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Academic Discourse Socialization Through Oral Practices: The Negotiation of Participation and Identity Amongst University ESL Learners

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**Academic Discourse Socialization Through Oral Practices:
The Negotiation of Participation and Identity Amongst University ESL Learners**

by

Rebekah M. Holmes

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

Saint Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In Teaching English as a Second Language

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Thesis Committee

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Abstract

As an instructor in an English for Academic Purposes program, students' patterns of participation were puzzling to me. I wondered why some international students did not speak in class and what I could do to help them. This research attempted to discover participants' perspectives regarding academic discourse socialization in small group activities, how students relate participation to their identities, and to discover the changes in identity and participation which occurred throughout the semester. In this research, 12 international university-level ESL students were involved in a dialogue journal which included a pre- and post-semester questionnaire, video-recorded small group discussions, and an audio-recorded stimulated recall task.

Through a statistical analysis and an emergent theme approach, it was found that although students' frequency counts for oral turns taken and number and type of academic strategies used did not significantly increase, changes did occur in relation to students' perceptions and attitudes as identified in the stimulated recall, discussion journal, and questionnaire methods. Students experienced increased confidence after expressing initial anxiety about fears of being misunderstood or making mistakes. The confidence arose after their negotiation of academic discourse and negotiation of identity throughout the semester. They also reported improvements in their oral speaking abilities. Students gained knowledge of their own academic backgrounds and of academic strategies including the importance of listening, critical thinking, and developing their pronunciation and vocabulary. Students also expressed a preference for small group discussion despite having minimal experience in their home countries.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my committee members: Isolde Mueller, Choonkyong Kim, and Semya Hakim whose guidance, patience, and feedback aided my research immensely. I would like to thank each member individually: Dr. Mueller for guiding me towards an appreciation for narratives and stories in research, Dr. Kim for initial topic selection guidance and permission and ideas for implementing this project in my EAP Listening and Speaking course, and Dr. Hakim for challenging me to think deeply about notions of power in relation to education.

My sincere appreciation goes to the students who participated in this research. Your optimism and hard work are inspiring. May you all experience tremendous success during your time in an American university and beyond!

Finally, I'd like to thank my partner, Thomas, Rotchadl, for supporting me through many long days of reading articles on our travels, writing and editing this paper in coffee shops, and for tolerating having papers strewn about the house for years.

"As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities - it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53).

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Upon entrance into American academic classrooms, ESL students engage in complex negotiations of personal and environmental factors from identity to classroom culture. These factors work together to influence students' classroom participation. The purpose of this study is to better understand ESL undergraduate students' negotiation of identity and participation during the process of academic discourse socialization. This study is the result of conversations with colleagues and the researcher's own classroom observations. General questions kept coming up on this topic: What drives students to participate in different ways? What prevents students from fully participating orally in an academic setting? How can the instructor aid students' oral participation in class? All of these guided this study and the research questions presented below:

1. What are the perspectives of university-level ESL learners regarding academic discourse socialization in small-group oral activities?
2. How do students relate their participation in small-group activities to their identities?
3. What are the changes that occur throughout the semester in relation to students' identities and academic discourse socialization?

Research which triangulates qualitative data on the negotiation of international students' identities and participation during academic discourse socialization is needed in the field. Many studies call for additional, in-depth qualitative research studies which examine the interrelationships of the various aspects of academic discourse socialization. Lee (2009) specifically addresses this topic, "To reduce the misunderstanding between communicators and to help international students more successfully function in US graduate classrooms, universities must specifically address classroom discourse skills as well as the dynamics of participation" (p.

155). And to further add to the purpose of this study, Morita (2000) points out that few studies have explored academic discourse socialization through oral language and calls for more extensive investigation in this area, particularly calling for a variety of oral activities to be studied, specifically stating group discussions and the development of oral performance over time, both of which this study examines. Morita examined the academic discourse socialization of graduate students during oral academic presentations (OAP) given in class. Due to the complexity of the task, Morita argues that academic discourse socialization should not be viewed as a, "predictable and unidirectional process of enculturation" (p. 279). Her participants reported linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties with the OAP, including limited English skills, cultural differences in classroom norms and critical thinking skills, and lack of confidence or a feeling of inferiority.

While some studies have looked at identity and L2 academic socialization, this research will contribute to a better understanding of the academic socialization of international ESL students in the university context. This research examines quantitative frequency counts of turns taken and number and types of academic strategies used by 12 international students during oral production in small-group discussions. The research took place over the course of one academic semester in a Listening and Speaking course in a College English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. This data was triangulated with dialogue journals which included a pre- and post-semester questionnaire, and a stimulated recall task. These were analyzed through a qualitative emergent theme approach.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to explore and understand students' perceptions and experiences regarding academic discourse socialization through oral practices. There has been a considerable amount of research regarding the complex topic of students' identities and classroom participation and how students, in turn, become more aware of academic discourse as a part of new communities in US classrooms. In this literature review, salient themes, constructs, and definitions are placed in the context of background information and research relevant to students' identities and perceptions of classroom participation and academic discourse socialization.

The theoretical basis of this study draws primarily from sociocultural theory, language socialization, critical theory, and community of practice. Psychologist Lev Vygotsky's (1978) research, though focusing on L1s, incorporated sociocultural aspects into research on language. Sociocultural theory relates an individual's language skills to the individual's culture and use of language in various cultural contexts. The importance of sociocultural theory to this research is evidenced in research by Lee (2009), who found that,

"In order for students to participate in class discussions, they needed not only academic language but also knowledge of and experience with discourse norms in US classrooms. The students had to constantly negotiate between their prior sociocultural knowledge and the current classroom rules by which they had to operate" (p. 153).

Critical theory is also seen as important to this research. Kinchloe, McLaren, and Steinberg in *The Sage Handbook for Qualitative Research* (2011) define a criticalist as, "a researcher, teacher, or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: All thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted" (p. 164). Furthermore, Giroux (2010) describes critical pedagogy as,

"...shifting the emphasis from the teachers to students and making visible the relationships among knowledge, authority, and power. Giving students the opportunity to be problem posers and engage in a culture of questioning puts in the foreground the crucial issues of who has control over the conditions of learning and how specific modes of knowledge, identity, and authority are constructed within particular classroom relations" (p. 2).

Therefore, the active involvement of students in the research process is implemented in this research. In this study, students are given the opportunity to think critically about their own participation and identity during a semester in an American English for Academic Purposes program. Through the dialogue journal, they can communicate directly and ask questions about the topics, and through stimulated recall they can see themselves on video as a participant in a small group discussion and analyze the interaction.

