

Developing L2 Identity Through the *Perezhivanie* of Learning: A Case Study of Two Students in Jeju Island

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In this study, using the concept of *perezhivanie* as an analytical tool, we were trying out new ways to investigate L2 identity taking the peripheral educational context into account. We examined how two graduates from non-academic high schools perceived their peripheral school situation through their *perezhivanie*, and described how this situation affected the individual trajectories of L2 identity development as well. When two students immersed themselves in marginalized classroom contexts, they have experienced academic stigma in the context of classroom community. Moreover, they all experienced emotional conflicts related to English learning. Besides, they struggled over deficit remedial L2 identity, entailing identity tensions. As they attempted to reconcile the contradictions between themselves and their circumstances, their *perezhivanie* made their social situation of development differently. Depending on how the contradiction was being emotionally experienced through the prism of each student's *perezhivanie*, the same contradiction had different meanings, led to different reactions, and had differing impacts on their L2 identity.

Key words: Vygotsky, *perezhivanie*, cognitive–emotional dialectic, L2 identity, marginalization, Jeju

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Jeju, the largest island of South Korea, there are several types of high schools: general high schools (academic high schools); vocational/commercial schools (non-academic high schools); and specialized high schools. Admission into a 3-year high school involves a selection process; some schools are more selective than others. If they pass the high school entrance exam, they advance to academic high school. Most of the students who fail the exam will be enrolled in vocational/commercial schools that offer training programs in specific occupational areas, where there may be fewer opportunities to get into top universities. Non-academic high schools are phenomena of the lower social stratum, compared to academic high schools (Phang, 2004), and marginalization manifests along an academic/non-academic divide (cf. David & Govindasamy, 2005). “Marginalized” refers to the individuals who have been placed on the margins or periphery of the mainstream school hierarchy (Cross & Atinde, 2015).

According to the Jeju Free International City Development Center (JDC), Jeju has experienced noticeable socioeconomic changes due to becoming a major hub for international tourism in the northeast Asia since the late 1990s. Tourism has operated as an economic instrument for specific public and private interests. Yet another manifestation of dramatic change is the widespread move to establish English as an international language. Learning English has been the center of public attention, and a great effort and considerable investment for stimulating an English friendly environment have been made in order to transform Jeju into a free international city (Kim, 2014). The status of English in Jeju is held up as a way of engaging with the wider world, and as a gateway to a new global community.

The non-academic school students experience the academic stigmatization in the local context of Jeju (cf. Ha, 2019; Ryu, Choi, & Hwang, 2019). And even more poignantly, they are at risk for a variety of negative outcomes inherent in their belonging to a community on the margin (Von Houtte & Stevens, 2009). In non-academic high schools, the immediate relevance of English to the daily lives of many students is questionable, and thus, students are likely to undergo emotional stress as they learn English (e. g., Park & Choe, 2018). Also, their belonging to marginalized contexts is an emotionally charged event, all of which may deeply affect their language learning experience (Ha, 2019). As such, these students might give meaning to their emotional experiences during language learning, and clearly such experiences are not trivial matters for them (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & Li, 2018). Together, there is little doubt that they as members of stigmatized groups experience a unique challenge in constructing identity regarding language learning.

Due to non-academic schools’ peripheral status in the local Jeju community, students of non-academic schools may experience seemingly considerable degree of cognitive-emotional struggles (e.g., Oh, 2013). So, we may imagine, this peripheral status greatly

determines their lived experience and identity. In recent years, there is a growing body of empirical research demonstrating a noteworthy relationship between learner identity formation and local foreign language contexts (see Vasilopoulos, 2015 for identity research in EFL contexts). As of now, however, seemingly under researched are identities of marginalized classroom language learners in the context of Korea. This opens up, then, a new question exploring how the environment impacts second language (L2) identity development.

Vygotsky's concept of *perezhivanie*, which is "approximately translated as emotional experience or lived experience" (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 90), presents a powerful tool for grappling this challenge. While Vygotsky did not directly discuss identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015), his concept captures the affective nature of *perezhivanie* as emotional experiencing with a clear connection to cognition in identity development (Kang, 2007; Veresov, 2020). The *perezhivanie* of an individual is a kind of psychological prism, which determines the role and influence of the environment on development (Vygotsky, 1994). The same social environment, being differently refracted through the *perezhivanie* of the different individuals, brings about different developmental outcomes and individual developmental trajectories (Veresov, 2020; Vygotsky, 1994).

