates to the phenomenon they are trying to better understand: what they know of the theory relating to the phenomena, how they have conceptualised their research question, what steps they are taking to investigate, what conclusions they eventually draw, and so on. In the initial stages, there exists a contradiction between what the researcher knows of a phenomenon, and what they do not know but want to better understand. This contradiction creates the moving force for the creation and subsequent undertaking of the study and conversely, the study that is undertaken reflects and contains traces of the contradictions that gave rise to it in the first place, even if these traces are not made explicit. Elements of this dialectical relation between a researcher and the phenomenon under investigation are already, in a sense, explicated as part of the academic writing genre: the review of literature is what the researcher already understands about the phenomenon and how they conceptualise it, while the research question represents the overlap between known and unknown. However, typically, only the intellectual dimension of this relation is expressed. What is left hidden are the countless other characteristics that may have potentially informed or continue to inform the researcher's relation to the phenomenon and to the study (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, personality, behaviour, past personal experiences, ideology, etc.) at particular moments in time—that is, their *perezhivanie*. Coincidentally, it is these dimensions that proponents of reflexive research practices are most concerned about.

The concept of *perezhivanie*, when used to conceptualise the researcher's relationship to their object of research, is also instructive in another way. The characteristics that give rise to a given *perezhivanie* emerge from the relation between individual and environment in concrete situations. Rather than assuming that some particular characteristic of the individual has shaped their relation to a situation, it is a task of analysis to identify *which* characteristics were actually made concrete in that experience. This lends support to the idea of reflexivity being an ongoing practice throughout the research process rather than a one-off self-reflection at the

end of the study to give the appearance of rigour (DOWLING, 2008; STEIN & MANKOWSKI, 2004). This is because the ways in which the researcher relates to their research can change throughout the study—for example, through different identities (PINI, 2004), through complex relations with inner talk (SIMON, 2013), through different perspectives and their accompanying narratives, having the benefit of new knowledge and understandings, being increasingly familiar with the topic or research participants, or perhaps just growing weary of the study. (Indeed, the act of being reflexive is itself a different perspective—a kind of critical meta-perspective focused on subjectivity—that the researcher takes to their research). Being reflexive is not reflecting upon one's personal characteristics in a general sense, but is an ongoing awareness and understanding of the *particular* characteristics that have come to characterise, and become crystallised in, the researcher's *perezhivanie* during the research project. That is, to summarise, reflexive practices can be understood as the explication of the researcher's *perezhivanie*, where *perezhivanie* is understood as a kind of experience, emerging from the particular ways in which the researcher has related to the object of study, and/or to the process of doing research itself. Reflexive practices enable the researcher to reveal the kinds of relations—attitudes, ideologies, identities, and so on—to research that have typically been omitted in the genre of academic writing in favour of cognitive or intellectual aspects of the relation, and does so in ways that better reflect the multifaceted and locally emergent nature of such relations.

Furthermore, the notion that reflexivity is to be an ongoing process supports and is supported by an understanding of the potentially developmental effect that research has on the researcher, and thus, the transformative nature of research. Dialectical contradictions, being dialectical, are constantly being resolved during the process of research. For example, the contradiction between what is known and what is not yet known can be resolved through particular observations that change the way a phenomenon is theorised and understood. Or, the contradiction between a strongly held belief and a contrary observation, between an enthusiastic attitude to research and the reality of laborious work, between different conflicting identities of the researcher, and so on, are all potentially sublated in the doing of research. Respectively, a more moderate belief might be taken, combining the contradictory sides; a muted, studious attitude could be adopted; and a different, neutral identity might be used. These sublations, which preserve yet overcome the contradictions, come to be internalised in the researcher, forming part of their consciousness, and thus have the potential to inform future *perezhivanie* by participating in (e.g., causing) new contradictions. Reflecting back on my own journey in the PhD, it began with a vague idea of a topic that led to a curiosity-motivated reading-spree. As I realised all the directions I could take the research and the vast depth of knowledge I did not yet have, I lost motivation. This lack of motivation came into conflict with the reality of deadlines I would need to meet to continue, which spurred acute, yet somewhat reluctant bouts of writing and decisiveness as I was forced to narrow my focus. All the later contradictions built on contractions I had earlier sublated, and could not exist without them. Had I been properly motivated and enthusiastic, the reality of deadlines might not have troubled me—that is, come into contradiction with aspects of my being—at all. This notion that the doing of research is transformative is not, of course, a new idea: research with others and/or using the self, has the power to transform the researcher and/or participants by being therapeutic, emancipatory, through confession, witnessing, questioning narratives, making sense of ourselves and others, raising consciousness, and so on (see, e.g., ELLIS et al., 2011; NAIDU, 2014; STARR, 2010; STEIN & MANKOWSKI 2004)—though the kind of transformation discussed here is much broader and includes the more mundane everyday, perhaps incremental, transformations that do not readily demand attention.

Similarly, the notion that research is transformative also applies to other research participants (e.g., in qualitative research more generally) and also to the communities that the research project seeks to better understand. The voices of others—of the people who are involved, directly studied, or whom the research is about—are filtered through the subjective lens of the

researcher in the decisions they make throughout the research process (MEDFORD 2006, MENDEZ 2013). Even if raw data were to be presented for the reader to draw their own conclusions, the very existence of the data stems from considered decisions in the construction of the research project. The necessarily interpretive work of qualitative research means that these people are often made vulnerable since the researcher has ultimate control over how they are represented (STEIN & MANKOWSKI 2004). The meanings we make are not necessarily the ones held by the people we write about. Reflexive practices, then, reflect the duty that researchers have in understanding how they are the mediator between the world and the knowledge they produce. Making clear these subjective aspects of research through reflexive practices can potentially place it in contradiction with the purported objectivity of research itself, but it is this dialectical relation—which reveals underlying narratives, brings the research out from the shadows—that creates research that is ethical and better supports the transformation of knowledge into social action and change (STEIN & MANKOWSKI, 2004).

5.3. Analysis as a dialectic

Related to reflexive practices is the notion that the process of analysis is a dialectic. Since a dialectical understanding of knowledge construction has already been discussed above and in more detail in BEN-ARI and ENOSH (2010), here I would like to only briefly touch on two other related facets of analysis in autoethnography.

The first is the dialectic between the past and present self in autoethnographic research. Whether autoethnographic writings are borne purely from autobiographical memories, or instead prompted and elicited by texts and artefacts from the original experience, autoethnography proceeds through a dialectical tension between experience and re-experience. This tension exists, of course, because our experience of a situation occurs from a perspective that differs from the analytical stance we take when we decide to revisit and better understand the situation. Additionally, there is also a distinction between the experience as it occurs in our stream of consciousness as we live day-to-day, and the experience that is, only after the fact, understood as a discrete, bounded period of time—what DEWEY (1939/n.d.) calls experience and *an* experience, respectively. It is only in retrospect that we can revisit an experience with the benefit of knowing the outcome to better understand the narrative of the situation, and to now be mindful of aspects of the experience which were perhaps noticed but the significance of which was not yet known (see, e.g., SIMON, 2013). The unique position of autoethnographers as both subject and researcher allows for a consideration of the differences between an experience in its inchoate state as it was being lived (through reliving that experience in memory) with all its richness, and the same experience now understandable as a discrete narrative. (Indeed, this discussion would apply any time a researcher revisits experiences or notes made in the past to add to their analysis, e.g., reviewing field notes made during more traditional observational research).

The second relates to the -ethno- of autoethnography (and thus to ethnography more generally) and the way in which we learn about the culture in which the autoethnographer is ostensibly a member. As ROTH (2003) argues, there is a dialectical relationship between the general (culture) and the particular (an individual, reasons for doing something, ways of doing something): the latter is a concrete realisation of possibilities (which may not have otherwise been realised) that exist in the former. This is to say, echoing VYGOTSKY's (1997b) genetic law, that the social (genetically) precedes the individual. Conversely, concrete realisations themselves contribute to development of the general, since in becoming concrete, are now available to interact with other members of the general. To give an example: this present paper is a concretised mosaic of ideas that other writers and theorists have made concrete. However, despite the fact that this paper was a possibility given the existence of those ideas, it has not, till now, been manifested concretely. Now that it exists, drawing connections between ideas

that might not have otherwise been connected, it opens up new possibilities for other researchers who may draw links between it and other ideas. Or to give a simpler example: the English-language character set as represented on a standard keyboard contains the possibility of every book that has or will be written (hence, the infinite monkey theorem)—though of course, not every possible book has yet been actualised.

This dialectical relation between general and particular suggests that the individual can indeed be studied to understand the cultural, since the individual (and the way they act, and/or the reasons for those actions, and/or the way they perceive/understand/relate to situations) is a concretely realised possibility that is available at the level of the collective. VYGOTSKY (1997a) had realised this path to knowledge, traced from the individual to general when, early in his career, he praised Pavlov for using the study of the salivation of dogs (the particular) to understand conditional reflexes (the universal). The ways in which we experience and relate to a situation (i.e., our *perezhivanie*) are realisations of the infinite possibilities of consciousness, themselves concretisations of cultural possibilities. Every *perezhivanie* tells us about the individual, and since "every life story … tells us about [culture] history" (ROTH, 2003, para 22), then every *perezhivanie* also tells us something about culture and its possibilities.

5.4. Audience reception as a dialectic

As I read over my language learning journal in preparation of writing up autoethnographical study, I found myself reliving the circumstances in which I wrote particular entries. I can picture myself sitting at my desk, in front of the learning website, writing notes after having completed particular activities. It is almost like I have travelled back to that moment. I have a rich feeling for room in which it took place, since I am so familiar with it. But as I consider how I might convey this somewhat mundane experience to others, I come to the realisation that the memories, experiences, and personal biography and circumstances that allow the sense to be elicited by the words I have written would not exist for others. It is at this point that I realise why *verisimilitude* is often named as a criterion for assessing autoethnography.