Ochs' (1988) defines discourse as, "a set of norms, preferences, and expectations relating linguistic structures to context, which speaker-hearers draw on and modify in producing and interpreting language in context" (p. 8). In addition, Bourdieu (1977) discusses, "Language is not only an instrument of communication, but also an instrument of power...discourse must establish the laws which determine who (*de facto* and *de jure*) may speak, to whom, and how..." (p. 648).

Academic discourse socialization, then, is defined by Duff (2010) as the process in which students who are new to an academic community become more competent in regards to both oral and written discourse. Another explanation comes from Morita (2009) who states that academic discourse socialization is a complex and dynamic process in which students must navigate identity, membership, power, and more. Barnawi's (2009) work is quite similar to the research being carried out in this study. Through a case study of two Saudi students' construction of identity in an L2 academic classroom setting at a university, he argues that, "the newcomers' (i.e. international students) socialization in a certain academic discourse community is a conflictual

and complex process, which involves struggle, negotiation and construction and deconstruction of identities" (p. 62). Even with a case study of two students with similar backgrounds, Barnawi acknowledges potential differences between participants including, "unique learning experiences (i.e., cultural, religion, and identities) in America-oriented classrooms regarding their classroom participation" (p. 70).

This research attempts to incorporate language socialization theory into inquiry regarding academic discourse socialization. Duff (2007) defines language socialization as, "the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group" (p. 310). She goes on to describe the importance of the mediation in this process for the end goal of gaining mastery of linguistic conventions, adopting appropriate identities, and other behaviors related to the target group. Duff lays out the common approaches to Second Language Socialization (SLS) which include, "(1) a focus on indexicality in language learning, and (2) a community of practice orientation to SLS, which also embraces sociocultural theory" (p. 309). She continues to explain that it is a new way of thinking about language learning as a, "means of foregrounding social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge and how it is gained, across a variety of language learning situations at various ages and stages of life" (p. 310).

For the purposes of this study, oral participation was examined through videos in small group discussions. The complexity of the factors which influence participation has been noted by scholars throughout research. Pierre Bourdieu (1977) sets the foundation for research into linguistic communication and the importance of the social context, including group dynamics.

He takes notice of symbolic power relations and the hidden conditions for participation.

Bourdieu states,

"What is said is a compromise (like dreams) between what would like to be said and what can be said, a compromise which obviously depends on what the speaker has to say, his capacity to produce language, assess the situation, and euphemize his expression, and on his position in the field in which he expresses himself" (p. 663).

Research into group work is surprisingly thin in some key areas. Chen & Hird (2006) studied 36 female students at a university in China. They made four groups of eight and one group of four students. These students held discussions with topics derived from the students' textbook, such as collaboratively designing a robot and discussing the ideal family. They stress the individuality of experience that happens in group work and work to highlight these differences in their research.

Scholars have debated the cultural importance of the definition of participation. Duff (2008) explains, "*overt* participation cannot be the only measure of language and culture learning because competent people may opt *not* to participate like their peers or mentors, or may be unable to for a variety of reasons" (p. 122). Participation is not always manifested through speaking and can take a variety of forms. Zheng's (2010) methodology focused on a case-study of multiple Chinese students' negotiation of academic socialization in which interviews and video-recorded observations were transcribed for later analysis. For example, it was noted that students did not produce many verbal responses in class, but participated in other ways, as in listening attentively, following directions, taking notes, etc. and indicated that silence does not indicate passivity (p. 455). In another study, Lave & Wenger (1991) discuss *peripheral participation*, and describe it as, "an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement" (p. 37). To further describe legitimate peripheral participation, the authors explain, "...newcomers' legitimate peripherality provides them with

more than an 'observational' lookout post: It crucially involves participation as a way of learning - of both absorbing and being absorbed in - 'the culture of practice'" (p. 95).

Vishwanathan's (2014) research on group discussions further illustrates the dynamics of participation: "...The non-participation of some learners in a group discussion may be attributed to socio-cultural factors that need to be examined to understand the reasons for non-participation and find ways to invite better participation from the silent learners without making them feel ashamed or alienated in any way." The study conducted informal interviews with 40 students, and data analysis revealed that almost all learners' reticence to participate was due to cultural or acquired traits including a lack of confidence, assumption of unequal contest, low self-esteem which led to preference of silence over participation, respect for elders, and an expression of unity and solidarity.

Similarly, Lee (2009) identified major categories that influenced the participation of Korean graduate students: English language ability, sociocultural differences, individual differences, and classroom environment. Students felt that their English ability was not adequate for participation, they had different cultural backgrounds regarding respectful classroom participation, and their background with classroom norms influenced their participation in US classrooms. In addition, Ho (2011) found that, "small-group discussions provided a context in which students were gradually socialized into the discipline specific discourse and the practices of an ESL/EFL professional" (p. 437). Morita (2004) suggests that quantitative analysis of participation, "yields limited knowledge about L2 learners' perspectives, especially those learners who may have little verbal behavior in the classroom" (p. 575). In order to account for various

forms of participation, video-recorded small group discussions were utilized in this research to observe nonverbal forms of participation.

The formation and negotiation of identity in academic contexts is complex and has been examined in research by Cervatiuc (2009). The researcher studied how adult immigrants in Canada form their linguistic and cultural identities through interviews. Cervatiuc identified three emergent strategies:

"generation of a self-motivating inner dialogue as a counter-discourse to the social marginalization paradigm expected by the NS community, finding ways to gain access into the social networks of native speakers in order to improve communicative competence and secure meaningful employment, and symbolic membership in an 'imagined community' of successful multilingual and bilingual adult immigrants" (p. 254).

Despite the wealth of research that has been conducted into identity, participation, and academic discourse socialization, the complexity of defining the concept of identity is apparent.

Bourdieu's (1977) statement highlights the social and personal aspects of linguistic competence:

"...competence is not reducible to the specifically linguistic capacity to generate a certain type of discourse but involves all the properties constituting the speaker's *social personality*" (p 655). In

addition, Hansen & Liu (1997) state:

"Social identity is individual, and developing a hypothesis of social identity that categorizes an individual's behavior into groups, and the groups into determined categories, denies the individual and dynamic nature of social identity" (p. 571-572).

Furthermore, in the tradition of Bourdieu, Bonny Norton Pierce (1995) uses classroom-based social research (diaries, questionnaires, interviews, and home visits) to, "engage the social identities of students in ways that will improve their language learning outside the classroom and help them claim the right to speak" (p. 26). She argues for, "social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change" (p. 9). In her 2000 research, Norton states, "I use the term identity

to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5).

