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A Study on Perezhivanie in Applied Linguistics and Education

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Abstract: Perezhivanie, which is one of the main components of the sociocultural framework by Vygotsky, has been long ignored in the academic community all over the world. This marginalization is mainly due to problems with early translations and the continued prevalence of a cognition-based research paradigm. However, this idea is still important when it comes to comprehending how the psychological development of an individual can be influenced by the sociocultural environment. It is essentially not a passive interpretation of experience as it focuses on the process that individuals engage in constructing meaning through the interaction of cognitive skills, emotional conditions, and cultural backgrounds. We have systematically reviewed the existing literature and discussed its conceptual basis, practical implications in applied linguistics and educational contexts, methodological issues, and future prospects in this paper. There are indications that perezhivanie fills the gaps of conventional research that does not pay much attention to the subjective experiences of learners, but its practical applicability is limited by the absence of clarity about its conceptual parameters and the lack of cross-cultural studies. Therefore, intercultural exploration and methodological innovation should be emphasized in further research to make the full potential of this concept in the area of humanities education and language teaching possible.

Keywords: Perezhivanie, Vygotsky's Cultural-Historical Theory, Applied Linguistics, Education, Second Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

The sociocultural theory developed by Lev Vygotsky has been an invaluable theoretical basis of academic studies in the areas of education and applied linguistics, and it has significantly impacted on the way researchers approach the investigation of human learning processes and attempt to enhance educational practice[1]. This theoretical framework since its official introduction into the international academic community in the mid-20 th century has created many academic discussions, theoretical evolutions and empirical researches. The main emphasis made by researchers all over the world has been on the existing fundamental ideas like the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), mediation, and internalization[2]. These theories have found extensive use in a variety of disciplines of study including primary school education as well as adult language acquisition and have provided significant theoretical developments and practical experiences that have informed modern approaches to teaching.

By contrast, the other major concept in the theoretical framework of Vygotsky that is closely connected with his views on development and learning, perezhivanie, has been long neglected in scholarly literature, being scarcely discussed[3]. This ignorance is due to two interdependent main causes. First, the early translations of the works by Vygotsky, especially Russian-to-English translations, did not adequately reflect the deep meaning and general spirit of the word perezhivanie, which led to numerous misinterpretations and overly simplified explanations[4]. Second, since

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the cognitive-centered research tradition has always been dominant in psychology and education, scholars have failed to give enough attention to the holistic character of perezhivanie that easily combines cognition, emotion, and social context[5]. Over the past few years, as more and more of the entire body of work by Vygotsky (including manuscripts previously untranslated) becomes available and the quality of translations improves further, an ever-growing number of researchers are starting to reconsider the theoretical worth and practical relevance of the concept of perezhivanie[1]. The fact has contributed to the rectification of the initial misconception that made perezhivanie a mere emotional experience and helped to emphasize its holistic nature, where cognition, emotion, and social context are combined [6].

Nowadays, perezhivanie is slowly penetrating different research domains such as second language acquisition, first language maintenance, early childhood education, teacher professional development, etc. The number of empirical studies showing its positive impacts on educational outcomes and teaching approaches is increasing[7]. Nevertheless, there is still no systematic review and comprehensive analysis of its theoretical significance, historical evolution and practical utilisation in different cultural and educational settings. This absence of knowledge represents a huge obstacle to wider recognition and further elaboration of perezhivanie in the international scientific community. In order to overcome this difficulty, this study attempts to gather and analyse representative literature from applied linguistics and education over the last 20 years to elucidate the genesis and evolution of perezhivanie, summarise its practical application and results, and suggest specific and practicable suggestions for future research to close current theoretical and empirical gaps.

2. Theoretical Origin and Concept Development

The idea of perezhivanie was first introduced by Vygotsky in the 1920s and 1930s as one of the most important analytical tools to study the intrinsic connection between the social environment and psychological maturation of an individual[2]. He never stopped underlining that perezhivanie is not a passive reception of external stimuli or simple accumulation of experience but is an active and dynamic psychological process of building and interpreting subjective meaning[2]. In this way, people incorporate their intellectual skills, emotional conditions, life experiences, and personal values, and create a world perception through attributing distinctive subjective significance to events happening in particular cultural and social settings. This meaning-making is not only a response to external events, it also acts as one of the main triggers of the psychological development of an individual and, with time, directly affects his/her further behavior, attitudes, and intellectual development[3].