Here, verisimilitude is the ability of a text to "[evoke] in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, and a feeling that what has been represented could be true" (ELLIS et al., 2011, p.282)—the reader enters the subjective world of the writer or narrative. This is achieved through the kind of thick, rich description that aligns with the aesthetic aspirations and requirements of autoethnography, as well the persuasive logic found in academic writing more generally (BOYLORN, 2008; CRESWELL & MILLER 2000; SPRY, 2001; STARR, 2010). Considered this way, autoethnography is not only scientific, but also artful, and it is here that a final connection to Vygotsky's *perezhivanie* can be made.

As I argued in MOK (2017), the concept of *perezhivanie* as understood by Vygotsky can be traced back to TOLSTOY (1896/1996), who wrote that the proper activity of art is the conscious expression of felt experience, such that others are infected by the art and experience [*perezhivayut*] the same emotions (p.51). The Russian theatre director Stanislavsky considered *perezhivanie* to be the highest form of theatre, in which the actor is able to create the life of the human spirit anew in each performance, truly experiencing the character such that the audience experienced this. Vygotsky drew on this concept early in his career when he saw the psychological nature of art, and at the end of his life when he saw the dramatic nature of psychological development.

Applied to the present discussion, it can be argued that the aesthetic goal of artful, verisimilitudinous, narrative writing, is to "infect" the engaged reader—using expressive literary techniques—such that they are able re-live the experience described. In the same way that research in the post/positivist traditions convince the reader on intellectual grounds, autoethnographic and narrative research convinces on intellectual *and* affective (and other) grounds. The use of the word "grounds" here is deliberate, as research is most effective—through whatever means it may be—when the strange is made familiar, and the reader is able to comprehend, understand, relate to, and feel the experience or argument that text communicates by drawing on the same cultural possibilities of which the narrative is itself a concrete realisation. Through the act of reading and drawing on the culture (of which both the author and reader are members) to articulate (if only mentally) previously hidden yet possible understandings of how the world works (ROTH 2004), the engaged reader potentially experiences, dialectically, the text as a motivating force for their development (e.g., a new perspective or understanding of the world). It is through this process that research writing achieves its aims.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to make concrete a numbers of possibilities of understanding autoethnography using the language of cultural-historical theory, specifically the concept of *perezhivanie* and the logic of dialectics. The reconceptualisation of autoethnography, narrative research, and ethnographic epistemology in these terms is important not only as it creates new (or rather, makes visible) links between cultural-historical theory and autoethnographic methodology, but also because the new perception of something "means to acquire new potentials for acting with respect to it" (VYGOTSKY 1987 p.190). Not only is it now possible to theorise how dialectical contradictions are *synthesised* in the doing of research, but also *analyse* how aspects of research are constituted by (and reflective of) those contradictions that gave rise to them, and supports the use of reflexive practices.

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Author

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Revisiting Mok (under review)

Of the portion of the text spent outlining a dialectical understanding of autoethnography, a large part is dedicated to discussing reflexivity. The central idea, to summarise, is that reflexive practices elucidate the otherwise concealed dimension of knowledge construction—the subjectivity of the researcher. Such practices also acknowledge that the researcher is not merely a passive mediator or conduit within the knowledge construction process. Rather, the personal characteristics of the researcher that manifest within dialectical contradictions (by being elicited by a particular situation) during the process are sublated into the ideas that are developed to resolve those contradictions. For example, a particular interpretation of data reflects not only aspects of the object the data are about, but also the way in which it was perceived and understood by the researcher. Similarly, a research question reflects a researcher's own predilections, preferences, knowledge, curiosities, and so on, as well as a particular view of the phenomenon that the question is about. Using an idea from the conceptualisation of *perezhivanie* developed in Chapters 2 and 4, it is not the characteristics of the researcher understood as static traits, but instead, what is relevant is which particular characteristics took on a determining role in shaping experience at a particular moment in time. For example, though I have training in linguistics, my linguistics knowledge was not necessarily a factor in the way I perceived the language or language learning tasks—it may have played a role on some occasions, but other times, it was not at all relevant. To reiterate a point made in Firth and Wagner (2007), categories of identity are not omnirelevant, they are multiple, "motile, liminal, and an achieved feature of interaction" (p. 801). Though their discussion relates to interpersonal encounters, the point can also be made for encounters with the world more generally. This idea comes from Vygotsky (1994):

> do all of my own personal constitutional characteristic elements, of every type, participate fully and on an equal basis? Of course not. In one situation some of my constitutional characteristics play a primary role, but in another, different ones may play this primary role which may not even appear at all in the first case. It is not essential for us to know what the child's constitutional characteristics are like *per se, but what is important for us to find out is which of these constitutional characteristics have played a decisive role in determining the child's*

> *relationship to a given situation. And in another situation, different constitutional characteristics may well have played a role*. (emphasis in original, p. 342)

The paper has since been reviewed, with the recommendation to revise and resubmit. On a re-reading of the text, I would have to agree with the reviewers' comments. It claims to be an autoethnography yet is not strong narratively, it discusses my own experiences but there are too few examples:

> the text would strongly benefit from a rewriting of its narrative parts. Some episodes offer points of connection for the readers, but overall, the text lacks strongly evocative prose, a continuous narrative, and a visible storyline. (Reviewer #1)

> Use more data from author's journal and adopt a narrative focus and style from the beginning and weave throughout the article. (Reviewer #2)

> The inclusion of only a few examples from the author's PhD experiences and equally spare allusions to or anecdotes about challenges in pursuing doctoral studies and writing the dissertation weaken the text and intended arguments. (Reviewer #2)

The theoretical side is also weak, lacking rigour and adequate explanation of both concepts and methodology.

> Early on in the text, the authors should specify which kind of autoethnography they refer to. . . . Making explicit which tradition this text is based on (or how it goes beyond the existing traditions) is an important prerequisite for the assessment of its quality. (Reviewer #1)

> In chapter 5.2., the use of the term reflexivity is specified as a "tool by which a researcher examines and explains how they have influenced a research project". This is a rather vague use of the term. In the existing literature . . . reflexivity is discussed in many dimensions and it is important to clarify which dimension(s) the author refers to. (Reviewer #1)

> The literature review is at times adequate in some sections of the text. However, there are glaring omissions in other sections. (Reviewer #2)

> This reviewer was not always clear about how some concepts were understood, conceptualized analyzed and interpreted. For example, this reviewer is not convinced that the author understands auto ethnography. (Reviewer #2)

> There are sections that I have indicated directly on the manuscript that need much revision, e.g concepts that need to be more clearly defined, elaborated and/or explained. Perhaps, in revising author might work with fewer concepts. (Reviewer #2)

I tried to do too much; the idea still needed time and work to mature. And perhaps I misread the tone of other articles in the journal as being more experimentally permissive than they actually were, or perhaps the reviewers who were suitable for this topic just happened to be stricter that I anticipated. It was also rushed, as I needed to get back to rethinking my thesis after the presubmission progress review (Chapter 6).

Having had some time since to better distil the idea, here I restate the dialectical understanding of autoethnographic research. *Perezhivanie* can be an object of research in two ways. The first is being the actual object that a research project investigates (as I initially sought to do with my empirical study in Chapter 5). The second is the *perezhivanie* of the researcher. The *perezhivanie* of the researcher is how they interact with, see, and experience both the object of research and the process of research, through their own subjectivity. Reflexivity is the process by which this *perezhivanie* can be made visible in the text. *Perezhivanie* can be understood as capturing a locally emergent dialectic between the researcher and various parts of the research process. Where contradictions within this researcher–research or researcher–object relationship arise (and they do not always do so), they are the moving force for development towards a resolution that sublates the contradiction and progresses the research project. For example, a researcher's theoretical knowledge of X might be in contradiction with a contrary or unexpected empirical observation, which prompts the development and seeking of some explanation of their relation through adductive reasoning: is the existing research faulty in some way? Was the observation incorrect? Is there a third way to reconcile them? How can the contradiction be otherwise explained away? Much like an individual operating within their ZPD, the researcher becomes receptive to, even if not actively seeking, some kind of mediation. This idea applies to the conception of research project, the generation of specific research questions, the search of existing literature, the development of methodology and method, analysis, and the writing of the research report. At each stage—though to be clear, they are not necessarily discrete stages, as they often overlap—the concrete subjectivity of the researcher interacts with some observation

or social need that is fulfilled by carrying out some aspect of research, which in turn reflects that original interaction. These needs are not absolute, but exist only when experienced as a particular relationship between the researcher and their environment. For example, a researcher observing a conversation between two people may variously view it through the lens of their linguistic training, their casual interest in sociology, or see it theoretically as merely two people talking. Further, Vygotsky's general genetic law entails that what the researcher sees and experiences in their environment (rather than what objectively exists in the environment) is what can later lead to transformations in their consciousness (i.e., development). When the research is published, readers enter into a dialogical relationship with the text as they seek to make meaning of what is written. The goal of evocative writing, then, is to bring the reader into the story, into the situations being described, so that they may experience the experience for themselves and feel the truth of what is being said, rather than merely knowing it intellectually. The contradictions that can arise between, for example, their existing knowledge of the world and the experiences described, can provide the motivating force for development and personal change.

Reflexivity, being both an awareness of one's subjective influence on research, as well as the practices by which this is made textually explicit, becomes the final piece of the conceptual puzzle of this thesis. As I have suggested, it is not merely the explication of one's personal characteristics per se, but in revealing one's *perezhivanie*, it is better understood as explicating one's personal *characteristics only to the extent they informed a particular experience of the world at a particular point in time*. After all, experiences change over time, moment to moment, in the flow of consciousness. Conversely, *perezhivanie* and dialectics can be seen as both the guiding and explanatory principles for reflexive writing. Understood as *guiding* principles, they suggest what aspects of experience should be "revealed" in reflexive writing. Understood as *explanatory* principles, they explain what reflexive writings tell readers about the researcher's subjectivity and its role in constructing the research. However, as both the presubmission panel and the reviewers of the above rejected paper have indicated, I had missed an entire literature on reflexivity and did not state precisely which type of reflexivity I was envisioning. The next section

seeks to rectify this, to clarify the different approaches to and kinds of reflexivity, as well as the type(s) of reflexivity to which I intend to refer.

