

Revisiting Vygotskian regressions as 'living' processes in second language development: Narrative review

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Abstract - The transient or intermittent nature of Vygotskian regressions in the field of Second Language Development (SLD) has been relatively overlooked. To address this gap, the study employs a narrative literature review approach to enrich the theoretical and practical foundations of this concept. It proposes that they should be read in the context of the so-called living process development. By embracing this construct, the study introduces alternative theoretical insights, framing regressions as living-dramatic-dialectical occurrences, arising from the collision and interweaving of a wide range of opposing forces seen as events in variable proportions and intensities during moments of crisis.

Keywords: 'living' regressions, Vygotsky, second language development, dialectics

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, a small number of studies in relation to Vygotskian regressions have been published in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). In contrast, the concept of fossilisation commonly associated with Selinker's (1972) interlanguage hypothesis has drawn significant attention. Inasmuch as it unveils an extremely important, yet contrasting theoretical stance to Vygotsky's, is beyond the scope of the current review. As far as the author is aware, only the three noteworthy studies by Lantolf and Aljaafresh (1995), Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017) and Ableeva (2018) have explored the notion of Vygotsky's regressions, extending it into Sociocultural Theory research (SCT) in SLA (henceforth SCT-L2).

The presence of regressive movements was revealed not only in the learners' linguistic features but also in the frequency and quality of distinct types of tutor-learner regulations, consisting of both progressive and regressive movements within Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD). Despite the significance and value of this discovery for research and practice, not enough attention has been paid to the phenomenon. In this light, it would probably not be an exaggeration to echo Vygotsky's (1978: 73) observation, which seems to be as valid today as it was back then, that "those turning points, those spasmodic and revolutionary changes that are so frequent" within developmental processes still appear to be unnoticed.

Furthermore, it is sometimes overlooked that development "can be understood only as a living process of development, a coming into being, a struggle, and only in this form can it serve as a subject of truly scientific study" (Vygotsky, 1997b: 221). It is therefore proposed that the concept of regressions should be placed in the same context. Hence, the fundamental question that arises – one that previous studies seem to have left largely unexplored and the current review attempts to address, at least in part – is what constitutes the living essence of regressions and, consequently, what key elements may contribute to this quality.

The living essence of regressions is suggested to encompass elements of seeming or periodic, dramatic, dialectical and transformational qualities. There is further an inquiry into whether regressions may emerge due to the initial clash among opposing variables, causing primarily a decline in performance. For the same reason, whether they can also be associated with times of crisis (Dafermos, 2018, 2022; Fleer et al., 2017; Veresov and Kellogg, 2019a, 2019b), fostering transformational qualities that establish dialectical and dynamic relationships amid conflicting variables (Dafermos, 2018). To this end, a comparison is drawn to the dialectical and changeable interactions between cognitive processes and *perezhivanie* (Lantolf, 2021; Lantolf and Swain, 2020), usually translated as emotional or lived experience (Blunden, 2016), alongside the Social Situation of Development (SSD) (Veresov and Mok, 2018; Vygotsky, 1994), particularly, during a crisis or drama (Dafermos, 2018, 2022; Fleer et al., 2017) when, for example, the learner faces a challenging task (Chaiklin, 2003; Swain, 2013). Subsequently, it is suggested that the regressive characteristics become alive and dialectical rather than static or fixed in time due to the ever-changing nature of events. Precisely, Roth (2019: 24) clarifies that it:

...is not different from what chemists do when, for example, they write carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the form of O=C=O, where each line represents a pair of electrons. Instead, we have to think about person and environment as irreducible intertwined when we think them as ingredients of events.

