The Growing Pervasiveness of Perezhivanie

Mike Cole & Natalia Gajdamschko

To cite this article: Mike Cole & Natalia Gajdamschko (2016): The Growing Pervasiveness of Perezhivanie, Mind, Culture, and Activity, DOI: 10.1080/10749039.2016.1201515

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2016.1201515

Published online: 26 Jul 2016.
The Growing Pervasiveness of *Perezhivanie*

Mike Cole\(^a\) and Natalia Gajdamschko\(^b\)

\(^a\)University of California San Diego; \(^b\)Simon Fraser University

We offer here a note of explanation about why the editors decided to devote a special issue of *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (MCA) to the Russian concept of *perezhivanie*. Roughly two years ago the editors were confronted with half a dozen articles, all of which dealt in one way or another with the concept of *perezhivanie*. The problem was that there was very little agreement among the various authors about how, properly, to translate the term into English.

With the help of Mikhail Munipov we undertook an investigation of the various ways in which *perezhivanie* had been translated in Vygotskian texts for which there was a published English translation, beginning with *The Psychology of Art*. Meantime, *MCA* asked each of the authors who submitted an article to wait while we tried to sort things out.

Our rapid investigation revealed quickly the situation discussed at length by the authors whose articles appear in this journal issue. A non-Russian who is reading available translations of Vygotsky would be placed in a hopeless position because of the extraordinarily diverse ways that the term was translated.

Andy Blunden was a participant in these activities from the beginning, and the reader will encounter his conclusions in the following pages. Were it not for Andy, this project would not have been completed.

Our thanks also go to Tatiana Akhutina, Boris Meshcheryakov, Aleksandr Romanchuk, and many other Russian colleagues for the fruitful initial discussion of the term in Russian. Our Facebook-based discussion group also included the following international participants: Sonja Baumer, Milda Bredikyte, Berth Ferholt, Peg Griffin, Pentti Hakkarainen, Robert Lecusay, Jay Lemke, Kiyotaka Miyazaki, Monica Nilsson, Ana Marjanovic-Shane, and Anna Rainio. We are grateful to all them for their contributions on this topic.

We think *perezhivanie* stands as an unusually rich instance of a pervasive phenomenon: a failure of understanding across languages because of a lack of combined bicultural, bilingual expertise. It is an important issue. To paraphrase Roy D’Andrade (1984): every definition is a covert theory. In this case, every use of the term *perezhivanie* is an invitation to theoretical misunderstanding. Consequently, it is a pleasure to encounter a discussion in which the complexities of the task are known and well documented and the chances of future theoretical integration are advanced.

**Reference**