Forms of reflexivity

Reflexivity is, broadly, a qualitative researchers' engagement in an explicit and critically self-aware meta-analysis (Finlay, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Its purpose is an examination and subsequent explanation of the ways in which the researcher has influenced and constructed their research efforts at every stage, from the formation of the project to its writing (Bolam, Gleeson, & Murphy, 2003). Modern uses of reflexivity emerged from the 1970s, when the then-dominant paradigm of positivism came under critique, and analytic tools were turned back on the researchers to understand the effects of their presence in research (Finlay, 2002; Foley, 2002). Following the postmodern turn, a researcher's inextricable subjectivity was viewed not as a contaminant that needed to be (or indeed, *could* be) removed for the sake of objectivity, but instead as an opportunity for resolving various issues. Here I outline five approaches to reflexivity in terms of their central concerns: accountability, interpretation, epistemology (sociological), textuality, and ethics. These labels are intended as heuristic devices: they are not mutually exclusive, do not map neatly to different paradigms, can be achieved with various methods, and are often combined in practice. Other theorists writing about reflexivity have made different distinctions based on the methods for enacting reflexivity, or paradigmatic commitments (see, e.g., Bolam et al., 2003; Denzin, 2003; Dowling, 2008; Finlay, 2002; Foley, 2002; Marcus, 1998). The five-way distinction made here is intended to reflect different aspects of research to which a reflexive orientation can be directed. As Marcus (1998) notes, "reflexivity is an immense area of comment an interest" (p. 192), and so only a broad and generalised overview is possible here.

Accountability

Understood as accountability, reflexivity seeks to reveal how the researcher has carried out their field work as a kind of methodological accounting to produce a retrievable audit

trail of the path from data collection to the production of public knowledge (Seale, 1999b). That is, it documents the decisions made by the researcher to enhance the authority and credibility of the research. Associated methods include phenomenological bracketing, ethnomethodological indifference (Dowling, 2008), confessional tales (van Maanen, 2011), introspection (Finlay, 2002), vignettes (Humphreys, 2005), and autobiographical reflection (Maton, 2003). This explicated self-awareness allows for further critical thinking about the researcher's own practices and their limitations as interpreters. For example, a researcher can use confessional accounts (van Maanen, 2011) to provide a behind-the-scenes look at the undertaking of fieldwork, and allow the researcher to identify "possible sources for the anxiety of influence" (Maton, 2003, p. 54). Subsequently, this form of reflexivity is often deflationary with regard to truth and objectivity in questioning its very possibility (Foley, 2002). Marcus (1998) describes this as the "null-form" (p. 193) of reflexivity, a kind of self-critique or personal quest, playing on the idea of empathy with the researcher, and is the form of reflexivity that "most often evokes nervous responses or dismissals of reflexivity as dead-end self-indulgence, narcissism, and so on" (p. 193). For instance, Bourdieu (2003) describes this as shallow "textual reflexivity" (p. 282), while Geertz (1988) refers to it as a "diary disease" (p. 89). While it can be seen as lacking the epistemic value of other kinds of reflexivity, it has value in that it positions the researcher as a "dialogic knower or witness to a cultural scene" in their research, rather than a transcendent, "imperial, authoritative learner", while also obligating the researcher to acknowledge their responsibility to others (Foley, 2002, p. 475).

Interpretation

Interpretive reflexivity uses an accounting of the researcher-self not as an end in itself, but for strengthening interpretation of data. Fitting within postpositivist, interpretivist, and constructivist paradigms, this kind of reflexivity seeks to critically account for a researcher's biases, ideology, and other subjectivities in their analytical work. Part of this may involve making one's theories explicit (Bolam et al., 2003), or reflecting upon intersubjective relations research participants. Interpretive reflexivity acknowledges the inseparability of facts from the observer and culture that supplies the categories of

description (Maton, 2003). Thus, associated methods include philosophical hermeneutics and grounded theory (Dowling, 2008). Under the postpositivist paradigm, reflexivity is seen as a way to expose potential subjective contaminants of otherwise "objective" research, while in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, subjectivity is seen as a valuable part of research which, when explicated, helps to lend credibility to interpretations put forth.

Sociological

Sociological (or epistemological) reflexivity takes a critical view of the social, professional, and textual contexts in which research is produced. That is, a reflexivity concerned with interpretation is directed at the subjective and personal level, while a concern with the social contexts of knowledge production shifts the focus to the level of sociology. This approach is exemplified in Bourdieu's (2003) "epistemic reflexivity", in which reflexivity is understood as "participant objectivation". Participant objectivation refers to the "sociology of sociology", whereby the social and academic conditions for the very conduct of research becomes the object of reflexive analysis. That is, rather than examine a researcher's particular interpretive trail or lived experience, the focus is on the

> traditions, habits of thought, problematics, shared commonplaces, . . . and . . . the fact that [the researcher] occupies in it a particular position (newcomer who has to prove herself versus consecrated master, etc.), with 'interests' of a particular kind which unconsciously orientate her scientific choices (of discipline, method, object, etc.). (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 284)

It is through participant objectivation that a researcher can come to understand the limits and effects of their socialisation into a particular, disciplinary-specific mode of thinking and language of representation. Critical ethnography, critical hermeneutics (Dowling, 2008), and historiography (Foley, 2002) similarly shift the reflexive frame to the social milieu in which knowledge is created, and motivate deconstruction and recontextualisation of interpretation to ascertain either essential objective truths, or to gain different perspectives of the object of inquiry that transcend the limitations of one's disciplinary socialisation.

Textuality

Discursive reflexivity casts doubt on the ability of traditional, orderly writing practices to adequately express and reflect realities that are complex, messy, and unexpected. Reflecting a postmodern view of textual representation (Lincoln & Guba, 2005), reflexive strategies falling under this label seek to challenge the expectations and engagement of the reader (Bolam et al., 2003) through the use of nontraditional textual representations. Acknowledging multiple voices and perspectives, radical textual strategies include: denying authorship (the removal of the authors voice in collaborative texts; Maton, 2003); the use of poetic, fictional, narrative, and other literary forms (e.g., in autoethnography, see Chapter 3); and the use of different structures such as messy texts (Marcus, 1998), layered accounts (Ronai, 1995), and juxtapositional subtext (a secondary text running parallel to the main text; Petersen, 2015). Such texts reject the possibility of an objective, definitive, or even stable account of the object of inquiry. The goal is to give a sense of the whole without being totalising. They can also insist on their own "incompleteness, and uncertainty about how to draw a text/analysis to a close" (Marcus, 1998, p. 189), as a resistance to the totalising narratives of modernity. Thus, they invite active, involved reading and meaning making from the audience.

Ethics

Finally, aligned with critical and feminist research paradigms, reflexivity as a concern for ethics foregrounds the relationships between a researcher and their research participants, the communities being studied, and the general public into which the research is disseminated. As a matter of ethics, the feminist practice of "positioning" is recognition of the ways in which research is conducted from particular socially situated *positions* (e.g., of power or otherwise, and not merely different theoretical *perspectives*) that are subsequently reflected in the partiality of claims to knowledge. Thus, responses and engagement from those in other positions (the participants, readers of the research) is not only encouraged, but necessary for a more complete, ethical, and socially responsible view of the subject of inquiry. Remaining the goal of research, objectivity is seen not as a transcendence of subjectivity and ideology, but rather an achievement of joining multiple

views and voices into a collective subject position (Marcus, 1998, Chapter 8). Furthermore, it casts light on the ethical dimensions of the researcher–participant relationship, highlighting primarily the imbalance of power that exists, but also the reciprocal nature of participant research. Cooperative inquiry, participative research, and mutual collaboration (Finlay, 2002) are strategies to address this ethical dimension to better allow research participants to be heard in the research in their own words. In doing so, the researcher can become more attuned to the effects that their research has on the people they study not only during data collection periods, but also when it becomes published (e.g., as in critical, transformative, and emancipatory research paradigms).

Summary

As a heuristic, the above five broad categories of reflexivity reflect a critical awareness of different aspects of any research endeavour, from the accountability of the researcher to the ethics of doing research. Regardless of the central concern, the use of reflexive strategies and methods serves to explicate the influence and consequence of the researcher's otherwise unstated subjectivity in their research. Armed with a loose typology of reflexivities, it is now possible to clarify the kind of reflexivity I had intended to refer to in the dialectical model of autoethnographic research

In the summary of Mok (under review) above, I argued that reflexivity is the process by which a researcher's *perezhivanie* can be made visible in the text. It is in the explication of these *perezhivanie* that the dialectical contradictions that motivate development of research project can be made visible to reader. Since these dialectical contradictions are sublated in the different aspects of research, those parts of research—for example, the formulation of the research question, methodological decisions, new theories and understandings, and so on—can be read as reflecting (i.e., embodying) those very contradictions. Put another way, the research process can be understood as a series of abductive steps whereby the best option to account for X and Y, will ultimately change depending on what X and Y, are. Here, X represents the fluid, fluctuating, volatile subjectivity of the researcher, while Y represents some aspect of research—an observation, a body of knowledge, the task of writing, and so on. This relationship between X and Y is

represented within *perezhivanie*. Thus, explication of this *perezhivanie* as a form of reflexivity draws primarily on reflexivity as a concern with *interpretation*. This is because what is ultimately being made explicit is the researcher's particular and concrete experience of their research, where this experience will be shaped, at different times, by their beliefs, knowledge, emotions, attitudes, personality, and so on, which variously come to the fore and recede into the background.