In her research, Norton also seeks to investigate, "how the learners made sense of their experiences" (p. 22), which is much like their perception. Norton states,

"SLA theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities that L2 learners have to practice the target language outside of the classroom. In addition, many have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual" (p. 12).

Additional identity research has been conducted in the classroom with findings which have pedagogical implications. Miller (1999) examined the relationship between language use and identity in the ESL classroom setting. She discusses the integration of language use, institutional context, and identity for migrant high school students (p. 149). Furthermore, Haugh's (2008) findings indicate that identity data is interactional and jointly constructed through researcher and the researched. Haugh argues that, "More attention needs to be paid to the ways in which identities are discursively negotiated through interaction" (p. 207). Another researcher who appears frequently is Patricia Duff. Duff (2008) argues that, "Children, adolescents, and adults, have histories, desires, fears, identities, and (some) choices with respect to the discourses they negotiate, the affective stances they perform, and the power structures they encounter, appropriate, or defy" (p. 110). Finally, Morita (2009) conducted a case study of one international student's academic discourse socialization to compare the impact of differences in language, culture, and gender, the recurrent themes, within the academic community. She also examined the impact on this student's participation. She concluded that students' identities are co-constructed by the student and contexts in the community. Based on the above research, it is

crucial that this study grow from a primary focus on students' stated beliefs rather than any assumptions about students or their backgrounds.

Students' cultural backgrounds have been known to play a role in their classroom participation in a variety of research. Equally as difficult to define, Elinor Ochs' (1988) provides a definition of culture as, "a loose set of guidelines and premises, shared to varying extents by members of a society" (p. 6). Another definition is given by Collier's (2005) research which includes broader time frames, histories, and structural factors such as social institutions, norms, dominant ideologies, status, privilege, hierarchy, and agency. Her working definition of culture is, "a communicative location, a shared and contested alignment created by individuals, groups, organizations, or institutions" (p. 242). Kim et al. (2007) defines culture as, "A set of beliefs or attitudes that an individual learns in a given culture affects communication behaviors, such as people's motivational tendencies to avoid or approach verbal communication" (p. 304). In previous research, Kim et al. (2001) examined the varying cultural norms and values regarding verbal participation in high- and low-context cultures and independent and group cultural orientations. This research also warns that cultural norms cannot be generalized in studies of communication, yet, also contradictorily, states that culture does indeed affect individuals' behavior. They continue, to say that, "Understanding the cultural underpinnings behind verbal communication motivation will foster maximum effectiveness in pluralistic societies" (p. 384). They propose an integrated model of verbal communication predispositions which include, "(a) the impact of culture on individual values (the cognitive equivalents of individualism and collectivism), and (b) the impact of individual values on predispositions toward verbal communication" (p. 393). Additionally, Morita (2009) documented a student's interactions with

the various levels of culture: "the general educational culture of Canadian graduate school, the local disciplinary culture of his department, and the classroom culture of various courses he was taking across the curriculum" (p. 450). The contribution of culture to identity will be one theme that is considered in this study.

This research employs a primarily qualitative, triangulated design. Duff (2008) states that "Methodological and theoretical pluralism should be welcomed in 'LS research' because it allows us to view common phenomena from distinct but complementary perspectives, and not just according to the perspectives of first-generation American linguistic anthropology" (p. 113). In addition, Hansen and Liu (1999) indicate that methodological choices should allow for dynamism: "We believe that because social identity is a dynamic phenomenon, it should be studied with a methodology that is dynamic both in philosophy and practice" (p. 573). They also indicate that data triangulation is another way to accommodate the complexity of this research topic. Still, data from the group discussion observations will briefly be discussed from a quantitative angle.

For these reasons, dialogue journals, which include a pre- and post-semester questionnaire, group discussion frequency counts, and stimulated recall were utilized in this research. Duff (2008) states that, "Observation alone may not reveal participants' reasons for their behaviors or transformation, which is why triangulated and emic perspectives become crucial" (p. 113). Norton Pierce (1995) uses diaries and journals to encourage learners to reflect and practice metacognition with their language learning. Bell (2002) also explains how, "Narratives allow researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness...Narrative lets researchers get at information that people do not consciously know

themselves. Analysis of people's stories allows deeply hidden assumptions to surface... " (p. 209). Similarly, Peyton & Staton (1991) state,

"Dialogue journals are essentially written conversations between a student and teacher, kept in a bound notebook or on a computer disk or file. Both partners write back and forth, frequently, and over a period of time, about whatever interests them. Their goal is to communicate in writing, to exchange ideas and information free of the concern for form and correctness so often imposed on developing writers" (p. 3).

The authors continue on to explain the benefits of dialogue journals including, "development in language proficiency, writing and reading ability, improved overall communication, and by involving students' language and cultural backgrounds, students can explore the foundation of their abilities in the context of ongoing learning" (p. 101). Canagarajah (1996) elaborates,

"...narratives are gaining prominence in research publications because they represent holistically the local knowledge of the communities studied. In opposition to grand theories and global knowledge structures, narratives represent knowledge from the bottom up; in opposition to explicit forms of theorization, they embody implicit forms of reasoning and logic; in opposition to positivistic scholarly discourses which are elitist in their specialized and abstract nature, narratives represent concrete forms of knowledge that are open to further interpretation. Narratives, then, represent the research process in all its concreteness and complexity, remaining open-ended for creative theorization" (p. 327).

Stimulated recall is another method used in this research. Gass & Mackey (2000) explain that stimulated recall methodology is used to explore learners' thought processes (or strategies) at the time of an activity or task. This is achieved by asking learners to report those thoughts after they have completed a task or activity (p. xi). The authors discuss different types of stimulated recall, consecutive recall being the most closely applicable to this study. The stimulus for recall, as described by Gass & Mackey (2000), is to, "reactivate or refresh recollection of cognitive processes so that they can be accurately recalled and verbalized" (p. 53). The dialogue journals, questionnaires, and stimulated recall all incorporate introspective data into the methodology in

order to gain insight into learners' perceptions about participation and the relationship to their identities. The next chapter discusses the methodology in greater depth.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

The following chapter presents research questions and designs including the research participants, research instruments and procedures. The intention of this study is to explore the relationship between identity and participation amongst university-level ESL students. Students arrive in the United States with a variety of background experiences and cultures, and a variety of perspectives regarding the classroom culture in the United States. This study was undertaken to investigate students' attitudes about participation and their perceptions about identity and classroom discourse. The research questions to be addressed in the following study are as follows:

1. What are the perspectives of university-level ESL learners regarding academic discourse socialization in small-group oral activities?
2. How do students relate their participation in small-group activities to their identities?
3. What are the changes that occur throughout the semester in relation to students' identities and academic discourse socialization?