The concept of perezhivanie was further elaborated and refined by Veresov, one of the most prominent scholars in the field of cultural-historical theory and one of the leading interpreters of Vygotsky in the early 21 st century. In order to reflect the two-sided character of this notion, he divided it into two dimensions that are interrelated and complementary to each other[5]. The former dimension is the empirical dimension which alludes to psychological phenomena that can be seen and described in day-to-day life. These kinds of phenomena may be documented and analyzed based on the actual behaviors of an individual, expressions of emotions, verbal descriptions, and even nonverbal cues. The second dimension is the theoretical dimension which acts as a scientific analytical tool that describes the internal processes by which the experience of an individual leads to the development of psychology and how social contexts mediate these changes. This duality makes perezhivanie both technical and explanatory in nature and provides a strong basis upon which it can be applied to empirical studies in various fields of study[5]. Traditionally, due to the fact that the works of Vygotsky were published in a fragmentary form, such key ideas (such as perezhivanie) were not translated properly, and research focused on cognition long remained the main trend in the spheres of psychology and education, many scholars have ended up over-simplifying and misinterpreting perezhivanie[4]. Others even do not care to consider the fact that cognition, emotions, and social context are inherently interconnected, and to simplify it down to an emotional experience, has greatly undermined its explanatory power and narrowed its scope[6]. Over the past few years, as interdisciplinary studies between psychology, pedagogy, and linguistics become more active, researchers have once again taken an interest in the holistic character of perezhivanie and have realized that it is a

crucial link between the individual and society, as well as one of the major elements in the integration of emotional experience and cognitive development[8]. This new insight has provided the foundation of interdisciplinary work in applied linguistics and education thus creating new opportunities in research and practice.

To emphasize the essential meaning of the term perezhivanie and its crucial difference from the notion of experience (used in a vague way in scientific debates and in everyday speech), I present in Table 1 a comparison between them considering three main dimensions—their nature, their contents, and their contextuality. Such a comparison helps readers to better understand the specific value of perezhivanie, to avoid the confusion of equating it with ordinary experience, and to appreciate its theoretical and practical importance for understanding human development and learning[5].

Table 1 The Differences between Perezhivanie and Traditional "Experience"

Dimensions	Perezhivanie	Traditional "Experience"
Nature	A dynamic, subjective operation involving meaning construction with agency	Passive reception of external inputs lacking subjective meaning formation
Components	An all-encompassing synthesis of cognition, emotion, and social context	A solitary cognitive or emotional occurrence lacking holistic synthesis
Contextual Relevance	Intimately connected to particular cultural and social environments, exhibiting strong contextuality	Frequently decontextualized and independent of specific situations, displaying weak contextuality

3. Applications in Applied Linguistics

Perezhivanie has successfully addressed one of the key gaps in the conventional second language acquisition research. Although past research has focused on objective cognitive measures like vocabulary size, grammatical accuracy, reading speed, and test scores, very little consideration has been given to subjective experience of learners, emotional needs, or individual differences[8]. This undue focus on cognitive signs has restricted the breadth of the studies on second language acquisition and has obstructed attempts to clarify why considerable discrepancies in learning achievement, motivation, and language proficiency may exist among students who are objectively equal (when teachers, textbooks, and time spent studying are equal).