So while this notion of reflexivity shares a concern with interpretive reflexivity, it is also more specific in that it does not entail, for example, merely making clear an ostensible paradigmatic commitment in general terms. Rather, what is explicated is the *actual* perspective that has come to determine the researcher's relationship to their research, not merely some convenient label that may only describe part of this relation. For example, in writing about her introduction to autoethnography, Wall (2006) writes that the postmodern scepticism of neutrality and objectivity is appealing, and yet she nonetheless still maintains a contradictory realist perspective that "some things are right and some are wrong, that some things are real, and that truth can sometimes be known the same way by all people" (p. 156). I am reminded of Denzin's (2012) notion of the *bricoleur*, who moves between and within competing and overlapping methodological and theoretical *perspectives* to solve particular problems, rather than being bounded by the strict limits of a singular *paradigm*. The researcher's *perezhivanie* as explicated through reflexive writing practices does not reveal a static and unitary individual, but instead, and individual who changes over time, has multiple voices, conflicting identities, contradictory perspectives, and an array of beliefs and attitudes that are in flux but which come to be crystallised in particular ways in *perezhivanie*.

There are two final points to make here. First, since emergent dialectical contradictions can be understood as being sublated in the ongoing process of research, it also suggests that the revelation of *perezhivanie* (in which these contradictions are experienced) has *epistemic* value. This is because *perezhivanie* helps to justify and explain a particular interpretation or decision in research. For example, the formulation of a particular method of data collection can be understood as arising from the need to answer a particular research question, combined with, say, a researcher's manifest proclivities or particular attitudes towards particular data collection techniques to the extent they arose

during the design of the research question. A deep-seated postpositivistic preference for quantitative certainty, or a lack of confidence in doing observational fieldwork might manifest in a qualitative researcher's *perezhivanie* as an eagerness for questionnaires and surveys and a distrust of relatively more open-ended observations or interviews. In another instance, a researcher's negative perception of a particular theorist, for whatever reason regardless of how well- or ill-justified this may be, may lead to the development of a program to review existing literature that excludes or avoids that theorist. In Ellis and Bochner's (2006) response to Anderson's (2006) critique of evocative autoethnography, Ellis makes the unusual (but welcome) step of reflexively acknowledging her personal friendship with Anderson and suggests that it is this friendship that allows her to read his critique as less of an attack and more of a conciliation. That is, her *perezhivanie* of Anderson's critique is informed, in this case, by her friendship with him, and this *perezhivanie* is subsequently manifest and reflected in her particular reading of and response to the paper.

Second, and finally, since *perezhivanie* implies a fluidity and flux of the researcher's relation to the world, the reflexive explication of *perezhivanie* is unlikely to conform neatly to the logical and orderly nature of traditional academic writing. This in turn suggests the need for *discursive* reflexivity: a critical consideration of the way in which research is presented. To formulate a motivation for research solely in terms of some gap in the literature, for example, is to not only neglect one's personal motivations for pursuing a particular question (especially those realities of academic work that are perhaps impolite to acknowledge, such as the need to maintain a steady stream of publications, to fulfil grant obligations, or to bolster a department's publication record), but also neglects the ways in which this motivation may change, disappear and reappear, and transform throughout the course of research. It may even be that this motivation changes *because* of the research itself. This may, of course, be seen as an incitement to indulge in the kind of narcissistic reflexivity derided by the likes of Bourdieu and analytic autoethnographers. However, to borrow the retorts from evocative autoethnographers: such practices can enable the creation of texts more approachable, personable, and accessible to the general public, and serves to break down the restrictive modernist ideals of what research ought to look like. These modernist ideals were founded on the kinds of formal, analytical

thought that dialectics opposes for being too removed from reality to adequately reflect the living, ever-changing world. By contrast, dialectics, with its insistence on historical analysis and rejection of rigid abstractions, suggests the use of narratives for conveying the historical development of research (its questions, ideas, findings) and reality (Bencivenga, 2012).

Conclusion

Developed in this chapter is the connection between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography through the philosophy of dialectics and the concept of reflexivity. In being directed toward a consideration of the role of reflexivity in autoethnography (due to concerns raised in Chapter 3), I developed an understanding of reflexivity as the explication of a researcher's *perezhivanie* in the context of research more generally. Understood this way, I argued that the function of reflexivity draws a concern with interpretation, while also having epistemic value, and textual implications. This, consequently, provides the basis for a shift in my research orientation from understanding the *perezhivanie* of language learning to that of research practice itself. The next and final chapter turns this model of autoethnography back onto this thesis, and clarifies its narrative structure.

Chapter 6: Reflecting on the study

This final chapter concludes the thesis by turning the dialectical model of autoethnography (developed in Chapter 5) reflexively back onto the thesis and answers the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Or rather, it is used to reveal the narrative purpose of the reflexive writing that has permeated the thesis. I argue that the autobiographical elements help to explain and justify the particular directions in which the research has been oriented. This discursive strategy emerges from the concrete circumstances of the thesis and its use of reflexive writing was argued for at the end of the previous chapter. Thus, moving beyond "benign introspection" (Woolgar, as cited in Finlay, 2002, p. 215), I show how my research project itself reflects the series of contradictions and struggles that were sublated in its development. To put it another way, this research project, whatever it is, in its conception, conduct, continuation, and conclusions, is as much a reflection of me and my *perezhivanie*, as it is a reflection of the object of my inquiry. Consequently, I view autoethnography as the rationale and framework for textual experimentation, which supports the use of a narrative structure for representing this research project. The following from Ronai (1995) resonates here: "[if, as Bourdieu suggests] all sociology is a personal reflection of the sociologist creating it . . . [then] why should we impose forms of writing on ourselves that disguise this fact?" (p. 396)

Before engaging in this reflexive exercise, however, it is necessary to first provide an overview and summary of the substantive theoretical contributions developed throughout this thesis and in the included publications—if not to reorient the reader, then to fulfil the expectations of a final thesis chapter. There are two primary theoretical contributions.

Contribution 1: Developing the concept of perezhivanie

First is the concept of *perezhivanie*. Three of the included publications examine the concept from different perspectives. Mok (2015) presents a kind of exegesis of "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994) contextualised within the calls for methodological and epistemological expansion within the field of SLA. Thus, I argued that

perezhivanie can support and inform more holistic and emic (learner-centred) research methodologies, since the concept explains the developmental significance of particular learning experiences. How an individual experiences, perceives, or relates to a situation is manifested in *perezhivanie*, and it is here that further analysis can reveal something of their current state of development as well as, consequently, indicate where development might next proceed. The example used in Mok (2015) was learner of English as a second language who, unable to distinguish between the phonemes /t/ and /d/, does not hear the difference between the words *tire* and *dire*. In this hypothetical individual's case, explicit instruction or an encounter with a sentence that only makes sense with one of the words but not the other, will be meaningful for that particular individual (and not developmentally meaningful for someone who can distinguish the phonemes). I also cautioned against the preanalytical presumption of the relevance of particular characteristics when analysing *perezhivanie*, stating that the concept is best defined as "an indivisible unity of *all and only* those personal and situational (environmental) characteristics *actually related to*, and elicited in, a given individual's experience of *a specific situation*" (emphasis added, Mok, 2015, p. 147). Drawing on Vygotsky's notion of sense, the scope of personal characteristics that can *potentially* be found in *perezhivanie* is broader than just cognition or emotion. Rather, it is any psychological fact that arises in consciousness (as discussed here in Chapter 3). Yet, what actually comes to constitute a given *perezhivanie* is specific and exact, since what is relevant is only those characteristics that have actually played a "*decisive role in determining the . . . relationship to a given situation*" (emphasis in original, Vygotsky, 1994, p. 342).

Mok (2017) provides a critical review of the then-existing literature on *perezhivanie*, and is situated within the context of cultural-historical research (rather than SLA), drawing on some research in education. The book chapter sought to sketch the landscape of interpretation, tracing the historical lineage of the concept through Soviet philosophy, Vygotsky's work in the arts, and neo-Vygotskian interpretations. I provided a kind of typology of interpretations to better demarcate the ways in which the contexts of interpretation change the interpretation itself (it can be said now, that the interpretations each sublate and reflect the different relations between concept and the context of interpretation). It is in writing this chapter that I began to shift focus away from SLA,

towards CHT proper, and later towards dialectics as a means to understand the concept's philosophical foundation. A crucial distinction made in writing Mok (2017) was between reflection as "throwing back" versus "to embody"—crucial because it was in this distinction that an embryonic understanding of dialectics formed in my conceptualisation. Lastly, Veresov and Mok (2018) returned the discussion of *perezhivanie* to the context of SLA research, though with an emphasis on the dialectical foundations that inform the concept, suggesting that it is this foundation that has been overlooked in sociocultural SLA research.

Contribution 2: Reflexivity reveals perezhivanie in autoethnography

The second contribution is the conceptualisation of reflexivity as the process of explicating a researcher's *perezhivanie* within autoethnographic research and research more generally. In the Chapter 5, I argued that research progresses and develops through the dialectical sublation of contradictions, and that reflexivity is the means by which these contradictions, manifest as the researcher's *perezhivanie*, can be made visible in research writing. These *perezhivanie* are crystallisations not only of how a researcher experiences the process of doing research (which informs the decisions, interpretations, and conceptualisations they make), but also the emergent struggles that are the moving force of development (both of the research and the researcher) toward a sublation of those struggles through some mediating concept or higher level of abstraction[15]. I also suggested

[15] It is worth noting here that elements of this idea have been developed in other theoretical frameworks—with some discussing analytical strategies, and others discussing the research process more generally. I stumbled across Guyotte and Sochacka's (2016) discussion of the "productive tensions" they encountered when trying to publish an autoethnographic work. These tensions between their desire to publish an autoethnography and the expectations of the journal's readership were addressed and resolved through editing their manuscript. Similarly, in researching postmodernism for Chapter 3, I found mention of Rorty's (1991) idea of inquiry as recontextualisation: creating novelty in research is the process of reweaving one's web of beliefs, or attitudes towards beliefs, in an effort to relieve tensions (i.e., contradictions) between old and new beliefs and desires. Hedegaard's (2008) "dialectical-interactive" methodology, used by many of my colleagues in the faculty of Education, formulates the researcher's role in data collection and analysis as an active and involved maker of meaning. Her formulation of the process of analysis shares the same kind of

that, being a dialectical process, ones development (as the object of autoethnography) and ones research (as the object of research reflexivity) can be conveyed using narrative structures rather than the traditional abstracted model of scientific writing. To be clear, I am not suggesting that the traditional model be replaced when the object of inquiry is investigated through the lens of dialectics, but rather, I suggest that the use of narrative (or other) structures can help coax out and support a research project's implicit postmodern sensibilities—especially if the approach and methodology used (e.g., autoethnography) is similarly postmodern in spirit.