The participants in this study were 12 international undergraduate students (9 male, 3 female) enrolled in a Listening and Speaking course in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program at a large, public, Midwestern university. The students range in age, background, and English ability. Students came from a wide variety of countries including Burundi, Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Students had been studying English from a range of less than one year to 16 years, but all had similar listening comprehension scores which placed them in this course and varying speaking abilities. Participants resided in the United States anywhere from having just arrived shortly before the start of the semester to having lived

here for 2 years. Students were majoring in Economics, English Education, Information Systems, Management, Radiology and four types of Engineering: Chemical, Computer, Electrical, and Mechanical. For the purposes of confidentiality, student's names have changed to self-chosen gender and culturally consistent pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Permission from students for use of all data was employed.

In order to thoroughly explore the research questions and triangulate data, three primary methods of data collection have been used: (1) online dialogue journaling which includes a pre- and post-semester questionnaire, (2) observations in small group discussion-based activities, and (3) stimulated recall. These are described in detail below.

Participants kept online journals using the free website, Penzu. At the beginning of the semester, students received training to use the technological component of this website and were guided through the sign-up process in a computer lab. They also received a handout with due dates and sign-up instructions (see Appendix B). Students joined a course page and submitted weekly journals based on topics chosen by the instructor, who then commented on the online journal. In addition, the initial and final journal were not used in the data, but served as a training and calibration exercise and as the pre- and post- semester questionnaire. The course page appeared as follows:

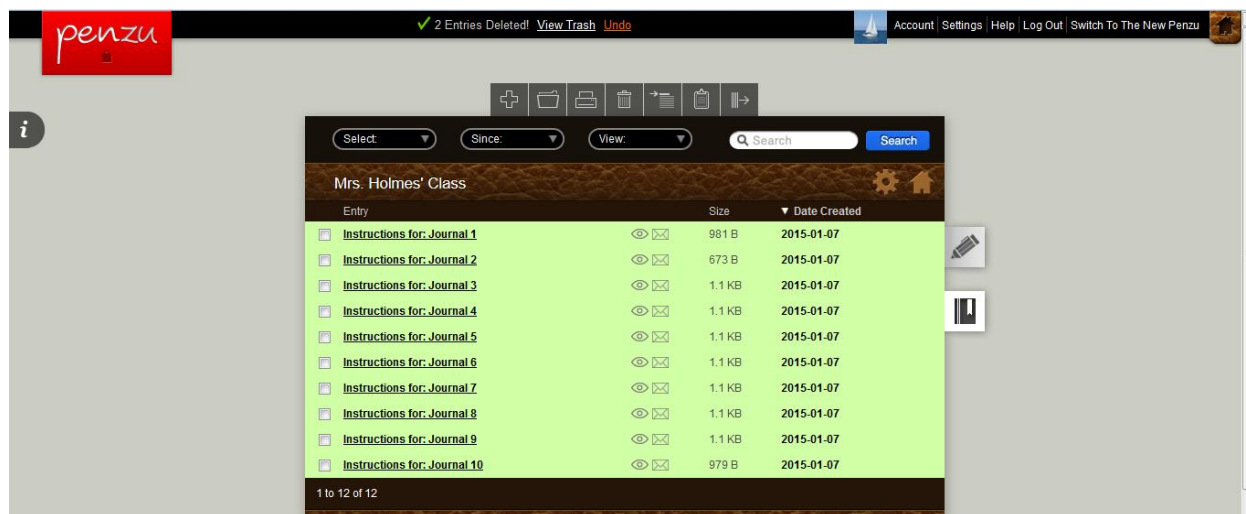


Figure 3.1

Penzu Classroom Dialogue Journal Page

The journals were conducted using a list of weekly questions designed to generate students' introspective responses (see Appendix C). Students practiced metacognition in reviewing their experiences, strategies, and difficulties in small-group participation and the classroom environment in general. The topics aimed to encourage student reflection in order to answer the research questions. Students chose which question to answer each week, so that, depending on their experiences at a given time, they could choose the most salient topic.

In addition, a brief questionnaire was administered to each participant at the beginning and end of the semester using Penzu (see Appendix D). The questionnaire had two purposes. First, it was used to gather background information and demographics of participants. The second purpose is to compare students' perceptions and experiences regarding small-group oral participation and academic discourse at two points in time: before and after a semester of academic English preparation in an EAP program.

Participants were divided into groups of 3 students. Each group met 10 times throughout the course of the semester for one hour. These groups also functioned as students' mandatory tutorial session which was required by the EAP program. Because these tutorials were a component of the EAP program, some work was predetermined; however, 10 minutes of the tutorials were used for small-group discussions. For logistical reasons and to minimize the scheduling difficulties for students, groups were formed primarily based on schedule availability of the participants. The backgrounds of participants did not factor into group formation, making the group formation as random as possible based on students' schedules.

The first session focused on training and allowing students to acclimate themselves to the environment and the video recordings. Students engaged in a metacognitive discussion about participating in small group discussions themselves. The group discussion prompts were based on textbook chapters associated with the College EAP course (see Appendix E). Group-discussions were video recorded for two reasons. First, they were collected to facilitate data analysis at a later time and to observe both verbal and nonverbal changes in participation throughout the semester. Secondly, videos were collected for stimulated-recall interviews with the participants after tutorials. The stimulated recall methodology is discussed in further detail below.

The final methodology is stimulated recall. In this technique, students met once individually with the researcher shortly after a discussion to view one video of their small-group discussion. The students were asked to comment on their participation in the small-group discussion following the prompt by Gass & Mackey (2000):

“What we're going to do now is watch the video. I am interested in what you were thinking at the time you were participating in the group discussion. I can hear what you

are saying by looking at and listening to the video, but I don't know what you were thinking. So, what I'd like you to do is tell me what you were thinking" (p. 59).

Other general questions were asked to gain more insight into the students' thoughts about participation, such as, "What are you thinking at this point?" These interviews were audio-recorded for future transcription and analysis. According to Mackey & Gass (2005), "In this method, the observer makes an audiotape or videotape of a lesson for the stimulus, and then plays the tape to a participant, periodically stopping the tape to ask what the participant had been thinking at that particular point in time" (p. 203). This method allowed the researcher to gain additional introspective information about students' perceptions about their participation.

Chapter 4: RESULTS

The data were primarily analyzed for emergent themes and patterns within and across methods in relationship to the research questions. Through all the methods, data was triangulated in order to provide an in-depth, holistic understanding of students' perceptions of participation, academic discourse socialization and their identities. The primary purpose of data analysis is to answer the research questions described in the methodology section.