As Lantolf and Swain (2020) remind us, "the same environment is refracted through the same individual in different ways at different phases of the individual's development" (p. 88). Accordingly, the developing individual is always a part of the social situation and the relation of the individual to the environment and of the environment to the individual occurs through the *perezhivanie* of the individual (Lantolf & Swain, 2020; Vygotsky, 1998). Thus, the concept of *perezhivanie* allows us "to study the interrelations of an individual and their social reality, understood as their social situation of development" (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 98). In this sense, the social environment is the source of development; it influences an individual, but what makes the social situation a social situation of development is *perezhivanie* (Veresov, 2019; Veresov & Mok, 2018).

Accordingly, using the concept of *perezhivanie* as an analytical tool, we were trying out new ways to study L2 identity taking the peripheral educational context into account. More specifically, we examined how two graduates from non-academic high schools perceived their peripheral school situation through their *perezhivanie*, and described how this situation affected the individual trajectories of L2 identity development as well. In so doing, we'll be able to disclose how learner *perezhivanie* provides evidence of L2 identity development in educationally marginalized contexts, and how such marginalized students' emotions in their English language learning are inextricably linked to their L2 identity development.

2. L2 IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH *PEREZHIVANIE*

Vygotsky (1994) approached the understanding of human development through conceptualizing the sociogenetic process by which higher psychological functions develop (Veresov & Mok, 2018). However, he gradually shifted from an understanding of development as the isolated higher mental functions, “to an understanding of development as the systemic reorganization of interfunctional relations in human consciousness” (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 90). Thus, he rejected the idea of the separation of lower from higher psychological functions as dualistic (Zavershneva, 2014). The new concept emerged during this period was that of *perezhivanie*. According to Veresov (2016), the concept of *perezhivanie* is more than a simple emotional experience; as a concept, it becomes a tool for “the analysis of the role and influence of social reality on the course of [individual] development” (p. 130).

Vygotsky (1994) discussed the role of the environment in relation to individual development, using the concept of *perezhivanie*. As Vygotsky (1994) inevitably points out, it is not just the surrounding conditions that play a key role in an individual development but the surrounding conditions “refracted (i.e. shaped) by the specific psychology of the individual” (Lantolf & Swain, 2020, p. 88), depending on what events or conditions this individual has chosen to be important for him/her. 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. Indeed, Johnson and Worden (2014) point out that “individuals have distinctively different *perezhivanie*, as their reactions are based on the specifics of their past experiences” (p.128).

In Vygotsky’s writings, *perezhivanie* appears in relation to the conceptions of the social and the individual as a dialectical unity. So when advocating *perezhivanie* as the unit of analysis, Vygotsky (1987) argues that neither exists alone and all have contradictory dimensions that are constantly moving through the process of change. This is further explained by Lantolf and Swain (2020):

Given its dynamic quality, the social situation of development is itself a dialectic process in which the environment shapes the individual, but at the same time that individual brings particular features of his or her own psychology to the environment that in turn shapes the social environment and influences how it will be refracted by the person (p. 85).

For understanding the social situation of development, Vygotsky (1994) identified *perezhivanie* as an analytical unit of developing individual consciousness. He describes *perezhivanie* as constituting “an indivisible unity of personal characteristics and the

situational characteristics” (p. 342). By indivisible unity, Blunden (2016) adds, “Vygotsky obviously meant the *relation*, not the personality *plus* the situation” (p. 8). It is here that the emphasis is on units “which do not lose any of the properties which are characteristic of the whole” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 341). In this unit, just as Lantolf and Swain (2020) stressed, Vygotsky attempted to capture not only the dialectical unity between an individual and their environment, but also the dialectical unity of emotion and cognition in the experience of a concrete situation.

In Vygotsky’s work, the dialectical conceptualization of development relevant to the role of *perezhivanie* is contradictions and qualitative reorganization (Veresov & Mok, 2018). From a dialectical perspective, “development requires the contradiction of internal contradistinctions, the resolution of which constitutes development” (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 91). This is captured in the concept of social situation of development, which refers to a dialectic process in which an individual attempts to reconcile the contradictions between self and social environment (Johnson & Worden, 2014; Lantolf & Swain, 2020). Veresov and Mok (2018) further highlight: “Development is also transformative” (p. 92). Though there are different types of transformation, “it is only qualitative reorganization that it is considered development from the point of view of dialectics” (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 92).

Although the human mind can undergo many quantitative changes, as pointed by Veresov and Mok (2018), “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” (p. 92). Veresov and Mok (2018) further elaborate on this point, saying that

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 determine an individual’s different developmental trajectories at a particular moment (p. 92).