I also argued in Mok (under review) that *perezhivanie* is the object of analysis in autoethnography specifically—it refers to both the *phenomenon* that is ostensibly captured in accounts of one's experience, as well as the *concept* that explains the developmental significance of what is expressed in the account[16]. In autoethnography, it is the researcher qua subject's *perezhivanie* that is made visible for analysis. However, this experience is revisited and analysed from the perspective of the researcher qua researcher, and incongruities between the actual experience (now a memory for the researcher) and its expression in text can generate new questions to be explored. For example: are there details missing or withheld? Does the expression adequately evoke the experience for a reader as it does for the researcher?

On the issue of evocation in autoethnography, I also argued that verisimilitudinous (i.e., lifelike) writing could be understood as the means by which a reader can experience the researcher's experience. In doing so, the reader draws on shared cultural possibilities and cultural knowledge (first and foremost, language) to understand the reported experience.

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spiral metaphor—upwards from concrete data to higher abstractions by moving back and forth between data and interpretations to generate new interpretations through which to understand the data—that also characterises grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and hermeneutics. It is easy to see all of these examples as different formulations (even recontextualising) of the same core idea also found in dialectics: that tensions and contradictions are resolved by moving to a higher level of abstraction that incorporates, while overcoming, them.

[16] This distinction between the *concept* and *phenomenon* of *perezhivanie* is borrowed from Veresov (2016, 2017a).

Subsequently, tensions between the reader's imagined experience and the researcher's expressed experiences can provide the basis for the former to reflect on their own experiences as a starting point for personal change. Indeed, this is one of the stated goals of evocative autoethnography. In the context of discussing the experience of art, Vygotsky (1971) describes this process as catharsis (also discussed in Mok, 2017).

Finding my voice and cultivating the idea

One final story is needed here to understand the dialectical emergence of the narrative structure of this thesis. While theoretical support for such a structure has already been developed in arguments for reflexivity, the following account reveals the final supportive push that was needed to bring it to life.

After returning from ISCAR 2017, it was time to prepare for the presubmission seminar—the final milestone in which I present my research to a panel through a short presentation and a summary paper. By this milestone, from what I could gather from the guidance on the university's website, students generally should have their thesis completed, with the milestone being an opportunity for a last round of feedback. However, I was stuck at the stage of analysis. "Analysis is the hardest part, the rest is easy once the findings have been developed", I would rationalise to myself. I dreaded the seminar, since it would bring me face to face with the cumulative effects of procrastination, indecision, inability to clarify, and failure to analyse. It would finally justify my "imposter syndrome" (the self-doubt that is apparently common in academia), as it would reveal me to be, as I (irrationally) feared and suspected, an imposter. Maybe I could catch up, though. I had time to take a break from my work, and perhaps my mind would be clear enough to work through analysis. I decided with my supervisors that perhaps the best course of action would be to finish the fourth paper for publication (Mok, under review)—the final paper to meet the department's minimum publication requirements for my "thesis including published works" (formerly known as a thesis by publication). This should, in theory, be enough to convince the panel that I was on track. Furthermore, it was a concrete task I could busy myself with, instead of the vague, ill-defined task of "doing analysis". It would also form a crucial part of the thesis, since the three prior publications (Mok, 2015, 2017; Veresov &

Mok, 2018) all discuss *perezhivanie*. I could kill two birds with one stone by finally writing about autoethnography, which I had so far managed to (partly inadvertently) avoid. Thus I set to work on developing the ideas I had begun to formulate in the lead up to my ISCAR presentations; a dialectical understanding of autoethnography (much of this work is presented in Chapter 5).

At the same time I had come to terms with the fact that I was no longer truly interested in SLA, that statements to the contrary were merely self-deception. I lacked the kind of enthusiasm for my work that I perceived others to have—teachers who had enrolled in the PhD to research learning to effect change in teaching practices and policies; this seemed like concretely motivated work. I dismissed these self-doubts, from time to time, as just a normal level of jadedness that comes from being immersed in one topic for too long. But in my heart, I knew this to be an untenable excuse. My research to that point had led me far from SLA, and attempts to write my work as though it related to issues of language learning felt forced and alien. I had wandered out of that community for some time now, and had found more of a footing within the CHT community, where I could pursue the kind of theoretical conceptual development that felt natural to me, rather than bother with fieldwork.

I developed a majority of the ideas of the Mok (under review) in the weeks and months leading up to the presubmission seminar, but there was no conceivable way to have it ready for submission. I also needed to get to work on the presubmission report for the panel. This report needed to show enough of an understanding of my own work. It needed to discuss my methodology and method, my data and analysis. It even needed a discussion of—if at least preliminary—my findings. I had maybe half of this material ready to present. So what could I write?

Developing the publication prompted further research on autoethnography, and I found more and more research written in a looser, conversational, narrative manner. Feeling emboldened again, as at the end of Chapter 3, I decided to take a gamble and write candidly about my work. After all, I began to rationalise, the report did not need to be a summary of the thesis, but could in theory just be a report on my *progress* and work to date. Even if I were to write about study in the normal fashion, I was unsure of how to do

it. I had parallel threads running through the thesis that were difficult to separate and order neatly—they intersected and diverged at various points, and to untangle the threads for writing would be a violence against this interlaced structure. Do I group the discussion of CHT together with *perezhivanie*? If so, where does the relation between SCT and SLA come in? Should autoethnography be relegated to a later section under methodology, or does it need to be discussed earlier alongside *perezhivanie* to better draw out their similarities? Perhaps I should discuss parts of autoethnography from the beginning, then in more detail later—but then this seemed untidy. In the end, the report presented an account of my progress, structured narratively to describe the contexts surrounding the development of the various papers to be included in the thesis. I discussed the empirical study and how I had struggled to analyse it because of a nebulous conceptual difficulty. And finally, I provided a summary of the ideas of the final paper I had been working on, in lieu of a definitive statement of what it was. I situated this as having emerged from ideas developed for ISCAR. I concluded the report by revealing the narrative "trick" of the report, the same used in this thesis: that the report itself was a reflexive, narrative account of my *perezhivanie* (my understanding of and relation to concepts and the research process) that provided dialectical insight into the development of the research project (i.e., the contradictions and struggles that were sublated into new understandings, concepts, and directions for inquiry) and thus, insight into the nature of the ideas developed and decisions made. I wrote at the end that the confusions that paralysed my analysis were mostly gone by then. I do not remember what I was intending to mean when I wrote it, but it still seems in retrospect that the statement would have been false.

The writing of the report was almost effortless, as words flowed off the cuff unencumbered by the need to find quotations and citations. I felt, sporadically, as though I was writing in the manner of a more studious, prolific theorist: focused, lucid, in a state of flow. (Even though rationally, I knew this could not be true, as the clean and clear prose in publication is certainly the result of endless rounds of editing and revision). Foley's (2002) comment about his own work resonates with me now as I think about that period: "In retrospect, developing my own narrative style and voice was what finally made me feel more at home in the academic knowledge-production factory" (p. 469). Writing in my own voice, not through the words, conventions, and limitations of others, felt liberating; I

had a brief sense that I could truly be an academic after all. But was what I was doing still social science? I could set aside the presubmission report as a once off for the panel, but my candidature still required the production of a thesis beyond that.

Reprieve at presubmission

I went in to the presubmission seminar certain and resigned to the fact that I would not pass. Beyond the normal healthy fear of failure and lack of complete certainty, it was clear that I could not possibly satisfy departmental expectations. I had conveyed my fears and doubts to Nikolai, my attending supervisor, but he did not seem to share them. "I don't think he knows the real extent of this problem, though; how could he be so sure?", I thought to myself. I had isolated myself at home writing for some time now, so any confidence anyone could have in my abilities seemed completely unjustified. We had a brief chat before the panel arrived, about the concept of *Aufheben*, as something to distract myself from the impending presentation, and also to convey (both to him and myself) a sense that this very crucial milestone was actually something routine and not to be worried about (in much the same way that a patient undergoing surgery will see their procedure as far more significant than the surgeon who performs them daily). Wake up, arrive on campus, have a chat, pass the milestone, run some errands, go home: nothing unusual or significant. Pleasantries were exchanged, introductions were made, and then the moment arrived. I started to talk, and as usual, my mind switched off: the rehearsed words and sentence formed autonomously, and I woke up to myself 20 minutes later having concluded the presentation. I waited outside as the panel deliberated. It seemed to take longer than usual, but this was my first presubmission seminar, so what could I know about what was "usual"? Nikolai came out and assured me that it was fine, that there was nothing to worry about. I laughed nervously, "I really don't think this will go well, I honestly don't think I'll pass".

The presubmission seminar was the only thing I had scheduled that day. It was my one and only priority. I had mentally set aside the next day as well, in case I needed time to be devastated. In the back of my mind, I also had a sense that, despite the odds, I would probably pass. I had come this far on what seemed like an interminable lucky streak, my

status as an imposter remaining as-yet undetected. (Except for that one time, in my previous attempt at a PhD, where I was not so lucky). Or maybe this, *this,* would finally be it. The panel called me in and gave me the news: I had *passed*. But then the less-good news, that I needed to make some changes to stay on track, and possibly apply for an extension to make those changes.