Like the conversational analysis method described by Lazaraton (2002), this research attempts to discover patterns in small-group discussions in a process- rather than product-oriented approach: "no feature or observation based on it is too small, too random, or too irrelevant or insignificant...there is no way to know beforehand which features of talk might be important in later analyses" (p. 2). The recording of video attempted to discover the changes that occurred in students' verbal and nonverbal participation.

First, while this thesis focuses in the qualitative components of the data, a preliminary quantitative analysis was performed on data from the video-recorded group discussions. Frequency counts were conducted on observational data. Because the discussion lengths varied, the number of turns taken by each student and the number and type of academic strategies used were tallied and then calculated per minute. The academic strategies counted were borrowed from Frazier & Lemming's (2013) *Lecture Ready 3*:

- *giving opinion*
- *nonverbal cue*
- *asking for clarification*
- *asking for elaboration*
- *ask for opinions*
- *expression of interest*
- *other follow-up question*
- *agree/disagree*
- *attempt to compromise*
- *summarize*
- *paraphrase*
- *expanding*
- *bring the discussion back on topic*

Then, the data were statistically analyzed for changes from the beginning to the end of tutorials. The column “beginning of tutorial” represents a sample taken towards the beginning of the semester from one group discussion, which is compared with counts taken at the “end of tutorial” which falls close to the end of one semester. It states “tutorial” rather than “semester” because the tutorials began a few weeks into the semester and it would not be accurate to say “beginning of the semester.” This figure provides a comparison of the changes that took place near the beginning and end of the semester. Below that, each group is represented separately, though the data showed no significant difference between the groups. The numbers on the table are the quotients of the raw number of turns and academic strategies used divided by the number of minutes of the whole discussion, giving a count per minute to provide a consistent comparison. For example, Ryo’s .55 means that he took a turn approximately once every two minutes, with Hussain’s measure 2.06 being about 2 turns per minute. To answer the research question, no significant changes took place between the beginning and end of the semester. A figure of the frequency counts is included next.

	Beginning of Tutorial (per minute)		End of Tutorial (per minute)	
	Turns Taken	Academic Strategies	Turns Taken	Academic Strategies
Group 1				
Ryo	0.55	0.92	0.93	1.40
Alex	1.48	2.03	1.56	2.95
Wayne	0.74	1.29	1.40	2.95
Group 2				
Narisha	1.62	1.92	0.44	0.59
Paula	0.88	1.47	1.18	1.62
Hussain	2.06	2.80	0.74	1.33
Group 3				
Mojo	0.81	1.63	1.39	1.89
Hemant	0.54	1.09	1.29	1.49
Marie	0.81	1.49	1.69	2.59
Group 4				
Jay	0.70	1.41	0.76	1.41
Jeongho	0.82	1.29	1.52	2.17
Ujjwal	0.70	0.94	0.87	1.30

Figure 4.1

Observational Frequency Counts

Quantitative analysis was performed for number and type of academic strategies used and turns taken per minute at the beginning and end of the semester. The quantitative statistical analysis included t-tests, both paired and grouped, one-way analysis of variance, and correlation. Paired t-tests were run to compare pre- versus post-semester data using all cases and then broken down by group. Despite the many tests performed, the t-values and associated significant values indicated that there were no significant differences found. However, it was notable that the overall number and variety of academic strategies used was high, turns were generally well distributed amongst participants, and many students frequently used nonverbals such as nodding and gestures to participate.

Next, an inductive content analysis was performed on the qualitative data from the three methods described above using colored coding by hand. Inductive data analysis, as described by Creswell (2007), builds "categories, patterns, and themes from the 'bottom-up', by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information...working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes" (p. 39). In addition, this research involves an emergent design by developing main themes by focusing on the participants' voices and the patterns which emerge through their participation and dialogue journals. The method of analysis is illustrated in Morita's (2004) qualitative data analysis framework with four core activities: "(1) data coding by classifying the findings based on questions; (2) data display by reexamining the findings for data reduction and verification; (3) data reduction by screening out the findings relevant to the research questions, and (4) conclusion drawing by looking at the entire findings for idea generalizations" (p. 70). Below are the themes which emerged from each method of data collection, with three categories of themes emerging: affective, metacognitive, and linguistic. The sub-themes are further explained.

The first theme related to the affective aspect was negotiating identity and confidence. An item in the questionnaire asked participants, "How do you describe yourself?" to gain insight into students' changing identities. A theme that emerged was students' discussion of their identities in nuanced ways, and particularly in regards to their confidence in small group discussions. Jeongho explained at the beginning of the semester, "I am a funny guy." However, through experiencing difficulties communicating his sense of humor across language and cultures, at the end of the semester he said, "In my thinking, I want to be a funny person and I am

a funny person too. But, when I use English, it is a little bit hard for me.” Here, he is negotiating his identity between the person he believed himself to be and the person he wants to be.

Marie said at the beginning of the semester, “How I describe myself is that I am a kind of shy and quiet person but very smiling. I am always laughing. However, I like to socialize with new people.” While Marie’s identity statement did not experience much change, she did state at the end of the semester that, “Tutorials group discussions help me a lot to feel more comfortable and confident during class discussions.” Similarly, at the beginning of the semester, students expressed their reticence to participate as in the following quote by Ujjwal in response to the question, “How do you feel when you talk in class?”: “I think I feel a bit nervous, excited, and wonder all at the same time.” However, at the end of the semester, the same student said, “Now I feel a bit confidence, happy, and interested to talk in class if I feel to do it.”

Students discussed and negotiated their identities in the stimulated recall task. First, Marie, the only female in her group commented, “He asked me to go first because you are a girl, and I was like, ‘No, what?’ (laughs).” Perhaps her group member was trying to enlist the adage, *ladies first*, but this may have been unknown to Marie. Her response indicated that she did not expect this, and she didn’t understand why she would be called out to begin the discussion because of her gender. Gender expectations were only one of the ways in which identity influenced the negotiation of participation.

The most illuminating comment during stimulated recall came from Wayne: “I was trying to give Ryo freedom to speak. I feel at that time that’s Ryo’s time because he didn’t speak and he’s a good speaker.” From the stimulated recall interview, Ryo indicated a negotiation of identity in relation to his participation in the United States vs. his home country: “I am

wondering why I don't speak. But I think even in Japanese, I speak like this. I speak after I listen to what they say and thinking. I look for the timing to speak. Maybe I have to adapt English style conversation, but what I have to do, I don't know what I have to do."