This problem is well explained by relevant empirical case studies. Namely, when learners are put in the same objective learning environment, their individual "perezhivanie" (influenced by personal background, cultural identity and past experience) can result in a substantial difference in linguistic identity or attitudes to learning[9]. As an illustration, two students of similar academic achievement and educational backgrounds at a middle school in one of the regional areas of Korea exhibited significant variations in their English learning patterns within a year[9]. The other student was constantly given positive feedback and encouragement by the teacher concerning his participation in the class, readiness to ask questions, and timely delivery of homework. Consequently, the pupil slowly gained confidence in mastering the English language, developed a proactive and positive language learning identity and voluntarily engaged in different oral communication exercises including English speech contests, group discussions, and language clubs as extracurricular activities. Conversely, another student, who was often scolded by teachers due to pronunciation errors and errors in learning, but had almost no constructive comments, slowly got inferiority complex and fear of speaking English publicly. This created a negative language learning identity and the student started to avoid oral activities deliberately. This also impeded his development in the study of English and lowered his general motivation. It is evident that this representative example shows that perezhivanie has great explanatory potential on the differences between individuals in language acquisition. It does not merely present cognitive aspects but introduces a new angle to the complexity of second language acquisition[9]. Figure 1 illustrates the development of major indicators of the process of learning English among two Korean students during one year, based on the empirical case reported by Kim and Park[9], and gives a clear picture of how various kinds of perezhivanie affect the outcomes of learning a foreign language.

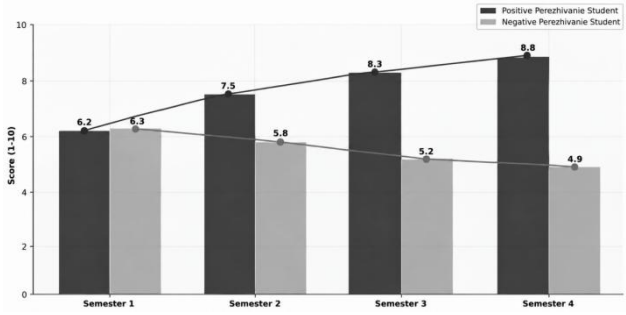

Figure 1 Changes in Key English Learning Indicators of Two South Korean Students

Re-drawn based on the empirical case reported by Kim and Park (2021)[9].

Moreover, perezhivanie is crucial for the maintenance and promotion of native languages, which are frequently endangered in multicultural societies[10]. A study of Chinese native speakers residing in the US found that those who frequently take part in family reunions, traditional celebrations (especially the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival) and other culturally and emotionally intense activities develop warm and significant perezhivanie through such activities[10]. These positive emotions not only reinforced their cultural identity and feelings of belonging to their roots, but also greatly motivated them to learn and actively use their native language in everyday life, resulting in better language maintenance outcomes than emotionless, routine language practice or textbook learning. In TESOL teacher education, the notion of perezhivanie leads trainers to focus more on specific classroom experiences, including changes in their own feelings during lessons, interactions with students from different backgrounds, and feedback from students and colleagues[11]. Such reflection based on perezhivanie enables teachers to transcend the mechanical acquisition of skills and inflexible, standardised teaching approaches, develop a steady and positive professional identity, and bring more humaneness into language teaching, thus enhancing the overall quality of language teaching and creating a more inclusive learning environment[11].

4. Applications in Education

In early childhood education, the notion of perezhivanie is used to interpret the affective and imaginative significance of children's play activities—an aspect often neglected in the traditional standards-based educational paradigm that focuses on developing academic knowledge and skills (e.g., early literacy and numeracy)[6]. The notion of collective perezhivanie, developed by scholars such as Fleer and Veresov from the individual perezhivanie, extends and enriches the theoretical construct of perezhivanie[12]. It is argued that shared emotions and processes of meaning making in children's collective play—such as cooperative games, role-play and creative activities enhance children's social and emotional development, imaginative thinking and sense of community, and equip them with skills of cooperation, communication and empathy from an early age[12]. For instance, in some Australian preschools adopting a play-based educational approach, teachers consciously apply the notion of perezhivanie in designing experiential learning activities centred on nature and discovery. Children can be engaged in the whole process of growing small plants like sunflowers or tomatoes planting, watering, fertilising and observing their growth[13]. children's curiosity about the germination of the seeds, their anticipation of seeing the sprouts appear, their excitement when the first shoots emerge from the ground, their feelings of achievement as they observe the plants growing and bearing fruit—all these are crucial components of their perezhivanie. Such experiences facilitate children's understanding of basic principles of plant growth and acquisition of rudimentary knowledge about nature, and nurture a sense of responsibility and patience, as well as a positive and caring attitude towards nature and all living creatures.