Theoretically, it was unclear what paradigm I was working in: "In what paradigm is your work situated?" "Paradigm? What do you mean?", and I realised how dumb this made me look as soon as I said it: I could almost feel the room sigh. I said something about postmodernism, maybe. It wasn't clear in my head what paradigm I was working in, because I was not consciously working within any particular paradigm (not that I could clearly distinguish the different paradigms then, either), and yet, there were metaphysical assumptions that I needed to make clear. I did not have the words to express that, perhaps, I was working postparadigmatically, as part of a postmodern approach to research. Or perhaps, that my work was shaped by the pursuit of a particular problem irrespective of paradigm, in line with what Geertz (1980) had noted regarding the "blurred genres" period: "social . . . scientists have become free to shape their work in terms of its necessities rather than received ideas as to what they ought or ought not to be doing" (p. 167). Though he had in mind the blurring of boundaries between the humanities and social sciences, the sentiment is applicable to paradigmatic boundaries, too. Denzin's (2012) notion of the researcher as a *bricoleur* also seems fitting: "The product of the interpretive bricoleur's labor is a complex, quiltlike bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage, a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations" (p. 85). The *bricoleur* works eclectically, drawing on diverse theoretical frameworks and systems, perspectives, paradigms, methodologies and methods, and interpretive lenses, to create the "quiltlike bricolage". This "poetic making do" (de Certeau, 1984, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4) with what one has at hand results in an emergent, pragmatic, strategic construction that reflects the specifics of the research situation. These statements all resonated with me when I happened across them in recent research when I sought to understand my expereinces.

The panel also asked about the kind of reflexivity I was referring to in my report. Since I had just then discovered the significance of reflexivity, I was not yet familiar myself with

the discussions. I only saw the word appearing in association with discussions of autoethnographic methodology, and assumed I knew what it meant. Kelly, deVries-Erich, Helmich, Dornan, and King (2017) make a similar observation: "reflexivity has been likened to marriage in that 'everyone knows what it is, a lot of people say they do it, yet behind each closed front door there lies a world of secrets' (BOLAM, GLEESON & MURPHY, 2003, §4)" (para. 1). There were apparently multiple types of reflexivity (see Chapter 5), and perhaps I needed also to consider the work of Bourdieu specifically. "Great", I thought to myself sarcastically, "that is definitely a weighty name I have heard before. It's going to be a lot of confusing extra reading I need to do now".

Perhaps most the most significant moment was when the panel said that I ought to reconsider the need for my empirical study (see Chapter 3), since it was clear from my writing that I was "fighting" the data. I clearly remember the description, as it very aptly captured how I felt about it. Rationally, I considered the data to be a necessary part of the research, a friend. But the cold reality was that, as reflected in my account of a struggle and even reluctance to interpret the language learning data, it was simply not working out. I explained to the panel that I had always believed that a PhD in the social sciences required an empirical study—this was an axiom I had picked up during my MA at my previous university, in the linguistics department. The Chair of the panel gave me a surprised look. "No, of course not. Many PhDs are written without empirical research and address philosophical issues" and referred me to an example of such a thesis, which I quickly noted down. Of course, I had understood that a more philosophical thesis in the *humanities* did not require empirical research, but I had never contemplated the possibility this was what I should have been writing, or even that it would be acceptable in the faculty. I felt a weight off my shoulders, a relief from the tension I had felt between what I seemed eager to do, and what I believed I needed to do. (And not till later, did I start to feel some regret at having wasted time spent collecting data and writing my learning journal, though perhaps it can be used some other way). Though I like to avoid long quotations in writing, the following excerpt about a student in Doloriert and Sambrook's (2009) discussion of autoethnography is a reassuring mirror to my own experience:

> She could happily spend days re-reviewing her already substantial literature review and playing around with her conceptual framework. Perhaps, she felt comforted by a sense of familiarity with these tasks, or she felt that their puzzle had already been solved, but when it came down to analysing the interviews and making sense of her autoethnographic story, that familiar sense of dread ensued. Maybe she was experiencing a crisis of confidence (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). At worst such moments can be painful, debilitating, and sometimes embarrassing (Pinn, 2001). As Higgs and McAllister (2001, p. 33) describe "having begun the qualitative research journey, many novice (and expert) researchers get lost. There are several good reasons for this. One is idealistic commitment to a particular research paradigm."
>
> The thing was, not that she knew it quite yet, Josie was merely paying "lip service" (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 124) to the philosophical underpinnings of her social constructionist study. She had gone through the motions of collecting her data and had a basic understanding of what she was doing. You see, she was a "social construction tourist", visiting from the land of objective, positivism. This stemmed from her undergraduate degree in a Business School that situated the world within a positivist paradigm. She had been conditioned into this paradigm without even knowing it or having a name for it (Higgs and McAllister, 2001). Even now, the business school she was in generally perceived qualitative research (let alone autoethnography) to be "fluffy", "not proper research" and "less academic." (p. 31)

The panel also noticed that SLA issues were no longer central to the research, despite being the original motivation for the study. The report revealed a slow drift away from SLA over time. Indeed, I had expressed an approach to my own language learning that was through the lens of learning and education more generally, rather than linguistics or applied linguistics. I was asked to clarify its centrality: "I guess it's not really a big part of my research any more". This was as much an admission for the panel as it was for myself. My doubts about the relevance of SLA to my research were made public for the first time, and the panel suggested that I shift (that is, reframe) the form and focus of my research. I realise now that I was being held back by a slavish adherence to a particular notion of what constitutes research, and an idealistic commitment to "doing a study about language learning". Both of these caused tensions that were only relieved—sublated—through the assurance of the panel that I could proceed another way. They knew best, and if they were saying it was fine, then it was fine.

The new problem, however, was that I had already published two papers that situated the discussion of *perezhivanie* (and secondarily, the way it supports autoethnographic methodology) within the context of SLA. Since my thesis was by publication (formally, a "thesis including published works"), and these papers needed to be included to at least fulfil the established departmental requirement of four papers, I needed a means to incorporate them into what would now be a methodological thesis no longer situated within SLA and still, potentially, use my data collection and analysis experience as a context for reflection and review. That is, I had to include work that was no longer directly relevant to the new direction of the thesis. This was a difficult task at the time. The narrative style used in the report could work, but it seemed inappropriate for a thesis. A more traditional style was out of the question, as there was no way to both explain then put aside the relevance of SLA. The clustering of papers around *perezhivanie* would also entail a heavy theoretical and literature review section with everything else being much lighter. I allowed myself a few weeks to think, and in the meantime, finished Mok (under review) and submitted it for review.

From analytic to narrative thinking

Writing Mok (under review) and being mentally situated in the context of autoethnography research reinforced the idea that perhaps an experimental or at least narrative presentation could be appropriate for my thesis. After all, many autoethnographers have had their work published with creative forms of representation that bear little resemblance to the archetypal social science report. When it came time to think about the thesis again, I seriously considered the narrative form with which I had experimented for presubmission report. I began to sketch ideas of how I might narrativise my research, to connect the various papers and disciplines into a cohesive whole. It helped that, with the comments from the panel, I now felt I had permission to pursue the kind of humanities-style thesis I had previously secretly wished to do. One member of the panel also commented on my writing abilities, which led me to believe that perhaps it wouldn't be such a bad idea after all.

I thought about my research to date through the model of autoethnography and reflexivity I had developed (see Chapter 5). Each progressive step in research represented a sublation of antecedent contradictions. Mirrored in Vygotsky's genetic law, the dialectical insistence on historical (genetic) analysis provides a rationale for a narrative, rather than analytic, logic (Bencivenga, 2012). The three papers on *perezhivanie* then had a point of difference. Although they all discuss *perezhivanie*, the specific nature of the discussion reflected my particular understanding of and (attitudinal, emotional, etc.) relation to different problems at different times. The discussion also reflected the contexts of writing: Mok (2015) being my first journal article, Mok (2017) being an invited literature review and introduction for a book that necessitated an investigation (if not discussion) of dialectics, and Veresov and Mok (2018) reflecting a new awareness of dialectics and revisiting of SLA issues. A kind of chronology, then, could be used to space out the papers. Since my involvement with autoethnography had now primed me to consider myself as an object of study, the chronology could rightly be a timeline of the development of my ideas. Eureka! This was a way to make my subjectivity—my *perezhivanie*—relevant in the thesis: as embodying the kinds of conflicts, struggles, and social relations that gave rise to different formulations of ideas. These ideas, conversely, as sublations of these contradictions, reflect those very conditions that brought it about. For example, my early understanding of *perezhivanie* reflected earlier concerns within SLA. My later understanding reflected a new focus on dialectics. This was how the thesis could be constructed into a coherent whole.

Though this felt right—or at least, it seemed to be the only viable option—it was not until later, when writing up the various sections of the thesis, that I would find the words to justify such an approach. And so, when I first sought to understand Marcus' (1998) notion of the "messy text", I nodded in agreement as I read:

> To me, the most interesting experiments (sometimes in spite of themselves) confront the problem that ethnography . . . has usually been produced through an analytic imagination that is both comparatively impoverished and far too restrictive, especially under contemporary conditions of postmodernity. For example, once we know (or analytically "fix' by naming) that we are writing about violence, migration, the body, memory, and so forth, we have already circumscribed the space and dimensions of our object of study—we know what we are talking

> about prematurely. But we can also be sure that our object of study will always exceed its analytic circumscription, especially under conditions of postmodernity. (pp. 187–188)

It is in experimentation with messy texts that authors are able to provide new—and I would argue, truly *novel*—cognitive mappings that resist "the kind of academic colonialism whereby the deep assumption permeating the work is that the interests of the ethnographer and those of her subjects are somehow aligned" (p. 188). In the introduction to Geertz' (1980) influential paper on blurred genres, he writes:

> many social scientists have turned away from a laws-and-instances ideal of explanation toward a cases-and-interpretations one, looking less for the sort of thing that connects planets and pendulums and more for the sort that connects chrysanthemums and swords. (p. 165)

Beyond analytic thinking, there is a more narrative style of thinking to connect one concept beyond its "analytic circumscription" to another concept. Was this describing what I was doing in my work in connecting Vygotsky's *perezhivanie* with autoethnography? Finally, I'm reminded of Wittgenstein's (1986) notion of "family resemblances", introduced to me years ago in an introductory philosophy class. The concept highlights a fact of language: that we routinely communicate with concepts and words that often have vague boundaries. The canonical example is the idea of a "game": there seems to be no single element common between all games (sports, ball games, card games, video games, etc.), but rather a web of similarities and differences. Though in ordinary speech we are able to nonetheless use the word "game" meaningfully, the lack of a common essence makes analytic abstraction—the derivation an essential meaning—impossible. Though these above three ideas—from Marcus, Geertz, and Wittgenstein—come from different domains, the opposition to analytic thinking that they embody provided justification for the kind of narrative-logic approach to the thesis I was now envisioning. (Not to forget, of course, all of the arguments for narrative structures more generally from the evocative autoethnographers; see Chapter 3).