In the local context of Jeju, students are at risk of being marginalized within the non-academic high school, and the non-academic high school is at risk of being marginalized in the community of Jeju. Jeju natives hold the negative stereotypes about these students: ‘They do not value education.’ Meanwhile, the non-academic school students may experience unique identity struggles, according to the way they look at themselves in relation to the environment. Particularly in such educationally marginalized contexts, their identities are continuously shaped and reshaped as a result of new experiences that they encounter and meanings that they ascribe to them. Although Vygotsky’s understanding of identity was

implicit in his writings, his claim about learners' cognitive and affective perception of their environment has particular value for understanding L2 identity development of students who are located in the marginalized contexts as deficit students.

The non-academic school students in particular experience the academic stigmatization from a position of marginalization. In the end, they are imposed an identity as a low achiever. Here, we need to better understand the individual-situational dialectic and its implication for L2 identity development. The concept of *perezhivanie* can be viewed as a very provocative way to analyze how lived experience produces L2 identity. Through *perezhivanie*, we can capture the dialectics of development in terms of what contradictions within the marginalized contexts provoke a learner's identity struggle, and in this struggle, how new identity options emerge and choices are made.

Grounding qualitative and emic methods, we asked two female community college students in Jeju to tell their own stories as "crucial witness of [their] own learning process" (Dewaele, 2005, p. 369). We hope that their self-chronicled L2 experiences will offer a tangible way to frame our understanding of how their experience of *perezhivanie* significantly affects their L2 identity formation in the process of linking an individual and the social environment. Specifically, we sought to answer two questions: (1) how individuals' experience of their environment shapes and is being shaped by their *perezhivanie*; (2) how the way they view their environment (i.e., the experience of *perezhivanie*) significantly affects L2 identity development.

3. THE STUDY

3.1. Research Context and Participants

The research took place at a mid-sized community college in Jeju Island in the southern coast of South Korea. Although the majority of undergraduate students are Korean, a large number of exchange and international students from other parts of Asia also undertake their studies at this college. As a result, the international mix of the student body necessitates the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) for intercultural communication on campus. Korean is used as the primary medium of instruction in the majority of undergraduate courses in the college, with only a small number of courses taught in English. The Department of Tourism English offers an intensive EFL program of credit courses. There are usually three or four levels of classes in the department, and students are assigned to different levels according to their English language proficiency.

Two female students, Hyun and Song (both pseudonyms), were selected on the basis of their willingness to participate fully in the study. Most importantly, we chose them because

they graduated from a non-academic high school. Hyun was a sophomore and Song was a junior in the Department of Tourism English at the time of the data collection. Hyun, 23 years old, graduated from a girls' commercial high school in Jeju. She moved to Seoul to go to college after graduating from high school and came back to Jeju to study tourism. She planned to work in the tourism industry. Song, 24 years old, graduated from a vocational high school. With the presence of international and exchange students on campus, Hyun and Song also reported varying levels of ELF experiences in English for specific purposes (ESP) courses.

Hyun and Song were born and raised in Jeju. They had all studied English as a foreign language at high school, as it is compulsory according to the Korean national core curriculum. In Korea, English has been taught at the lower primary level, starting in third grade, as part of the national curriculum. Hyun and Song had learnt English for at least ten years prior to their college studies, with their English proficiency ranging from intermediate-low to intermediate-mid levels. None of them had traveled or lived in an English-speaking country. They were perhaps more middle class in Jeju in occupational terms, their class position deriving above all from their fathers' occupation. Besides, both students shared a certain feeling of shame that derived from the low status and recognition of their high schools and college.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

From mid-March to late June 2019, the coauthor elicited and solicited six students' narratives for her own study (see Kim, 2020) separate from our current study. In spring 2019, the coauthor taught English writing class including extra-class work that required students to produce a personal narrative at home. Specifically, the coauthor who was the course instructor asked students to write about their reflections on their experiences and feelings about themselves as a learner during their English learning process. The students were given a list of questions because they were uncertain about what information they should include in a personal narrative. Just before the semester was over, the instructor recruited six students as participants, a choice based on their participation in follow-up interviews. Hyun and Song were among those who participated in the coauthor's own study.

After the semester was over, the instructor interviewed Hyun and Song once, each lasting about an hour. Interviews, which were conducted in Korean, were set up in a supplementary manner to ensure clarity in students' narratives. During the interview, the two students themselves talked about their own personal histories relating to language learning as marginalized students, which was far more extensive than their narratives would have indicated. After the interview had been finished, we configured their narratives from the interview data. Hyun and Song were particularly articulate in describing their experience,

which began from high school and continued up to community college. We therefore vitally follow their language learning histories (their ontogenesis) over a period of time. We also track within an individual the microgenesis of language learning, that is, “the history of particular psychological functions over relatively brief time spans, such as occurs in classroom language learning” (Lantolf & Genung, 2002, p. 177). Later, we realized that their narratives were worthwhile to demonstrate Vygotskian concept of *perezhivanie*.