Drawing on the research reported by Fleer[13], Figure 2 graphically demonstrates the correlation between the intensity of the process of "perezhivanie" in children during the various phases of planting activity and the growth of their skills, which in turn intuitively depicts how stimulating the process of "perezhivanie" in early childhood education is.

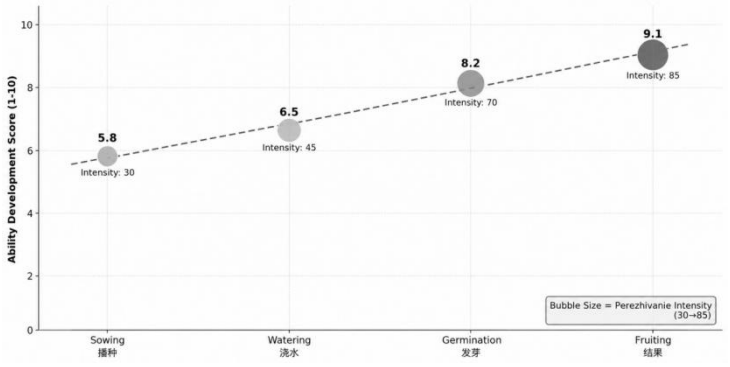

Figure 2 Correlation Between Children's Perezhivanie Intensity and Ability Development in Planting Activities Re-drawn based on Fleer (2016)[13].

In the early childhood science education, perezhivanie provides new methods and practices of instruction design that is in line with developmental peculiarities of young children[14]. The teachers can create more interesting and interactive experiential science activities by paying attention to emotional reactions of children towards natural phenomena like wonder at rainbows, questions about why the moon changes its shape, curiosity about insects, and awe of stars, thus, successfully increasing the interest of children in science learning and their capacity to learn independently[14]. Simultaneously, scholars warn that when using the concept of perezhivanie in early childhood education, it is important to find a suitable balance between the emotional experience and transfer of knowledge[6]. Underestimating the process of knowledge transfer or skill development and overrating emotional experiences may lead to the confusion of education and psychological counseling, which weakens the scientific rigor and validity of early childhood education.

In addition, professional development and maturation of educators are strongly associated with work experiences that gradually influence their professional identity and teaching practices[11]. The fulfillment of assisting students to overcome the challenges in their learning, the confusion and frustration experienced when dealing with the educational issues that persist (e.g., helping children with special needs), and the feeling of achievement upon successfully overcoming the educational problems (e.g., enhancing classroom management) all significantly affect the professional beliefs, educational practice, and career choices of teachers. Thus, teacher preparation programs should completely acknowledge these real-life work experiences and emotional requirements of teachers and direct them to think about and incorporate their work-related experience to promote long-term professional growth and development, which will eventually enhance the quality of early childhood education[11].

5. Methodological Challenges

perezhivanie is a dynamic and holistic, context-sensitive mental process with a high level of subjectivity and contextual dependency, which makes it different compared to other more objective and quantifiable psychological concepts[5]. It is hard to measure and quantify perezhivanie through simple quantitative research tools like questionnaires, tests, and surveys that are appropriate in studying objective, observable, and stable variables because of these inherent characteristics[7]. Consequently, most of the recent studies on perezhivanie have been based on qualitative research approaches- including extensive case studies, narrative research, ethnography, and semi-structured interviews- to explore the internal processes, expressions, and contextual determinants of perezhivanie[7]. Nevertheless, since there are no standardized criteria or assessment frameworks of qualitative research, the reliability of results depends on the researcher and it becomes challenging to reproduce the study or compare the results in various settings. As an illustration, when researching perezhivanie, data gathering and analysis methods can differ according to the researcher (including variations in coding procedures used to analyze narrative information), which complicates the comparison of studies or integration of theories. This blocks further progress and the knowledge building in the sphere of perezhivanie research.