In this sense, living is understood here as the active and changeable dialectical fusion of contradictory forces in varying ratios which represent an unpredictable and ongoing course of development. Drawing on Roth's terminology, this quality can further be defined as both "evental" and "transactional" (p.337). Roth observes that the presence of living participants necessitates adopting an event-based perspective to understand their role within the broader context of "material and social life". Proportionately, transactional implies an inseparable "unity/identity of organism and environment", highlighting the interdependence of the two that prevents the separate understanding of either entity (p.23). By virtue of being 'alive' from a dialectic perspective, these types of regressions appear unlikely to be brought to a standstill and be equated with quantitative measures in one moment in time. While the concept of evental and

transactional, explored in depth by Roth (2019), is touched upon in this paper, only its broad meaning is transmitted.

This being said, the present review aims to revisit Vygotskian regressions with the intention of comprehending and developing their theoretical and practical potential further as a dialectically 'alive', crisis-related and transformational phenomenon. Expanding on Lantolf and Aljaafreh's (1995) research, along with Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017), and Ableeva (2018) in addition to more recent examples, the manuscript shifts from solely linguistic interpretations of the phenomenon. Recognising after Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017: 168) that "development as a second language is about more than linguistics performance," the study acknowledges its revolutionary aspect, involving both progressive and regressive movements. To this end, this study maintains after Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) that permanently degenerative lapses to former stages of development are unlikely to occur in healthy individuals. It is because progress is still seen as a moving forward force despite momentary regressions.

However, the 'living' dialectical components involving opposing variables in Vygotskian regressions remain relatively unexplored in Second Language Development (SLD). By invoking these three specific SCT-L2 scholarly works on regression, the paper aims to deepen the understanding of the concept. Additionally, it not only re-emphasises their significance but also hopes to enrich the notion by providing an alternative perspective and integrating it into SLD and Second Language Teaching (SLT) research. This facet warrants thorough investigation, calling for further research to gain a deeper understanding of the living character of the degenerative-regenerative regression which appears not to be exclusively grounded in a deficient or purely linguistic view of SLD. This approach can enhance the understanding of nuanced developmental trajectories in second language processes related to transient regressive phenomena, potentially advancing SLD pedagogy and teaching.

Bearing this in mind, a narrative literature review approach has been adopted, following such phases as identification, understanding, "meaning-making", and conveying information (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016: 49). Unlike systematic literature reviews (SLRs) that necessitate a detailed methods section, search strategies or inclusion/exclusion criteria, narrative reviews are less rigorous, making them prone to criticism due to potential bias caused by subjective author choices (Greetham, 2021; Machi & McEvoy, 2022). Nonetheless, Kraus et al. (2022) emphasise the independent and critical value of non-SLRs, serving vital exploration, knowledge contribution, research, and practice. This view finds resonance with Lim, Kumar, and Ali (2022), as well as in Greenhalgh, Thorne and Maulterud's (2016) observations, accentuating the "research waste" when narrative reviews are omitted from the research landscape. Given this perspective, the present review strives to illuminate the concept of Vygotskian regressions through a synthesis of the selected literature, predominantly in the field of Vygotskian Cultural-Historical Theory and Sociocultural Theory (CHT/SCT), and SCT-L2, aiming to expand the body of knowledge and offer an alternative perspective on this essential issue related to SLD.

To ensure consistency and avoid any confusion between intentional learning and subconscious language acquisition (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), SLD as opposed to SLA is preferred. By the same token, the term second language (L2) is adopted in a broader sense to include English as both the sole second language and one of many. Similarly, references to emotions and affect are employed here interchangeably. The forthcoming section begins by providing a broader background to the concept while also exploring the potential variability of Vygotskian regressions. The discussion next focuses on performance decline in relation to periodic regressions. It proceeds to apply the concept to the three selected SCT studies, thereby illustrating the living-dramatic-dialectical nature of the phenomenon. Finally, by using a few recent selected studies the idea is illustrated further.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Diverse 'Living' Regressions

One of Vygotsky's (1997b; 1999) fundamental concepts commonly recognised is the view of development as revolutionary, characterised by non-linearity, fluctuations and unpredictability,

usually contrasted with the traditional notion of evolutionary or linear development (Ableeva, 2018; Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev, 2017; Lantolf and Aljaafreh, 1995). However, irregularity, it is crucial to observe, can indicate not only the possibility of regressions but also reveal their underlying dialectical nature. This dialectical substance can also reflect the dynamic nature of the developmental journey, which is inherently human. When conceptualising regressions as 'alive', it is thus essential to consider them also as events instead of as solely static quantitative outcomes bound by time.