Their narratives provided a look at “the objective external conditions being experienced” and “how it is being experienced” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 342). Through narratives, we investigated the two students’ perceptions of themselves and of events that occur in their own situation (Riessman, 2008) that can only be grasped through the concrete personal experiences of individuals. The narratives were analyzed for relevant themes associated with the students’ perceptions of their environmental situation and events in learning English. Here, the concept of *perezhivanie*, embedded in students’ narratives, provided a means to account for the developmental trajectories of their L2 identity formation. In the analysis, we started by familiarizing ourselves with each student’s narrative. Subsequently, we analyzed the narratives for the affective reaction of the individual refracted through an environment-individual dialectic (Lantolf & Swain, 2020) that impacts each student’s language learning experience, thereby being connected with L2 identity formation.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When two students were in marginalized school contexts (i.e., non-academic high school and community college), they were faced with lower public regard and more perceptions of their group as having low or stigmatized status. Hyun and Song’s *perezhivanie* constitutes “the particular prism” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 341) through which they perceive and attribute meanings to their lived environment. They perceived and shaped the school contexts in their own way, and placed value on the environment differently. They structured their own experiences and therefore related to themselves as having particular relations to their school contexts.

4.1. Hyun: Intellectual Orientation of *Perezhivanie*

Hyun graduated from a girls’ commercial high school. From nearly the first day of class, she found it frustrating to be perceived as different from more privileged academic high school peers and, in her words, “teachers thought that we were implicitly at-risk requiring remedial teaching strategies as possible.” At times, she felt she did not belong anywhere, and was not integrated or accepted anywhere. Hyun had difficulties in feeling fully herself

anywhere and projected herself as a failure. We can see from the following excerpt how the complexity of relations between personal and environmental characteristics is intertwined with Hyun's affective aspects:

*It's annoying that there are prejudices against non-academic school students.
It's annoying to be perceived as different all the time. My self-image got really
lowered in this non-academic high school.*

In commercial high school, there were only two hours of English instruction per week. The English teacher was always preoccupied with rule-of-thumb explanations of grammatical patterns. Thus, Hyun was caught in an untenable classroom situation, where students were presented with vocabulary lists and grammar rules. She felt like losing valuable time in a period of limbo during which she struggled just to understand what was happening in the classroom. Hyun's affective reaction to this class was negative after only a short period of time. While struggling through this class for several weeks, Hyun was in a state of inner conflict expressed in a simultaneously still-expecting and disappointing attitude toward her English teacher. As she navigated her ways through an anti-school stance, Hyun had a strong sense of personal contribution to Jeju. Specifically, she wanted to work with the tourism industry for Jeju. In this way, she wanted to be considered by others as worthy social beings. She determined to invest in English to participate in a globalizing Jeju society as a legitimate English speaker.

Hyun attempted to shape her own learning by actively negotiating her roles. For example, at one point when she enacted her personal agency in response to the teacher's pedagogical concerns, Hyun was employing tactics directed at improving her speaking proficiency. So, she "memorized songs out of spite." For Hyun, "the most important thing is to improve my English speaking skills . . . speaking does matter much." Her attempt did not seem to change the ways that Hyun was treated in the classroom. Nevertheless, Hyun felt confident as she took control of her language learning. This event seems to have been a cognitive turning point of Hyun's English learning. And so, the dialectical relationship between Hyun and the event in her language process created a constantly changing *perezhivanie*. Also, we see evidence of Hyun's *perezhivanie* of the situation, which directed at resolving an inner conflict, restoring an "affective equilibrium" (Swain et al., 2015, p.124):

*The English classes at high school were too boring because my English
teachers in high school only focused on grammar and vocabularies. . . I
memorized songs out of spite, just because I must be willing to make a fool of
myself in the trial-and-error struggle of speaking English. . . I don't much care*

about making an error of some kind. We cannot communicate spontaneously without making mistakes.