Following a lead from Ronai (1995), I found Merton's (1968) argument for what I described in Chapter 5 as *reflexivity as accountability*, to be comforting:

> The books on method present ideal patterns: how scientists ought to think, feel and act, but these tidy normative patterns, as everyone who has engaged in inquiry knows, do not

> reproduce the typically untidy, opportunistic adaptations that scientists make in the course of their inquiries. Typically, the scientific paper or monograph presents an immaculate appearance which reproduces little or nothing of the intuitive leaps, false starts, mistakes, loose ends, and happy accidents that actually cluttered up the inquiry. The public record of science therefore fails to provide many of the source materials needed to reconstruct the actual course of scientific developments.
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> . . .
>
> Even before the evolutionary invention of the scientific paper, three centuries ago, it was known that the typically impersonal, bland and conventionalized idiom of science could communicate the barebone essentials of new scientific contributions but could not reproduce the actual course of inquiry. (p. 4)

Ronai (1995) adds:

> By attempting to organize articles neatly into literature reviews, methods, findings, conclusions, and so forth, all thinking is forced into a mold yielding an account of the research process that ignores, indeed counts as irrelevant, issues such as who the researcher is and what his or her motives are for researching the topic of interest. (p. 421)

In the postmodern era, it is no longer appropriate to conceal the authored nature of research to claim scientific validity. There is no undistorted view of reality, only different accounts of it, and it behoves us as researchers to make our course of inquiry and reasoning—however irrational, partial, or mistaken it may be—visible to engender the empathy needed for a reader to see the world through our distorting lenses, effect dialogical engagement and, perhaps also, personal change. This is, coincidentally, the rationale for evocation in autoethnography: communication, rather than transferring facts. Campbell's (2017) responses to critics of autoethnography, for example, were framed as being motivated by a desire to clarify her own personal concerns (though this introspection was in part prompted by those critics):

> the tensions I have felt, and the way in which I have come to terms with the accusations I have made against myself are a fundamental part of this story. I have had many an internal conversation, going backwards and forwards, and struggling to reconcile my concerns. (para. 35)

Finally, there are also two examples from Vygotsky that can be rallied in support of a dialectical narrative approach to knowledge production. The first is his distinction between everyday and scientific concepts (Vygotsky, 1987, Chapter 6). In the discussion of conceptual development in childhood, Vygotsky distinguishes between concepts that emerge spontaneously and unsystematically from a child's everyday experience, and the more systematic and abstracted concepts found primarily in education. The strength of one type of concept is the other's weakness. Everyday concepts are saturated with empirical content, but a child is unable to abstract the concept from experience, and thus unable to use the idea in a voluntary manner (at least, not correctly). Scientific (secondary, nonspontaneous) concepts, on the other hand, are abstractions that participate in networks of cultural knowledge, and thus a child is able to consciously operate with and identify logical relationships between scientific concepts. However, being divorced from everyday experience, the child may not be able to use the concept spontaneously or in application to concrete situations. These two types of concepts are two poles of the same dialectical process of conceptual development: everyday experience becomes organised in scientific concepts, and scientific concepts gain empirical richness through everyday experience. One develops towards abstraction, the other towards specification. Here we see, perhaps, an analogy with the distinction between art (which proceeds upwards from the specific) and science (which proceeds downwards from abstraction). Indeed, the very use of concrete examples to explain theoretical concepts in scientific writing reflects this same idea. Conversely, in this present chapter so far, I have been discussing the ways in which I proceeded from a particularly salient experience and, motivated by experienced contradictions/struggles (e.g., between ability and need), subsequently sought out the concepts to describe that experience. In doing so, I opened the door to participating in the theoretical domains in which those new concepts are circumscribed. For example, from the inability to separate the researcher-as-subject and researcher-as-researcher during data collection (Chapter 3) led to the discovery of the significance of "reflexivity" for autoethnography generally, and participation in related methodological discussions (Chapter 5). So too, can the difference be found in the differing (indeed, opposing) alignments of evocative (which seeks to convince through verisimilitude and resonance with experience) and analytic writing (which seeks to convince through abstraction). Indeed, this is reflected in their corresponding

conceptualisations of "generalisation": traditionally referring to the transferral of findings to larger populations, in evocative autoethnography it refers to the relating of observations to the reader as "they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 283). Viewed through this distinction, narrative writing is simply the bottom-up counterpart to top-down analytic writing: contradictory positions within, and moments in the historical development of, autoethnography considered as a dialectical whole.

The second example from Vygotsky that supports a dialectical narrative approach to knowledge production is simply that he, as Leont'ev (1997) notes, had an "inclination to discern two polar, struggling sides in a phenomenon when he analyzed it and to regard this struggle as the moving force of development" (p. 19). In Mok (under review), I mention a number of examples of this worldview reflected in Vygotsky's work (e.g., the ZPD, CHT as sublating the problem of two psychologies, word-meaning, praxis, etc.). It is also reflected in Ben-Ari and Enosh's (2010) way of viewing knowledge construction, and my own way of viewing the process of autoethnography, doing research more broadly, and the development of concepts and ideas. This has been the premise of the structure of the thesis: that the development of the various ideas in this thesis proceeds through the resolution of the struggle between oppositions. It will suffice now, then, to provide a summary of these struggles as a matter of closure, before finally concluding the thesis.

Charting four years of progress over six episodes

The study began with a motivating intuition and problem to be resolved: *perezhivanie* and autoethnography seem to relate to lived experience, but what is the nature of their relation? The answer, in the end, is that they can be connected by conceptualising the reflexive practices of autoethnography as making visible the researcher's *perezhivanie*. In doing so, the audience for the research is better able to understand, interpret, and evaluate the research process, along with the character of decisions, concepts, and ideas that are developed in much the same way that the historical context of an idea provides insight into the nature and significance of the idea. Though this answer is somewhat removed from the question that prompted inquiry, it is nonetheless connected

historically. Each chapter of this thesis plots different episodes of development—marked by a dialectical struggle and its subsequent sublation in a new concept or idea—that together draw this historical narrative.

Chapters 1 and 2: Since my previous academic training is in SLA research, and there was a need to ground the discussion in some concrete theoretical problem to give some reason for doing the study, I argued that the combination of *perezhivanie* and autoethnography could help resolve some of the methodological and epistemological questions within SLA (e.g., in Firth & Wagner, 2007). Specifically, regarding the need for more emic and holistic methodology, and to expand the database of SLA to include learners outside of the classroom. In my case, this meant the casual online language learner for whom language learning is a low-stakes hobby or distraction (unlike those who are formally assessed in classrooms). Despite eventually realising that I was not very committed to SLA research, I discursively constructed the gap anyway. Petersen (2015) similarly reflects on her own work:

> Usually [researchers and scholars] make a life for themselves via "the gap", which is often portrayed as having an independent existence, rather than being a result of some very hard and determined labour. Not all these gaps sound as if they need plugging, but clever writers know how to produce that sense. (p. 153)

Consequently, *Language and Sociocultural Theory* seemed an appropriate journal for my first publication. Being new to deeper readings of Vygotsky, the resulting publication, Mok (2015), was primarily an exegesis of Vygotsky's (1994) "The problem of the environment", and little beyond that text. In researching the article, however, I found that Vygotsky's development of CHT was used to resolve the seemingly incommensurable materialist and idealist approaches to psychology. My explication of *perezhivanie* occured in the context of sociocultural SLA, as a response to the domain-specific issues mentioned earlier—that is, my characterisation of *perezhivanie* reflects the "struggle" and need to publish a particular kind of article to satisfy a particular academic need, and based on my relatively rudimentary understanding of the concept.

Chapter 3: Since autoethnography is an extension of ethnography, and typically used for anthropological and sociological research, I approached it as an outsider, as a tourist. My

data collection process was ostensibly intended to produce some layered narrative (as per my Master's thesis), and sought to be evocative. In reality, I could not shake off the analytic view of research into which I had been socialised. This view of narrative research is what Polkinghorne (1995) calls *paradigmatic* narrative inquiry, in which narrative data are gathered as material for traditional analyses (i.e., finding commonalities, generalising), in opposition to *narrative analysis* proper, in which data are organised into a coherent, temporally unfolding account to concretely explain actions and behaviour. Data collection was delayed repeatedly, but eventually finished. Prompted by the conflicting feeling that the learning journal could be more than just a dry record of my activity, I investigated other autoethnographies to gain a better sense of the kind of writing and expression that autoethnography enables and encourages. Subsequently, I gained the confidence to write more candidly and honestly. In doing so, a number of deeper issues were made visible: the compartmentalisation of my personal and academic lives, the authenticity of the study, and the researcher–subject relation. In short, these issues related to a consideration of my roles as researcher and as research-subject. I experienced these issues as a nebulous cloud or fog hanging over me, preventing me from moving forward with analysis. At the time, I needed but lacked the words and ideas to explain this frustration.

Chapter 4: Invited to write what I understood to be an important book chapter (Mok, 2017), I sought to convey an understanding of *perezhivanie* befitting the significance of the chapter. Being unsure about the prism and reflection metaphor, and drawing on knowledge gained since I began (Chaiklin's comments regarding dialectics, and Michell's revelations about Vygotsky past), I constructed a chapter that, in early drafts, strongly emphasised dialectics and reflection theory as central to understanding *perezhivanie*. Moving beyond "The problem of the environment" (Vygotsky, 1994), I examined the connections that other theorists have made to the concept of *perezhivanie*. A later invitation to contribute to a handbook chapter, Veresov & Mok (2018), reflects my new focus on dialectics, as I discuss its absence within sociocultural SLA.