Recognising the interactions between individuals and their environment as interconnected accentuates further the evental as well as dialectical nature of regressions. According to Roth (2019), Vygotsky's attention shifted towards a new theory at the end of his life, prioritising the significance of emotions, social relationships, and mental engagement as dynamic events with a transactional nature. Nonetheless, Vygotsky left many aspects of his theory unfinished, incomplete or self-contradictory in places which would also suggest that certain areas remain open to interpretation. Keeping this in mind, it is proposed that regressive incidents are likely to resist static definition and fixed dead-end results. For the same reason, they may embody ongoing change and continuity over time. The analogy can be drawn here to sculpting from stone or moulding an individual. In the educational context, the emphasis lies in seeking an in depth, as opposed to surface, understanding of regressive reactions, viewing them not exclusively from a linguistic or grammatical precision but also as intrinsically human responses. The substance of it can be captured in the following quote:

Above all, the very concept of education has expanded. The concern is not simply with education, but with the "reforging of men," in Trotsky's expression. And this reforging requires, above all (...) the greatest possible use of the innate substance of behaviour (Vygotsky, 1997a:347).

Far from being exempt from unpredictability and variability, the procedure of "reforging of men" is unlikely to escape regressive encounters. The non-linear and active substance of development found resonance in Vygotsky's (1997b) diverse expressions such as gaps, leaps, turns, breaks, regressions, zigzags, displacements or shifts. At first glance, they appear to primarily denote the idea of unevenness as an integral part of development. Yet, upon closer examination, when their active and dialectic nature is considered, they could equally imply a range of essential regressive travels during developmental processes, possibly arising in response to the clash of opposing forces causing initial regression which can also be associated with subsequent crisis.

On this basis, it can be maintained that the variation might also emerge from the dialectical interplay among contrasting variables such as affect, cognition or social factors in varying proportions, consequently giving rise to a mosaic-like synthesis of evental regressive responses. As observed by Vygotsky (1986: 254), "an infinite variety of movements to and fro, of ways still unknown to us, is possible" equally in SLD. Comprehending accordingly the dialectical and ongoing as *living* nature of regressions entails focusing on the nexus of the opposites. In this sense, it can be noted that when contradictory forces, for instance, affective, social or cognitive are viewed as carrying dramatic, dialectical and transformational character, "the greatest drama of development" (Vygotsky, 1997b: 222) unfolds on a living continuum, especially at the times of their collisions.

In such case, the role of "the personal way of experiencing" (Veresov and Fleer, 2016:334) cannot be overstated. Commonly rendered as an emotional or *lived* through experience, *perezhivanie* (Vygotsky 1994) acts as a catalyst for external experiences to become uniquely subjective (Fleer et al., 2017; McNamara, 2022; Veresov, 2016, 2020). It would thus seem that the likelihood of crisis may not be solely linguistic (or cognitive) but comparatively as emotional as social as cognitive since occurring along dialectical trajectories of SLD. When "emotions appear in new relations with other elements of mental life", Vygotsky (1999: 244) argues, "new systems develop, new alloys of mental functions." This fact, in turn, suggests that the primary emphasis should not be placed on separate forces, but instead on their ever-changing and dialectical

relationships among them as they unfold over time. However, the fusion of contrasting variables can also contribute to a performance decrease, considered in the subsequent section.

2.2. Performance decline and its latent potential

While generally acknowledged as a stimulus for developmental growth, the conflictual aspects of development (Dafermos, 2018, 2022; Veresov, 2016; Veresov, 2020) can lead to reduced performance levels, frequently associated with regressions (Kozulin, 1990a; 1990b). This occurs because “the old form” is displaced, and at times, entirely disrupted (Vygotsky, 1997b: 221). Crucially, the decline in performance should not be treated as an end product in this case. Contrarily, it represents a segment of an ongoing and qualitatively transformative event. Accordingly:

Where upheavals occur (...) the naïve mind sees only catastrophe, gaps, and discontinuity. History seems to stop dead, until it once again takes the direct, linear path of development (Vygotsky, 1978: 73).