It is now very clear that Hyun wanted to carry on a conversation, however incomplete or erroneous her attempts may be. It is no wonder, then, that Hyun wanted to gain the basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) that enabled her to get along well socially. Of course, Hyun understood her situation as a non-academic high school student, yet at the same time she repeatedly resisted being marginalized in her language classes, thereby striving towards a distant-yet-near goal of “contributing to the tourism industry in Jeju.” At the same time, she saw English as symbolic and material resources for the prestige shared in Jeju society. Hyun invested in a language because she understood that she would acquire a wider range of “symbolic promise” (Ortega, 2009, p. 247), which would in turn increase the feeling of self-worth in the global community of Jeju. Hyun wrote:

In Jeju, we can see a lot of foreign tourists on the street. I remember that my high school classmates were afraid of speaking to them because of their limited English ability. I don't want to be like them. I want to improve my speaking skills, so I can help foreigners whenever they ask me some questions.

Moreover, the way Hyun locates herself in relation to other students is salient (Bamberg, 1997; Davies & Harré, 1990). In the following excerpt, her perception of herself as an L2 learner in relation to her classmates is especially noticeable in the use of the deictic terms *I* and *they*. Her perception of herself as an L2 learner in that moment was based not on “memorizing English words and grammar to prepare for college entrance exams or TOEIC tests.” Instead, she “wanted to practice English conversation.” Hyun constructed meaning of self via her distinction from the other classmates and negotiated her personal identity *inter alia* through being different with them. This can be regarded as an instance of *perezhivanie*, through which Hyun came to exercise agency:

During English classes, I wanted to practice English conversation, but my classmates only studied to prepare for college entrance exams or TOEIC tests. When they studied English, they spent all their time only memorizing English words and grammar. I think it is important to prepare those tests for getting jobs. However, that's a real problem. I think the most important thing for them is to improve their English speaking skills.

Hyun graduated from high school and went on to a three-year community college to major in tourism English. And again, due to community colleges' peripheral status in society,

students from community colleges were marked as academically impaired. Often, community college students overwhelmingly confronted emotional situations as they struggled to study English. Indeed, many of the students in the community college suffered under the label attached to them, and withdrew from the language learning process. Hyun also faced marginalization and went through periods of emotional struggle, however, only momentarily. In such locus of frustration, she resisted undesirable identities imposed on her by exerting her agency and strived for her own identity. In the following excerpt, Hyun implicated herself as an agent responsible for language learning:

Some of my classmates in college don't try to study English hard. They are always late and don't do their homework. I think they are too lazy. They don't appreciate their English class. I think they entered this college to get a college degree. But they should know that they must be more responsible for their behavior and they must do their duties as students. I want to improve my English skills to contribute to development of Jeju. I want to tell them they must set up their goals and try to do their best to achieve their goals. Since Jeju is the main tourist destination in Korea, I want to improve my English in order to contribute to the tourism industry in Jeju.

There were many ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses offered for professional fields of Tourism in her college. Those courses were offered for students to be equipped with the specific language skills in the tourism, hospitality and service industry. She noted that native English-speaking teachers (NESTs), by virtue of their superior oral communication skills, were good teachers. Hyun stayed highly motivated to be fluent in a professional service language. Blunden (2016) argues that “a *perezhivanie* is both an experience and the ‘working over’ of it” (p. 277, italics in original). In the same sense, Hyun has suffered from her label of unsuccessful students and the stigma associated with this label. However, Hyun continuously and progressively figured out how to align herself with ESP courses. This can contribute to positive *perezhivanie*, leading to her perception of self as a good language learner.

Hyun’s “*perezhivanie* involves a qualitative move forward (i.e. development)” (Lantolf & Swain, 2020, p. 83) as a result of taking “a risk that paid off and opened a new phase of . . . life” (Blunden, 2016, p. 276). It seems, then, that Hyun’s current development will have an influence directly or indirectly on future *perezhivanie*, even if the surrounding environment remains the same (Mok, 2015). Hyun wrote that:

After I entered this college, I learn a lot of listening and speaking skills. I like the way English is taught in my class in college. In high school, English teachers

only focused on grammar and vocabularies. . . The English classes at high school were too boring. However, I am satisfied with English classes at college. I can meet native English-speaking teachers (NEST) more often and they give me more chances to speak English. So I feel my English is improving every day.

4.2. Song: Affective-Emotional Privileging of *Perezhivanie*

We now turn to Song, who graduated from a vocational high school. Students from vocational schools also suffer under deficit perspectives tethered to the term at risk. Even teachers in vocational school looked down on the students or underestimated their intelligence; they were not fully accepted as a legitimate high school student. Being a non-academic high school student had an impact on Song's life in various ways. Indeed, Song referred often to her ascribed identity of academically impaired. Song's such identity subsequently positioned her as deficit, which has ultimately led to her relative failure in high school. In recalling her frustration many years later, Song wrote as follows:

People in Jeju believe that passing the exam will determine students' destinies. Students who fail the test receive contempt from Jeju society. I never felt so humiliated in my life after failing the exam even though I studied and prepared for the test hard in middle school. I also didn't like social stereotype in Jeju towards vocational high school students. Even though I didn't graduate from academic high school, I want Jeju society to treat me as a productive member of Jeju, not a student who couldn't go to an academic high school.