The second affective theme was the fear of being incorrect or misunderstood. Students commented about a fear of being incorrect or misunderstood in the dialogue journal. While this is related to the issue of confidence, I believe that it stands alone as its own theme because it is related to a particular anxiety that appeared frequently in the journals. Marie wrote that she was worried if people would be able to understand what she was saying and said, "I also feel embarrassed to make mistakes." Hussain said, "Sometime I cannot participate because i feel afraid to do a mistake so I prefer to be silent." Some students attributed this perfectionism to their culture, as in Paula's comment:

"Many of Korean students feel very anxious and worried about the wrong (sic) answer and others' gazes. This is because we have learned how to distinguish between correct and wrong answers. A focus of education is ability to select the best correct answer rather than think about why it is right or wrong. That makes students be afraid of their group participation being incorrect. It also makes them cannot express their opinions freely."

Ryo added that a fear of being incorrect is a facet of his home culture: "We just take notes and listen what teacher said in class in Japan, we often hesitate to speak our own opinion to the class. Because it's our culture that we feel ashamed to make mistake in front of many people." Yet he experienced increasing confidence: "I was embarrassed to make mistakes in front of people when I am speaking, so it made me nervous at first. Recently, I feel my listening and speaking ability are gradually improving, and I'm not afraid a lot of making mistakes so I could be speaking a lot more than before."

On the other hand, Mojo wrote that this anxiety about perfectionism doesn't exist in his country, but instead is a facet of American academic culture: "In my country...one things is we do not really care about grammar mistake, pronunciation, and vocabulary...In US, when we are in group participation, we care about everything. For example, accent, AWL words, pronunciation, and others." Other students felt anxiety about whether or not they could be understood. Ujjwal said, "The reasons for me to become nervous were my hoarse voice, hasty behavior, and ability to make everyone understand my opinions." Similarly, Wayne explained, "What I do not like is sometimes in a group discussion people do not understand each other, which makes it so difficult to communicate."

The third affective theme was shyness, confidence, and identity. Students wrote about shyness and developing confidence through small group discussions. As Marie wrote, "If it is in English, it is more embarrassing," and Hemant plainly states, "...I get nervous while speaking English..." And the reason for this? Paula says, "It is probably because of the lack of confidence to my English ability. I never live in an environment to be exposed to listening and speaking English so speaking feels awkward for me." Jay also linked shyness to his identity and explained that nervousness was standing in the way of being the English speaker he wanted to become: "I want to be a leader who can socialize other and make people speak their opinion...for these mind, my body, and voice are tremble..."

There could also be a cultural component to these students' shyness. Marie was one participant who wrote about this topic in detail. Marie's cultural and gender identity influenced her verbal participation: "People in my country are very shy especially women. In my country women are very conservative and respectful. They don't talk loudly." In addition to those

factors, she also explained a predisposition towards shyness, “I am naturally a shy person and to speak a language which I don’t speak well was difficult for me.” She also writes, “Furthermore, I am fluent in my native language. I have power in this language. As a result, I can easily participate in a small-group discussion or in classrooms...I feel comfortable and confident.”

Like Marie, Jeongho was an active participant in his home country, yet had difficulty participating verbally in American classrooms: “There are several difference about my participation in american classrooms. First, I become a shy student. Because it is hard to me to participate by using English...So, I feel very heavy. But in Korea, I was not a shy student, just active participatent (sic).” But Ujjwal expressed a growing confidence: “Likewise I am building some confidence gradually as compared between my home country and America through class participation.”

Students expressed an increased confidence speaking and many attributed this to their experience in group discussions. For example, Hemant stated: “I do think that group discussion is one of the prominent factor of this class, it helps the students to become intellectual, confident, and gives extra knowledge to the student.” Marie echoes his sentiment: “What I mostly like in tutorials is we are in a small group which makes the atmosphere less stressful, it is easy to express your view in front of few people...my fear about speaking has been decreased since the beginning of the semester.” Through group discussions, students were able to develop an increased confidence.

The fourth affective theme was an optimistic outlook. Despite some of the themes above that express difficulties during small group discussions due to accent, pronunciation, shyness, etc., students expressed a lot of optimism at the prospect of their language improving in the

dialogue journals. Student indicated that they are likely to experience continued language development with hard work and persistence. Marie said,

“However, when I came to study here in United States, I was decided to manage my fear and stress. I considered speaking English as my challenge. When I started Intensive English classes with lot of international students, I discovered that I had not a too bad accent as I thought. It gave me strength and courage to speak and improve my English. Over time I feel comfortable and confident speaking with other people.”

Here, Marie discusses how she took the challenge of learning English upon herself and her fears and self-doubts diminished as a result of her continued effort. Similarly, Ryo stated, “Sometimes the classes are pretty (sic) tough for me because of a lot of speaking and listening in English, but I’m sure my English is gradually improving...therefore I would like to keep the motivation to the classes from now on.” Both of these sample quotations from students illustrate how challenges, confidence, and student motivation interact in the language classroom.

Metecognitively, students expressed a preference for small group discussions. In the questionnaire, in response to the question, “Which discussion formats do you think help you talk in class?” a number of students indicated a preference for small group discussions at the beginning of the semester but many more did so at the end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester, Ryo said, “Small group is better for me. I can talk a lot when I’m in a small group compared with a whole class.” And at the end of the semester many students echoed Marie’s statement from above, “tutorials help me a lot to feel more comfortable and confident.” She also said, “Whole class and small group are important. However, It is easy and comfortable to speak in a small group.” At the beginning of the semester, Hussain expressed that he had no preference for whole class, small group, or online discussions, but at the end he preferred small group work “because we can ask each one.” And Ujjwal said at the end of the semester, “I think small group

formats can help me talk in class. Handling pressure among small group is easier and convenient than being with the whole class.” This is very similar to the findings in Lee’s (2009) research with Korean graduate students. All of Lee’s participants but one said that they, “felt more comfortable in small group discussions than in the whole class formats” (p. 152).

The next metacognitive theme was the importance of listening. Students emphasized the importance of listening in the stimulated recall task. Mojo explained multiple times during stimulated recall that listening was his first priority: “I’m trying to listen to what his idea at the time.” He also said, “I’m trying to focus on listening to what she’s trying to say, because if I don’t get any part of what he says then it doesn’t make sense.” And Mojo’s behavior is very similar even in his own country and first language: “Most of the time in my country in group discussion I always try listening. If I can get what his point, I’m trying to listen and understand what he trying to say to me. What he trying to explain about the topic. What he trying to discussion.” Hemant’s comment illustrates the reason for a focus on listening: “At that time, I am listening to both people. I understand by listening to sentence what he speak, but not clearly.” He stressed the importance of listening due to the fact that it was difficult for him to understand some components of his group members’ speech. Another student took another perspective on the importance of listening, reminding us that there are two sides to the listening coin. Alex explained that he felt everyone participated more when they could listen to him: “Everyone is participating and they are listening to my views. It feels good for me. They were listening to me.”