Amidst this background, recurring regressions appear as metamorphic experiences, continuing to evolve within new events as opposed to a dead-end point. What this appears to indicate is their transitionary yet transformative characteristics which by having this virtue should not be perceived as definitive or fossilised. This fact further attests to the “growing complexity” of human development (Ibid.), serving also as a reminiscent reflection of the complexity found in SLD development. In alignment with Vygotsky’s articulation, it can analogously be likened to:

... a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into the other, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes that overcome impediments ... (p.73)

In this regard, regressive mechanisms seem to almost act like a DNA capable of developing, surviving and reproducing. This process was envisioned by Vygotsky (1999: 53) as a spiral-like traversal with a return point at a previous crossing, but on a higher plane, exhibiting a dialectical unity of back-and-forth movement.

But the regression is only a seeming regression: development, as frequently happens, moves not in a circle in this case, but along a spiral, returning on a higher plane to a point that was passed.

This idea can be further elaborated as:

The transition to a higher form of intellectual activity is accompanied by a temporary decrease in capacity for work. This is also confirmed for the rest of the negative symptoms of the crisis: behind every negative symptom is hidden a positive content consisting usually in the transition to a new and higher form (Vygotsky, 1998: 194).

Commenting on Vygotsky’s “cycle” of development, Veresov and Kellogg (2019b: 146) recognise that it “portrays the idea of opposites which interpenetrate rather than mutually exclude each other.” Similarly, Veresov (2016, 2020) highlights the contradictory, yet transformative, nature of development. In this framework, regressions tend to arise when conflicting internal and external forces intersect with varying intensities, signifying potentially the onset of crisis, before converging into a unified dialectical force. What seems crucial here, however, is the value of the “hidden positive content” within periodic-dialectical regressions as a possible way forward. Analogously, in SLD this situation does not seem to be confined to navigating exclusively through a linguistic challenge, but also traversing through a personal crisis where an individual repairs their damaged self (Kozulin, 1990a: 264).

This in turn indicates a need to recognise regressions as alive dramatic and dialectic entities which reveal more than relapses and recursions (Murphy et al., 2015; Wink and Putney, 2010), tidal waves (Zebroski, 1994) or recursive loops (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988: 35) but above

all a dialectical and changeable correlation across contrasting variables which might also be crises related. Therefore, revisiting the concept of *perezhivanie* in this regard appears vital in gaining a holistic perspective on regressions, which could also relate to potential dichotomies between individuals and their environment, along with internal and external factors. Noteworthy, *lived through* experience – *perezhivanie* – not only catalyses the subjectively unique nature of external experiences (Fleer et al., 2017; Veresov, 2020) but also serves as the central unit of analysis for the Social Situation of Development (SSD) (Veresov and Mok, 2018) acknowledged as the *relationship* between the individual and the environment (Vygotsky, 1994). Thereby, Veresov (2016: 244) like Roth (2019) recommends the “social-individual” or “individual-social” continuum to avoid any polarities. Likewise, Vygotsky (1999:53) emphasises that the “transition from a collective to an individual form of behaviour initially lowers the level of whole operations”. Continuing along this line of thought, it should be emphasised that:

It is incorrect to represent the two as external forces acting on one another. In the attempt to study the unity, the two are *initially torn apart*. The attempt is then made to unite them. (Vygotsky, 1984c, p.380, cited in Minick, 2017: 52; italics mine).