Song repeatedly referred to the high school entrance exam in her narratives. As Song put it, "A lot of people believed that passing the exam would bring honor and failing would bring scorn. Those who failed the high school entrance exam face a lot of pressure and stress . . . my failure does define who I am." Song went through an emotional experience over the failure in the high school entrance exam. She further detailed disillusionment regarding that exam:

All the middle school students had to take an exam for entering academic high schools in Jeju when I was a middle school student. Around 50 percent of middle school students passed the exam and became academic high school students. Unfortunately, I failed the exam and entered a vocational high school even though I spent a lot of time prepare for the test. Especially, I studied English very hard because it is one of the most important subjects in high school entrance exam. My mother enrolled me to Hagwon (a for-profit private institute)

for high school entrance exam and I spent most of my time after school until 12 o'clock at midnight.

Song's first year at the high school was a disaster in great part. During that time, the stigma of failure in the high school entrance exam hindered her *perezhivanie* to pursue her study. Besides, she was confronted with a 'remedial EFL' identity in an English language class. For example, the English teacher taught English Alphabet. Song was deeply humiliated by what was taught in the English class. As she put it, "The English class was traumatic memories." Such a potentially adverse event was not just embarrassing or annoying, but it actually impeded her language learning "by fragmenting cognitive functioning" (Verity, 2000, p.181). In the following excerpt, Song's *perezhivanie* refers to negative emotional experience of learning English Alphabet in high school:

After I entered the vocational high school, I realized that there was a big difference in English levels between vocational high schools and regular high schools. Our teachers taught us English Alphabet during the first year of high school. Learning English Alphabet in high school definitely humiliated me and learning English Alphabet in English classes were too tedious . . .

When Song stepped into an English classroom that carries a remedial deficit identity, her choices were not free; her language learning process was always controlled by the teacher. School days were not happy. And again, when she was put in the position of a failure, Song was not able to resolve, on the emotional plane, the psychological crisis caused by her negative language learning experience. Due to her experience of losing all ability to take control of her language learning process, she seemed affectively reluctant to invest in a language in high school. The following excerpt illustrates how Song's *perezhivanie* can impede learning by being enmeshed with cognition:

Many academic high school students, they studied difficult grammar and advanced English reading. Many of them thought we were poor at English and ignored us even though we studied very hard. Whenever they treated us with disdain, I became to lose my desire to studying English hard. I lost my confidence in studying English. I thought that I never caught up with them, so I neglected English. . . We become victims of Jeju educational policy.

After a series of emotional events during her adolescent years, Song entered college at the age of 19. Song had a hard time going through a transition from having been a non-academic high school student to becoming a college student. In itself, getting into college is a

somewhat achievement for Song. However, as she moved into community college, Song had to re-become a failure. The social stigma came with being identified as, and “re-becoming” (Marshall, 2010, p. 45), a failure because she was not accepted into a 4-year university. In fear, she experienced a continually reinforced feeling of inferiority. The emotional turmoil associated with being marginalized by a society was followed with those of inferiority (e.g., Kim & Kim, 2011). Even worse, when she was enrolled in college, she felt the distress when she confronted herself in ESP courses taught by NESTs. In an ESP course, students were required to become proficient in English for tourism purposes.

Song, who had negative learning experiences in her high-school English class, was beginning to feel apprehensive to continue her English studies (cf. Cross, 2012). That is, Song perceived experiences in a new environment (i.e., an ESP classroom) “through the prism of *perezhivanie*, a cognitive and emotional reciprocal processing of previous and new experience” (Golombek & Doran, 2014, p. 104). Her high school experience influenced the way she perceived an in-progress experience. Song’s potential for language learning notwithstanding, she positioned herself as a low achiever in her ESP course from the beginning. Song’s *perezhivanie* entwined with the emotional tensions and intensity in the past experience constantly destabilized her sense of confidence. As depicted in the following excerpt, her focus shifted from studying English communication skills necessary in her major of hospitality and tourism English to art (i.e., drawing). Song’s negative *perezhivanie* in language learning evoked emotional conflicts related to her college major, as in the following excerpt:

I know that English ability is very important in Jeju because there are a lot of foreign tourists and there are many tourism-related jobs. But I love arts more than English and I want to be an artist. Why do I have to study English and take tests such as TOEIC in which I am not interested. I am crazy about arts so I feel that English is far away from me now. I enrolled in an art institute instead of TOEIC Hagwon even though my major is tourism English. I imagine that drawing is perfect combination of my dreams.