The final metacognitive theme was cultural exchange and differences. In the discussion journal, students explained that one major benefit of small group discussions was the ability to

undergo intercultural exchange. Wayne explained, “I love learning new things from all different people representing different countries.” He continued in another entry, “...we can look at something deeply like religion or beliefs or how do people behave with their family members. These type of topics can lead us to see other perspective and theories.” Hemant stated, “From group participation we can learn about cultural exchange...In group discussion there is organization of different student of different country which is one of the interesting one. We learn about different culture and tradition of different country by each other.”

Another aspect of the cultural component was that cultural differences caused some difficulties in group discussions. Some students were not familiar with group discussions or oral participation in general, and this was a part of the academic discourse socialization as well, as in Alex’s case: “While I was back in Nepal, I didn’t use to have group discussions. I regret that now because having group discussion is pretty awesome thing to do because it will allow us to know the different views of different people.”

Two students from Asia, Ryo and Jay, explained that group discussions were quite new for them because of academic culture in their home countries. Ryo said, “We just take notes and listen what teacher said in class in Japan, we often hesitate to speak our own opinion to the class. Because it’s our culture that we feel ashamed to make mistake in front of many people.” And Jay added, “...I was not familiar with speaking because the most Korean study reading, listening, and writing for exams to get a good score...In fact, the reason why I come in the United States is to do these activities which let me speak in English.” Marie also gave a particularly enlightening comment about how the cultural differences both benefitted and hindered group discussions. She said:

“First of all, the culture is different...Even if we have the same subject, the way of the discussion is conducted is different because of the significant cultural and social differences. We have different way of thinking. Based on my own experience, I could say that college American education is based on the critical thinking.”

The importance of critical thinking and the differences between discussion styles because of culture and academic discourse expectations are evident to students.

The first linguistic theme was the inability to understand group members due to accent and pronunciation. During stimulated recall, students commented that they were unable to understand each other's speech due to vocabulary, accent, pronunciation, or other unknown reasons. Paula repeated twice, “I can't understand his point. I can't get the point.” Mojo commented, “To be honestly, I just don't understand...sometimes it's difficult because of the accent.” Later in the stimulated recall interview he said, “I'm trying to understand everything about what he say. It's important for me because if I don't understand any of his idea it's a little bit rude for the other partner.”

About half of the time, someone called out a specific person that they could not understand, leading to the belief that it may have been a specific language feature that was causing them difficulty. Hemant said, “When Mojo speaks, I can't understand him because he speaks...why, I don't know.” Both Jeongho and Jay were from the same language background, and commented that they had difficulty understanding their Nepali group member. Jeongho said, “Already I didn't understand well Ujjwal voice and pronunciation. It's difficult for me because he uses some Arabic English so it's a little bit difficult for me to understand,” and “I didn't understand something.” Jay commented similarly: “Ujjwal's pronunciation is hard to understand.”

In the discussion journals, this theme was also apparent Ryo said, “It also very hard to listen what they say because sometimes they have unique pronounce of their countries or they speak very fast.” Marie explained that, “In classroom there is students from everywhere, which means that there is more accents in English.” She also wrote, “During group discussions, it is more difficult and complex because all students have different accent. We have to focus heavily.” Mojo explains, “ The another [difficult thing] is their accent and pronunciation because I am not use to with their accent and back in my country we do not notice about pronunciation when we talk each other...” Students also pointed out their own goals of improving pronunciation in order to be understood. Wayne said, “I need to improve my pronunciation a little bit in order to be an excellent speaker,” and Hemant said, “...the words some time I pronounce did not get perfect sounds which is my first problem...” It appears that pronunciation and accent are related to students’ fears of being misunderstood.

The final linguistic theme was a lack of vocabulary. Students indicated in the discussion journal that their limited or lack of vocabulary words in English made it difficult for them to participate fully. Jeongho said, “The reason why participation with English is hard to me, I do not know many English words and expression so I can not express whole my opinion precisely.” Marie explains how this can affect students’ confidence: “We sometimes forget vocabulary words. Consequently, we are embarrassing and stressful in discussions...” Students had difficulty both drawing on known words, and also using new words. Paula says, “Also, at the middle of speaking my opinion, I sometimes cannot remember a specific word. It makes me very embarrassed and also makes my opinion look less persuasive.” Both Marie & Paula said this was embarrassing. Ujjwal also found using incorrect vocabulary words to be a problem: “I may mix

or replace the words that I wanted to express,” and Hemant had difficulty remembering and using newly acquired vocabulary words in discussion: “And there are other few difficulties I cannot use new words while speaking...” But students also took this as a learning opportunity to be exposed to new vocabulary words, as in Mojo’s quote, “I always learn from other students about new vocabularies which I am not too much familiar or I am not to use this word or so on.”

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study is exploratory in nature and examines the patterns which emerged within the data set. While there were no specific patterns of expected results, the framework for the study and the concepts of identity and participation in small-group participation determined the relevant results which are reported here. The data were predicted to reveal insight about individuals' varying participation patterns and constructions of identity through the dialogue journals, questionnaires, observations, and stimulated recall. While individual qualitative data cannot always be generalized, data were examined for aggregate patterns. As Menard-Warwik (2004) explains, "Teachers need to be cautious in assuming that they have understood the reality of students' lives based on student narratives; they especially need to be cautious about generalizing the narrated experience of particular learners to entire cultural groups" (p. 309).

The data presented above provide insight into how international undergraduate students navigate academic discourse, particularly through oral participation in small group discussions. This research examines whether or not learners are able to become fully participating members of the communities of practice they wish to join.

The emergent themes were organized into three major categories: affective, metacognitive, and linguistic factors. Various researchers have examined whether or not teaching strategies to studies to deal with these categories is effective. Marian Rossiter (2003) conducted a study which examined training students to deal with the affective component in the ESL classroom using strategies. She compiled a list of affective consciousness-raising activities and training for 31 intermediate ESL students to complete, including training in relaxation,

visualization, positive self-talk, humor, risk-taking, and monitoring emotions. While the researcher did not find significant evidence to support the impact on performance or self-efficacy as reported by students, she recommends building group cohesion and a positive learning environment with a focus on language skills and content based on learners' needs and interests. It is important to note that researcher Wendy Lam (2009), who researched metacognitive strategy instruction, also found that ESL students were able to use metacognitive strategies as a preparation for group discussion tasks. She discusses the importance for teachers to raise learners' awareness of metacognitive strategies in order to prepare learners to cope with discussion tasks. She suggests that this will also help students' language improvement and task completion.