Subject to the same conditions, it appears that at the very core of understanding regressive occurrences lay the dynamic relationships among varying forces, each influencing the others dialectically. Herein, Robbins’ (2007: 91-92) observation still rings true that the “interrelationships of developmental growth (and regression) within holarchies” have not been fully comprehended as a unified whole. This could also imply that the interactions among contradictory forces in a dialectical manner might inevitably correlate with the coexistence/presence of regressive movements. With this in mind, the current review will now look into the three identified articles to exemplify the possible similarities between the presented ideas and more recent research.

2.3 Detecting the concept in the three selected SCT-L2 studies

Building upon Vygotsky’s (1999) argument that development is revolutionary rather than linear or evolutionary, Lantolf and Aljaafreh’s (1995) pioneering study cast more light on the dynamic and nonuniform nature of L2 development within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Defining ZPD as the learner’s ability to work independently while also benefitting from supportive intervention to reach their potential, their research indicated that both forward and regressive movements are constituent components of L2 developmental processes. The derived conclusion was that linguistic development entails not exclusively linguistic accuracy but also the calibre and regularity of interactive regulations between the learner and tutor over time. In a subsequent empirical study, Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017) reaffirmed the same two central features. Similarly, in alignment with this perspective, Ableeva’s (2018) investigation into the responsiveness of the intermediate French learners to mediation, specifically the concept of reciprocity, revealed instances of retrogressive tendencies exhibited in the diverse range of learner responses in the context of Dynamic Assessment (DA).

Contrariwise, it may be argued that varied reactions can also stem from dialectically interconnected variables such as affect, cognition and social interfaces, potentially occurring together in an event. As previously mentioned, this dialectical interchange could potentially correlate with seeming regressions, exerting a holistic impact on the individual’s mind, language learning and personality (Mahn and Fazalehaq, 2020; Roth, 2016; Veresov and Kellogg, 2019b). However, this specific facet of seeming regressions remains relatively underexplored. Yet, these nuanced insights hold the potential to direct future studies investigating how different regressive responses influence L2 trajectories.

Using the selected extracts from Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) and Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017) as well as Ableeva (2018), an attempt will be made to capture the real-life, dramatic, and dialectically interconnected aspects of regressions coined as the living-dramatic-dialectical characteristics of regressions. Due to the limited space, the focal point of the discussion is on the students’ responses to highlight prospective intersections where both thinking and emotions might come together, along with social dramatic dynamics. This synthesis can also be

thought of as the intersecting of *perezhivanie* (affect), thinking, SSD (social interaction) to interweave, potentially leading to a step backward initially.

Turning first to Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) and Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017) who integrated the samples from Aljaafreh's (1992) dissertation, the selected extracts are used to exemplify the discussed phenomenon. The original data were collected through weekly tutorials, involving three female students from Japan (Y), Portugal (F) and Spain, who were enrolled in an eight-week reading and writing program for advanced English language learners at an American university. In Extract 1 Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) originally demonstrate mediation between the student F from Portugal and the tutor, while receiving feedback on present perfect use in F's essay. However, it is also possible to detect in the excerpts various verbal and nonverbal reactions, revealing the cognitive, affective and social criss-crosses.

More precisely, in lines 3 and 6 Learner F's cognitive reaction to the tutor's prompt is accompanied by both emotive and social exchanges. This is clear from the laugh and the verbal affirmation "yes", as well as the nonverbal choice to stay quiet, shown through a gesture. Furthermore, a soft or quiet tone, echoing and repetition in lines 8, 10, and 13 suggest uncertainty, hesitancy, and likely a lack of confidence or shyness. This type of response can also indicate self-doubt or self-consciousness. It is also noticeable that cognitive, emotional and social aspects interact, especially influenced by the presence of the tutor, giving rise to further collaborative interactions.

Interestingly, the collision of opposing forces additionally seems to signal an upcoming crisis, resulting in temporary periods of complex and dynamic regressive shifts, which can also be categorised as living, dramatic and dialectical, evident in lines 20, 22 and 24. To be more precise, in line 20 the student's exclamation "*aaah ... I don't know!*" is combined with a smile, revealing how her potentially relapsing reaction involves intersecting and interweaving cognitive, emotive, and social aspects. Similarly, line 22 displays self-contradiction in which positive and negative affirmation fuse: "*Yeah, I don't the ...*". Furthermore, line 24 highlights a clash between theory and practice when the student utters: "*No, I know the (As you label it) but to use I don't know*". The convergence of various variables at this juncture reveals not only a cognitive struggle but also affective and social overlaps; the quality that may also be associated with regressive responses. Additionally, it may be defined as living due to its unique individual dramatic-dialectic character rooted in daily changeable events.