Moreover, Song’s relationship with Jeju community has been found to be very important for her to construct a sense of identity. She felt dissatisfaction, anger at *Goen-Dang Munhwa* (i.e., *Goen-Dang* culture), or other unsettling emotions. According to Song, in Jeju, individuals are more constrained by a culture of community, called *Goen-Dang Munhwa* (권당문화), and “opportunity structures” (Cloward & Ohlin, 1966) are constrained by *Goen-Dang Munhwa*. Jeju society today fails to provide many young people with adequate, legitimate ways to attain a job. For example, *Goen-Dang Munhwa* can block a particular opportunity structure for certain people, like community college graduates, while still

enabling others to obtain a job. Talking of how and why *Goen-Dang Munhwa* brings about structural inequalities, Song noted:

Jeju is so small society that people are closely related to each other. Many people are connected with kinship relationships. I heard it is important to have many connections with people . . . when you apply jobs in Jeju. I think people judge you by who your mother, father, sister, brother or relative is, not by yourself. "Goen-Dang" means "relatives" in Jeju dialect. This is one of negative things in Goen-Dang Munhwa. Goen-Dang Munhwa is sometimes good because people in Jeju help each other a lot during their hardships. Blood relations are considered very meaningful in Jeju.

Indeed, *Goen-Dang Munhwa* “functions as an orienting system for self-reference by providing an individual with a conceptualization of their place in society” (Jenkins, Zaher, Tikkanen, & Ford, 2019, p. 15). Song lamented that she didn’t occupy a legitimate position in the *Goen-Dang* culture. Repeatedly, Song defined herself primarily as affiliated with marginalized social groups and as being sidelined in the Jeju community. The following excerpt implies that *Goen-Dang Munhwa* is equally powerful influences on Song’s L1/L2 identities locally. *Goen-Dang* culture itself was a negatively powerful force in mediating her L2 “identity as related to *perezhivanie*” (McCafferty, 2018, p. 85). Song further criticized the prevalent values in Jeju:

I heard that many things are not transparent in Jeju society, especially hiring people in Jeju. Many things seem to be carried out unfairly in terms of employment . . . it is really unfair to see someone who got hired not by their capabilities but by their connections to many people. I know some people who got their jobs because they have these unjust connections. When I heard this kind of social injustice in Jeju, I don't want to continue studying English. Why do we have to study hard in this situation in which people are evaluated not by their abilities but by their connections with other people? I hope Jeju society should treat people fairly and equally when they hire people so that young generations like me don't feel frustrated by social ills in Jeju.

Thus far, we describe the nature, role, and influence of *perezhivanie* in the reaction of two students who experienced the same external situation but whose perceptions of this environment fundamentally differed according to their personal meanings to L2 learning situations. Despite the fact that they shared common characteristics, such as gender, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, levels of education, institutional contexts in which they

experienced negative judgments and stigmatization from others, each of them signified such situation or events differently. The heart of the matter is that, “whatever the situation, its [the environment’s] influence depends not only on the nature of the situation itself but also on the extent of the [student’s] understanding and awareness of the situation” (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 343).

Hyun experienced a seeming contradiction between her role as a language user and her teacher’s demand as a language learner in her high-school English class. Hyun imagined what it was to be her role as a language user. She was considerably strategic in aligning her own efforts in English learning. Through the use of various production tricks (e.g., memorizing songs out of spite), she took charge of her own learning that led to the qualitative reorganization of her language proficiency. We can see that Hyun developed an awareness of the importance of English proficiency in being a self-evident insider of the Jeju community. And importantly, she insisted on defining herself rather than being defined by others. Hyun, through agency in connection with *perezhivanie*, resisted undesirable identities (or stereotypes, such as remedial language learner of English) imposed on her and constructed new ways of being that she would aspire to in her lives, marked by the reorganization of her L2 identity as a legitimate English user. Through *perezhivanie*, Hyun shaped her perspectives on the surrounding world and her place in it diachronically, creating her L2 “identity in the dialectics of being and becoming” (Veresov, 2020, p. 182). For Hyun, “*perezhivanie’s* intellectual orientation” (Michell, 2016, p. 18) plays the key role in determining her relationship to the situation and the situation’s subsequent influence on her L2 identity development.