Chapter 5: In writing a commentary for a special issue on *perezhivanie* (Mok, 2016), I discovered Polkinghorne's (2007) discussion of issues in narrative analysis. This subsequently directed my attention to the possibility of applying *perezhivanie* to understand the researcher. This reflects the inward gaze that autoethnography

necessitates, and subsequently connected to my earlier dilemma regarding the researcher/subject self during data collection (Chapter 3). Feeling the pressure of presenting at ISCAR, I stitched together a rudimentary dialectical understanding of research, which considered each aspect of research as developing through resolving and abstracting contradictions (i.e., sublating them). The writing of the final paper, Mok (under review), prompted a more thorough search of autoethnographic research, and given the lingering unresolved issue of distinguishing the researcher/subject self, the concept of reflexivity became salient. This concept seemed to resolve the confusion experienced, by providing the terminology to discuss it at a theoretical level. A new understanding of the connection between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography thus emerged: autoethnography encourages reflexivity, reflexivity can be understood as revealing one's *perezhivanie*, and this *perezhivanie* can be understood as manifestations of the dialectical contradictions that are the moving force for the ongoing processes of research.

Chapter 6: The need to produce a written report for the presubmission milestone, and the lack of analysis for what I understood to be a thesis that required empirical research, was manifest in a last-ditch attempt to save the project. The narrative-style presubmission report subsequently produced provided a blueprint for a style of presentation I did not believe could be acceptable. However, the reassurance by the panel that a humanities-style thesis could be appropriate for my work resolved this contradiction. Now feeling a sense that a narratively organised thesis could be possible but unsure of how to justify such an approach, new areas of research (regarding reflexivity, postmodernism, narrative inquiry) became salient and soon provided assurance that it was indeed a valid strategy. What I realised was a dialectical contradiction between my inclination towards evocative autoethnography and my actual analytical-autoethnographic practices came to be resolved through a consideration of a *narrative* style of presentation that could be one way to make reflexivity visible in a manner more aligned with the aims of evocative autoethnography.

And here we are: a thesis that develops a roundabout connection between autoethnography and *perezhivanie*, then uses its own structure to demonstrate an application of the model developed.

The purpose of making my subjectivity and experiences—my *perezhivanie*—clear is not for benign introspection or to add colour to the thesis, but is instead a form of reflexivity. This reflexivity has value in supporting the reader in better imagining and tracing the winding course of inquiry to understand the way in which this research project, as an example of research more generally, develops dialectically. In most cases, this appeared as a struggle between a need (e.g., social, academic, professional) and inability (e.g., lack of knowledge or concept)—captured in *perezhivanie*, and resolved through new concepts, ideas, and so on, that sublated the contradiction and struggle. The part of *perezhivanie* that corresponds to my personal characteristics (knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, needs, desires, concerns, etc.) does not refer to particular characteristics of my being as static omnirelevant variables, but instead to those characteristics only to the degree that they were relevant. In some cases, a lack of knowledge is an issue; in others, it may be a desire to impress.

Much like Vygotsky's inclination to identify the struggling sides within phenomena, the theoretical discussions in this thesis also use this approach—identifying not "either–or" analytic dualisms, but "both–and" dialectic unities. CHT as emerging from two psychologies; CHT as a manifestation of general laws of dialectics for the specific issues of psychology; differing laws of lower/higher mental functions; the social/individual in the genetic law; the genetic law as having a monist materialist ontology *and* epistemological dualism; Vygotsky's indirect method as a solution to experimental/observational psychology; in Veresov/Blunden's early disagreement regarding *kategoria*, a third option draws on both positions and resolves a misunderstanding; analytical/dialectical logic; distinctions between SCT/CHT as highlighting historical/contextual/practical differences in interpreting and applying theory; and evocative/analytic autoethnography highlights disagreements core to autoethnography. These are just some of the main examples within this thesis.

Answering the research questions

This thesis explores the potential for deeper connections between *perezhivanie* and autoethnography. Inspired by Veresov and Chaiklin's approach to conceptual clarification,

my own research efforts into understanding *perezhivanie* similarly examined the historical antecedents and theoretical entanglements of the concept that would further illuminate its meaning and theoretical purpose. This was opposed to merely taking ostensible definitions of the term at face value.

The empirical study that was initially developed sought to use autoethnographic data to answer questions regarding the ways in which I mediated my language learning, how this changes over time, and how these mediations change my experience of the language and language learning process. However, the issues in doing autoethnographic work led to a consideration of the history and purposes of autoethnography—much like my approach to the *perezhivanie* concept. It was the realisation that I had previously taken autoethnography at face value—as merely a method for collecting data about the self to be subjected to traditional analysis—that led me on a path to engage more fully with the deeper postmodern and reflexive commitments of the methodology that led to its emergence in the first place, to revise my research focus, and reformulate my research questions.

Vygotsky's CHT, built on a foundation of dialectical logic, sought to understand the essence of mental phenomena not by describing them as they are, but in explaining how they emerge and develop. It is this same kind of historical, genetic approach that has also been fruitful for elaborating the concept of ZPD (as in Veresov and Chaiklin's work) and *perezhivanie* (in this thesis, and also Veresov's work). I have also used this approach to better understand what autoethnography is, how to use it, and why. That is, in the same way that the history of the development of a higher mental function reveals its essence, so too does the history of the development of a concept (e.g., *perezhivanie*), theory (e.g., CHT, SCT), or methodology (e.g., autoethnography), reveal their essence.

Consequently, I have argued that what reflexive research practices make visible for the audience is the historical context of research that, through a dialectical lens, allows for a better understanding of the way in which a research project has developed, an understanding that is more faithful to the actual experiences of the researcher. Specifically, reflexive practices make visible a researcher's *perezhivanie*—their concrete relationship to the research. The use of a narrative style of presentation (as opposed to a

more abstracted analytical style) allows for a coherent account of how actions, experiences, events, happenings, motivations, and so on, have contributed not only to the undertaking of research, but to the very character of the ideas, concepts, theories, decisions, and so on, that are developed. To put it briefly: CHT—specifically the concept of *perezhivanie* and the logic of dialectics—can be used to understand development not only of mental functions, but also of research.

To return, then, to the research questions posed at the beginning:

1. In what ways can autoethnographic methodology be used to support investigation of *perezhivanie*?
2. What is the explanatory role of the *perezhivanie* concept for autoethnographic data?

First, autoethnography, as an approach to research, can support an explication of the researcher's *perezhivanie* in the use of reflexive research practices and narrative writing styles. Through ongoing reflection on their experience of the research undertaking, the researcher can better understand, and thus explain, the ways in which their experiences—their *perezhivanie*—have shaped their research, and informed their conceptualisations, dialectically. The character of an idea, insight, or decision is explained by its concrete history. The use of a narrative writing style connects specific *perezhivanie* to its particular influence on some part of the research at a particular point in time, rather than assuming the influence of some abstractly considered characteristic of the researcher. Furthermore, a narrative style of writing broadens the scope of characteristics that can be included in discussion beyond one's general philosophical commitments, ideology, theoretical orientations, and so on, to also include (only to the extent that they play a decisive role) affect, attitude, incomplete and partial understandings, values, chance occurrences, personality, and so forth. Beyond the study of research practices in this thesis, the reaffirmation of the importance of ongoing reflexivity also applies to autoethnographic research in particular. It is through reflexivity and its expression in narrative that a sense of verisimilitude can be achieved, not only of the experienced phenomenon that is the object of study, but also of the logic of subsequent theorising. Both the phenomenon and

the theorisation become grounded in concrete particulars of the experience as it occurs over time, rather than being abstracted from the richness of continually changing reality.

Secondly, and conversely, the concept of *perezhivanie* explains the data of autoethnography—the introspections, reflections, and meaning-making of the researcher-self—as reflecting the particular ways in which the individual relates to their environment. It is in these concrete relations that dialectical contradictions are manifest and experienced. These contradictions—oppositions, struggles, and so on—are the moving force of development, and are sublated at higher levels of abstraction. Consequently, it is also possible to understand the disappearance of a previously experienced dialectical contradiction as indicative of some kind of development having taken place. In the case of this thesis, development was typically manifest as a new insight or idea that resolved a struggle and reflected something of the content of that conflict. This development, at the same time, opened the door to participation in new discourses and disciplines. For example, an uneasy discomfort with the authenticity of my approach to autoethnography during the empirical study led to further reading into the methodology. It was in this investigation that the issue of reflexivity became salient (when it was previously overlooked) and eventually a means to resolve, restructure, or at least think through the struggle. As a consequence, I entered the domain of methodological discussions regarding reflexivity, and its role within autoethnography and research more generally. In line with Vygotsky's CHT and conceptualisation of *perezhivanie*, it is through development that new relationships between the individual and environment emerge, and subsequently, new potentials for the kinds of dialectical contradiction that can lead to further development.

Conclusion

Having summarised the theoretical contribution of this research project, I conclude this chapter and thesis much like Vygotsky did at the end of "Thinking and speech" (1987): that is, at the threshold of new problems. The conceptualisation of *perezhivanie* and its relation—through dialectics, reflexivity, and narrative writing—to autoethnographic research, brings us to the broader paradigmatic and epistemological discussions of

research practices, the purposes of research, ways of knowing, and forms of writing. In reflexively using CHT to understand the (historical) process of research itself, a sense of the ubiquity of CHT and its underlying dialectical logic is achieved, leading to a consideration of the ways in which the theoretical tools that we, as researchers, use to understand phenomena are likewise applicable to our own research practices. In connecting the dialectical logic of CHT with the narrative knowing of autoethnography, interdisciplinary lines of communication are opened up. On a personal note, the ways of knowing and writing that are permitted and encouraged by autoethnography, and used in the presentation of this thesis, have been therapeutic and transformative. Where my *perezhivanie* of this research was once characterised by the kind of doubt and frustration typical of many on their journey towards a PhD, I now have a cautious optimism, having found a voice and approach to research that both better resonates with my underlying sensibilities and allows a way to gain purchase on the inevitable uncertainties that arise in research endeavours.

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