Extract 1: Student F's responses (Lantolf and Aljaafreh, 1995: 623)	Extract 2: Student F's responses (Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev 2017:165-166)	Extract 3: Learner Y's responses (Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev (2017:166-167)
3. F. yes (laughs)	11. F. I don't understand why?	4. Y (v. softly) I think th that
6. F. (points to "I chose")_	(...)	6. Yexpressio.n (...)
8. F. tense (very softly)	16. F. //But Bible, if you read	9. Y Expression, nooo
10. F. The tense	Catholic Bible and you read	12. Y Hum↑
13. F. Past	17. other religion Bible it's	14. Y Why? Why?
(...)	different.	16. Y //aaah//
20. F. aaah ... I don't know!	They call Bible	20. Y aah you mean that is
(smile)	18. but inside it con.. cont..	subject ↑
22. F. Yeah, I don't the ...	Conta..	22. Y Subject↑
24. F. No, I know the (As you	20. F. Yes, is different. ☺	24. Y aah I thought this is clause.
label it) but to use I don't know.	Because I try	. I think
	read different	that
	21. Bible. (...)	37. Y //aah this mean//
	25. F. //No, this case Catholic	40. Y //aaah//
	Bible, but I	50. Y //that↑
	read other	
	26. Bible too. (☺)	
	46 F. uhhum	

A similar pattern can be detected in Excerpt 2 (Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev, 2017), where Learner F admits her frustration at difficulties understanding the use of the definitive article “the” with the word Bible. Throughout the discourse, the student’s responses include pauses, smiles, repetitions, mumbling, echoing the tutor’s words or backchannelling. At times, student F engages in the conversation at a more social level rather than solely concentrating on the correct application of articles in grammar. During this process, it appears that the learner attempts to collaborate with the tutor to comprehend the issue, but also navigate through this dramatic experience of backward-moving situation (or living regressive event) from her own personal and social understanding of it which is not exclusively based on grammar. As the conversation progresses, the event eventually reaches a point where Learner F pauses to reflect as shown in the utterance of “uhhum” in line 46. Interestingly, F’s responses could also be seen as the development of trust and increased openness to the social presence of the tutor.

To go further, the other passages also highlight the presence of dialectical relationships that include, inter alia, emotional, cognitive, and social involvement. At the same time, they bring to light the emergence of what may appear as periodic regressions and their potential dialectical nature. For instance, in Excerpt 3 (Lantolf, Kurtz, and Kisselev, 2017:166-167) Learner Y’s replies are characteristic of changes in voice volume, with softness in line 4 or raised tones in lines 12, 20, 22, 50. Frequent pauses and hesitations, fluctuations in voice tone along with unfinished words and stuttering are also evident throughout the interaction. Notably, these nonverbal cues or such exclamations or vocalisations as “hum” in line 12, “why?” in line 14, and “aah” in lines 16, 20, 24, 37, and 40 might equally signal a thinking process, but also suggest moments of uncertainty, self-doubt, contemplation, or even irritation.

A comparable pattern is resonated in Ableeva’s (2018) qualitative two-month empirical investigation into progressive-regressive reciprocating behaviour in DA. Noteworthy, the responses of the university students at French intermediate level were ranging from silence to responsive versus unresponsive through both negative and positive reactions or refusals to accept the mediator’s assistance. The author concluded that insufficient attention to L2 learners’ reciprocating conduct may result in an impoverished picture of SLD. The same statement might also be reiterated and applied to the present topic under discussion since the variety of recurring regressive reactions can equally indicate the clashes between conflicting variables to different extents and their subsequent dialectical relationships, impacting L2 developmental pathways.