Song also suffered a degree of social exclusion both inside and outside of school. Song was in a state of inner conflict expressed in a negative attitude toward L2 learning and sometimes toward *Goen-Dang Munhwa*. Song shows strong resistance towards *Goen-Dang Munhwa*; for these reasons, it is down to fear of being despised, or anger against the hegemony that excludes non-academic school and community-college students from the mainstream of Jeju society. She even argued that *Goen-Dang Munhwa* eventually led to her isolation and to restricted or less powerful participation in the Jeju community. Indeed, *Goen-Dang Munhwa* has lived on as an aspect of her *perezhivanie* regarding her long identity struggle.

Above all, she still remembered negative experiences regarding high school English classes, where the teacher generated unfair or otherwise inequitable treatment of students on the basis of their academic ability. Song’s classroom experience evoked “emotional and cognitive dissonance” (Golombek & Doran, 2014, p. 106), and thereby her negative *perezhivanie* in language learning brought changes to her whole system of psychological functions (Veresov, 2020). And these changes negatively influenced her L2 identity and future identity orientations. Perhaps, Song at times lacked “affective proficiency” (Verity,

2000, p.183) necessary to cope with her situations where negative emotion was so strongly felt. Yet, her emotional aspects of experience impacted her cognitive performance with emphasis given to aggravating her frustrations and feelings of anger at times. In this sense, for Song, the “affective privileging of *perezhivanie*” (Michell, 2016, p.7) takes priority over the cognitive on the course of L2 identity development.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, we attempted to explore the implications of Vygotsky’s concept of *perezhivanie* for the development of L2 identity in the marginalized language learning environment. We investigated how the marginalized students, Hyun and Song, experienced the same social environment, and projected their own L2 identity through their *perezhivanie* of the environment. As expected, the two students have experienced the academic and linguistic stigmatization in an array of contexts inside and outside of the classroom; they all experienced emotional conflicts related to English learning. Besides, they struggled over deficit remedial L2 identity, entailing identity tensions. The two students, despite being in the same social environment, transformed their significant microgenetic (i.e., moment-by-moment) experiencing into ontogenetic (i.e., life history) formations of totally different L2 identity.

Of course, *perezhivanie* underscores that both emotion and cognition are ever present but that one may take priority over the other in some cases (Lantolf & Swain, 2020; Mok, 2015; Poehner & Swain, 2016), “as is expected with dialectical relations” (Poehner & Swain, 2016, p. 226). In the case of Song, emotional reactions to a given situation dominated over rational thought. For example, Song displayed a highly negative affective reaction to high school English classes, and such a reaction extended to college ESP classes, while she simultaneously experienced a feeling of hatred and attachment to *Goen-Dang Munhwa*. Together they further protracted her identity struggles. As such, her personal way of experiencing L2 learning was disrupted in projecting a new identity. In this way, Song was involved in a loss of language identity within her particular social situation of development through her prism of *perezhivanie* (cf. the narrative by Eva Hoffman in Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000).

By contrast, Hyun could construct a desired L2 identity for herself from a position of marginalization. She engaged in active struggle to overcome her existing social situation, and through her agency in connection with *perezhivanie* (McCafferty, 2018) she resolved most of the conflicts, leading to qualitative change in her L2 learning. We see that Hyun’s positive *perezhivanie* provided evidence of being related to the eventual attainment of her L2 development. Her *perezhivanie* was intrinsically associated with emotional development,

as arising from emotional conflicts perceived as meaningful to her. After all, Hyun's *perezhivanie* has played a decisive role in forming her L2 identity, highlighting the importance of cognition. Perhaps equally important, the dialectical relationship between her inner conflict and learning situation had a positive impact on her *perezhivanie*.

The global city of Jeju serves as a hub of education in the configuration of opportunities to L2 learning. In this global city, ironically, Hyun and Song were in the marginalized language learning situation, where the issue of L2 identity is at stake. Being consistent with Vygotsky's (1994) argument, they experienced this situation in different ways. The same situation, being differently refracted through their *perezhivanie*, brought about an entirely different and unique social situation of development and individual trajectories of developing L2 identity. Again, individual trajectory of developing L2 identity is not just a cognitive struggle, as Swain (2013) reminds us, "it is a cognitive-emotional struggle" (p. 205). For pedagogy for the marginalized, "the point of paying attention to learner *perezhivanie* is not to help them avoid negative feelings about learning" (Lantolf & Swain, 2020, p. 103). In fact, emotion must be paid attention to during cognitive work (Poehner & Swain, 2016).

Applicable levels: High school, college

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