The issue of mistranslation of the term perezhivanie has been a major problem in international academic exchange, and it has become a barrier to cross-cultural cooperation and knowledge transfer[4]. It is hard to find one English word that can be used to convey all the shades of meaning of the Russian word perezhivanie because of its rich, multilayered sense including cognition, emotion, context, and meaning formation [4]. Consequently, researchers have resorted to various translations (e.g., lived experience, subjective experience or even the very Russian word itself), and some scholars have even reduced it to an emotional experience without considering the fact that cognition, emotion and social situation are inseparably interrelated. This does not only cause confusion in terms of concepts in scholarly discourse but also goes far away against what Vygotsky originally intended his theory to represent, which was the holistic nature of perezhivanie[2]. Moreover, since there are no standardized and systematic research techniques that were developed specifically to study the concept of perezhivanie, it is challenging to develop a comprehensive and consistent research framework on this concept; therefore, the generalization and detailed elaboration of this concept in different areas are further constrained[7]. To overcome these methodological issues, three areas should be considered by future studies: enhance the standardization of conceptual definitions to remove ambiguity; innovate research methods that integrate qualitative and quantitative research; and increase cross-cultural comparative research to improve the generalizability of research results.

6. Future Directions and Conclusion

Given the present state of research on perezhivanie and the difficulties that exist, future research should concentrate first of all on the following three areas in order to facilitate development in this area and realize its theoretical and practical potential to the full.

At first, the conceptual scope and the main meaning of perezhivanie are to be outlined on the basis of the systematic review of the literature, a thorough theoretical analysis, and consensus building of the experts[7]. Having a single, standard conceptual definition will provide a nice theoretical base to future empirical studies and academic discourse and will help avoid the misunderstandings and confusion of having imprecise concept definitions that have plagued this scientific discipline in the past. Second, the cross-cultural comparative research should be broadened and reinforced[3]. It is through that research participants will be drawn into other cultural groups (Eastern and Western societies, urban and rural settings) that researchers will get a chance to examine the variations and similarities in perezhivanie among different cultural groups, thus shedding more light on its theoretical importance and extending its practical use to a wide range of educational and linguistic contexts. It will also assist in bridging the existing gap in intercultural research and adding even more weight to the global applicability of perezhivanie. Third, research methodologies have to be innovated in order to surmount the drawbacks of one methodological approach[7]. To make perezhivanie research more practical and standard, researchers need to actively seek ways of facilitating integration of qualitative and quantitative researches (such as mixed methods research) and develop scientific and practical, perezhivanie-research oriented research tools (such as standardized observation forms and validated measures) as these will make Perezhivanie research more practical and better standardized. This will assist in countering the shortcomings of single research methodology, increase scientific rigor, persuasiveness of research outcomes, as well as reproducibility and accumulation of research findings. Table 2 summarizes the major research challenges at present with respective solutions in future indicating a clear guideline on how a researcher may engage future by carrying out a study on perezhivanie.

Table 2 The Main Current Research Challenges and Corresponding Future Solutions

Current Research Challenges	Corresponding Future Solutions
Indistinct conceptual boundaries of perezhivanie	Elucidate conceptual meaning through systematic literature reviews and theoretical analyses
Challenging operationalization and	Innovate research methodologies and integrate qualitative and

inconsistent research standards	quantitative techniques to improve operability
Inadequate cross-cultural investigation	Enhance cross-cultural comparative studies within diverse contexts to enrich theoretical meaning
Inaccurate translation producing conceptual confusion	Standardize translation protocols and unify scholarly expressions to facilitate academic communication

To sum up, the concept of perezhivanie, which is one of the fundamental ideas in the cultural-historical theory by Vygotsky and has been pushed to the periphery over a long period, can provide a new comprehensive approach to studying human learning and psychological development as a process that incorporates emotion, cognition, and social context into an integrated and dynamic process[2]. This idea has been effectively implemented in different areas including language teaching, early childhood education, and teacher professional development, and has shown significant theoretical significance and practical applicability in enhancing learning outcomes and educational practices [6]. Despite the fact that modern research continues to be plagued by many problems, including the ambiguity of conceptual boundaries, the challenge of empirical operationalization, and the absence of cross-cultural studies, with the continuous evolution of theoretical investigation and innovation in the field of research methodology, the notion of perezhivanie will become more and more important in the creation of humanistic and holistic models of education and language education[7]. It is likely to greatly contribute to the qualitative growth of education and applied linguistics on the global scale, better address the needs of individual development in complex sociocultural environments, and help promote more inclusive, effective, and human-centered approaches to education.

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