Extracts in Ableeva (2018)

Extract 4: Dan’s (D) responses (pp.272-3)

4. how would you say ‘could disappear’? . . . could disappear . . .
- 5 D. silence {Unresponsive}
- (...)
7. D. silence . . . {Unresponsive}
9. D. salience . . . {Unresponsive}
11. D. (pause) . . . oh . . . *pouvoir* [can] . . . (D. begins to respond to mediation - Responsive) *pouvoir* . . .
13. D. silence . . . {Unresponsive}

Extract 5: Michel’s (M) responses (p. 274)

5. M. I don’t know (mumbling)
7. M. =oh!!!!...water?

Extract 6: Erica’s (E) responses (p. 276)

- 1 E. I mean . . . the first like. . . I can’t really understand . . . like the first you know

Extract 7: Fee’s (F) responses (p. 277)

1. F. I don’t know what she says . . . it sounds like *rien du tout* [nothing at all] or some- thing . . .
3. F. ok (laughter) (...)
7. F. oh! . . . so they are not paid at all. . .

Extract 8: Mona’s (M) responses (p. 278)

1. M. I . . . I . . . I still can’t hear it . . .
 3. M. I just can’t hear the first letter . . . something like *sponsible . . . (unclear)
-

-
6. M. no (laughter) . . . it doesn't make sense!
8. M. uh . . . uh . . . no . . . I can't . . .
-

By way of illustration, in Excerpt 4 Ableeva (2018: 272-3) recognises the recurring moments of silence and pauses as instances of unresponsiveness. Hitherto, Dan's unresponsiveness or silence can also be interpreted as more than mere lack of knowledge or a deficiency. It also unveils deeper layers of affective and social struggles intertwined with reflective thought processes and cognitive challenges, thereby initiating dialectical interactions among variables. With this said, living-dialectical regressive responses seem to arise from conflicting factors, leading to initial decline in performance. The parallel example is manifested in Michel's reactions in Excerpt 5 (Ibid: 274) where emerging instances of frustration are depicted through hesitations, mumbling and such expression as "I don't know", followed by verbal response "oh!!!" These have been categorised by Ableeva (2018) as contrasting negative versus positive. Conversely, they once again appear to indicate a conflict between opposing factors.

In the same vein, Erica's almost hopeless recognition, "I can't really understand" in Excerpt 6 (Ibid: 276) can also be classified as a cognitive and affective struggle verbalised within the social context of the tutor's presence. This thread is mirrored in Excerpt 7 (pp 277-8) when another learner, Fee, expresses the uncertainty and cognitive battle by uttering, "I don't know what she says." This is followed by the affective response of laughter, then an "oh!" affirmation, as a corresponding social reaction that aligns with the tutor being there. Finally, in Excerpt 8 (pp. 277-8) Mona's regressions are evident through statements such as "I . . . I . . . I still can't hear it . . ." and "I just can't hear." These are accompanied by unclear verbal responses, vocalisations, and expressions of laughter, frustration or annoyance or perhaps disheartenment, as seen in utterance "uh . . .uh . . .no . . .I can't . . .".

In this context, it can be argued that contradictory affective, social or cognitive forces appear to form an active-evental-transformative continuum, representing a type of development which is marked by collisions with ingrained regressions, forming "the greatest drama of development" (Vygotsky, 1997b: 222). Accordingly, SLD may involve active emotional, social, and cognitive navigations creating uniquely individual SLD dynamic trajectories. These instances collectively illustrate the intricate interplay of variables during regressive-progressive development. They equally reflect the holistically impactful characteristics of alive regressions, linking emotional experiences "*prezhivanie*", cognitive processes, and the social dialectically. As Verseov (2021: 745-6) emphasises, the analysis should be placed on a "qualitatively different dialectical unity, not a simple 'arithmetic' sum of components". Understanding the back-and-forth interchange among these factors offers insight into deeper understanding of the learners' regressive responses which can inform SLD pedagogy.

2.4 Subtle Regressive Patterns in Recent Research

Keeping this in mind, the final part uses several selected studies to illustrate some similarities between the ideas that have been presented so far and more recent studies. Specifically, one of the findings reported by Taheri et al. (2019) on a group of 188 Iranian ELF university students was the close correlation between emotional and cognitive intelligence, learners' language performance, and thinking patterns. This fact may also suggest the existence of various regressive movements during these processes that require deeper attention. Similarly, Leonova's (2019) research into 383 students aged between 7 and 18 years old revealed substantial correspondence between psychological strengths/capital and their ability to adapt in overcoming educational crises in educational settings. The students exposing the low agency levels, that is, feeling in control of their actions, do not make full use of their mental and personal strengths during challenges. As a result, the correlation across negative emotions, learning issues and behavioural problems was observable. On the other hand, they could also be taken as an indicator of the actively dramatic and dialectical nature of the evental regressive phenomenon.

The same crisis oriented and transformational pattern within seeming regressions can be detected in other studies. For example, using the concept of *perezhivanie* as an analytical tool, Kim's (2021) qualitative empirical study analysed learning experiences and motivation of 103 pre-

service teachers from childhood to high school using a grounded theory approach. The research highlighted the importance of emotional experiences, positive appraisals, and relationships in shaping L2 motivation as well as learning potential. Conversely, this may also point to ongoing and new dialectical regressive forms constructed in varying degrees. As seen also in Igorevna and Vyacheslavovich's (2021) research, the formation of secondary linguistic psychological personality goes beyond speech behaviour and activity. The changes can affect communication, individuality, motivation, or openness.

At the heart of Huh and Kim's (2021: 161) research was the concept of *perezhivanie* to investigate L2 identity in the context of non-academic peripheral community college. Two female graduates' experiences were explored revealing how the students faced academic stigmata and the existence of inner conflicts related to English learning. These experiences led to identity tensions and varying reactions to their circumstances, impacting their L2 identity development, resulting in two different pathways. In a study by Cong-Lem (2022), the importance of considering both emotions and thinking together is discussed. Using content analysis, the author looked into Vygotsky's three nominal writings on affect and cognition, re-emphasising the close connection between the two but also noticing that the current understanding of this connection is still incomplete and far from holistic.

These selected studies seem to indicate that there may be unexplored aspects of dialectically driven regressions which can also be seen as living-dramatic-dialectical entities, resulting from clashing and interweaving of a wide range of opposing forces in variable ratios and intensities possibly at times of crisis. Varying degrees of predominance of differing variables such as affect, cognitive engagement or social factors during developmental processes might potentially influence L2 pathways but also offer new ways of pedagogic and educational interventions. It would be interesting to see further research on their relation to regressive reactions.

3. CONCLUSION

While limited in scope and subject to limitations due to the use of a selected set of studies within a narrative review framework, the study has endeavoured to advance the theoretical aspects of Vygotskian regressions. It specifically considered their 'alive' and dialectical nature as particularly evident in collisions of opposing forces. The study sought to uncover the corrections among variables as part of regressions' 'living' nature in the hope of opening up new ways of their interpretation. Nonetheless, choices had to be made on what to include and what to leave out in this review, resulting in more questions than answers.

Therefore, further empirical and theoretical research is needed to understand different degrees of variable intensities and their impact on regressive responses related to SLD so that their living character can be further defined and distinguished from dead-end regressions or learning deficiencies. In turn, this could help to devise relevant educational and pedagogical approaches. As Vygotsky (1999) once argued, the understanding of disintegration is necessary to the understanding of development and vice versa. It is because regressions can mean that "the whole system of personal consciousness disintegrates" (Vygotsky, 1998). It is hoped that future research will be able to uncover beauty from the ashes in this so often negatively burdened and rejected concept, yet unavoidable, so that latent regenerative periods within regressions could be discovered and offered as part of SLD educational and teaching pedagogy.

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