Regarding linguistic factors, Bonny Norton, in *Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom* (2001), tells the stories of the reasons why some students do not participate in ESL classrooms. She found that all the learners, "drew sharp distinctions between language as a linguistic system and language as a social practice" (p. 168). This could be another explanation for the different emergent categories listed above, and why Lam emphasizes teaching language skills rather than affective strategies. Another important aspect of Norton's research is imagined communities, which she explains as a community of practice that transcends time and space, "to the imagined world outside of the classroom" (p. 164). This is certainly related to her other research and this research in the connection to students' continued construction of their identities. Norton states, "If we do not acknowledge the imagined communities of learners in our classrooms, we may exacerbate their non-participation. My research suggests that teachers might encourage learners to think of themselves as living in

multiple communities, including the classroom community, the target language community, and the imagined community” (p. 170). By empowering students to examine the multiple sites of their identity, students can begin to make sense of their changing sense of identity.

In this section I will discuss the research questions and answer them in greater detail. The three research questions examined in this study are as follows:

1. What are the perspectives of university-level ESL learners regarding academic discourse socialization in small-group oral activities?
2. How do students relate their participation in small-group activities to their identities?
3. What are the changes that occur throughout the semester in relation to students' identities and academic discourse socialization?

In order to examine the first research question, students’ perspectives about academic discourse socialization will be examined from the questionnaire, stimulated recall and the dialogue journal data. To review the concept of academic discourse socialization, Duff (2010) defines it as the process in which students who are new to an academic community become more competent in regards to both oral and written discourse. Morita (2009) adds that academic discourse socialization is a complex and dynamic process in which students must navigate identity, membership, power, and more. Academic discourse socialization answers the question, “How do students adjust to a new academic culture, drawing on their own identities and cultural backgrounds?” While research questions 2 & 3 more specifically address students’ identities and cultures, this research question aims to discover how students perceive the process of gaining proficiency in American oral discourse.

First of all, the questionnaire indicated that students had an increased preference for small group discussions throughout the semester. Participants explained that this format helped them talk in class and increased their confidence, themes which also appeared in data outside the questionnaire. Students also tied in their perceptions about small group discussions and speaking in their home countries and cultures, noting the difficulties and differences they experienced. During stimulated recall, students across cultures said that they had little experience with group discussions, and even if they had experienced it, the format and focus of the discussions was different. Students learned throughout the semester that the focus of American group discussions was based on critical thinking, collaboration, and sharing opinions.

In the stimulated recall activity, students indicated the importance of listening as an academic strategy for success in group discussion. This was an unexpected result, as the focus of the study was on students' oral participation, but students identified listening as of the utmost importance to their success during group discussions in the Listening & Speaking for Academic Purposes tutorial. In order to speak, students realized that they must first be good listeners and understand what their group members were saying. The process of receptive oral discourse was also a focus of the dialogue journal. Students indicated linguistic difficulties understanding other students because of accent or pronunciation, and at the same time were afraid to make mistakes and be understood themselves. They found a lack of vocabulary to be a particular problem.

While academic discourse socialization focuses on *competence*, students expressed primarily that their *confidence* in speaking improved throughout the semester. In the end, students' indicated that academic discourse socialization was an ongoing process, and their continued perceived improvement could be attributed to their tendencies to see their own

academic discourse socialization from a mastery orientation, focusing on their own gradual learning to become comfortable, competent, and confident speaking. Many of these topics reinforce Morita's (2009) research on academic discourse socialization, in which participants reported linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties including limited English skills, cultural differences in classroom norms and critical thinking skills, and lack of confidence or a feeling of inferiority.

To answer research question to and determine how students related participation in small group activities to their identities, the themes related to identity which emerged during the questionnaire, stimulated recall and the dialogue journal are examined here. As discussed in the literature review, educational theorists within the critical tradition, including Freire, Giroux, and others, have emphasized that language teaching is related to power, in that gender, race, class, ethnicity, and other factors influence language learning. These constructs of power and freedom emerged in the stimulated recall in a variety of ways.

The questionnaire indicated that students were confronting their conceptualizations of self, such as "I am a funny guy" or "I am a shy and quiet person." Students discussed how these self concepts were changing as a result of difficulty or growth during group discussions. While the questionnaire did not indicate any themes related to any clear changes in identity, it did indicate that students were grappling with how their identities can be portrayed by communicating in a second language and if they could maintain their identities.

Marie was one student in particular who stood out as making significant connections between small group participation and identity. In the dialogue journal, she wrote, "I am fluent in my native language. I have power in this language. As a result, I can easily participate in a small-

group discussion or in classrooms...I feel comfortable and confident.” The relationship between the power to speak or be heard and the mastery and ownership of language is apparent.

There also seemed to be a cultural component to these students’ shyness. Through her entries in the discussion journal, it stood out that Marie’s cultural and gender identity influenced her verbal participation: “People in my country are very shy especially women. In my country women are very conservative and respectful. They don’t talk loudly.” In addition to those factors, she also explained a predisposition towards shyness, “I am naturally a shy person and to speak a language which I don’t speak well was difficult for me.” Both Paula and Ryo indicated that students from their cultures often experience anxiety about making mistakes which prevents them from freely expressing their opinions.

Wayne’s comment during stimulated recall in conjunction with his group member, Ryo’s, comments, illustrate the negotiation that occurs in groups for the “freedom to speak,” Wayne said, “I was trying to give Ryo freedom to speak. I feel at that time that’s Ryo’s time because he didn’t speak and he’s a good speaker.” By identifying this important concept, the freedom to speak, Wayne is drawing on notions of power and freedom in a small group discussion format. Why wouldn’t Ryo feel free to speak? Ryo watched the same video as Wayne during stimulated recall, and stated, “I am wondering why I don’t speak. But I think even in Japanese, I speak like this. I speak after I listen to what they say and thinking. I look for the timing to speak. Maybe I have to adapt English style conversation, but what I have to do, I don’t know what I have to do.” Ryo said that he was looking for the “timing to speak.” Ryo’s thought process illustrates a definite negotiation of identity and participation in academic discourse. He is wondering whether

he needs to adapt, but he is still left with questions about how he fits into the discussion.

Academic discourse socialization takes time and reflection for students.

To answer the final research question, the changes that occurred in relation to students' identities and academic discourse socialization can be seen through the quantitative data and dialogue journal. When looking at the statistical analysis, students did not take a significantly different number of turns speaking from the beginning to the end of the semester, nor did they use significantly more academic speaking strategies. This does not necessarily mean that participants did not develop in regards to academic discourse socialization. If we look at the data from the other two qualitative methods, it would appear that the major changes that took place were more related to students' perceptions and attitudes than their performance.

The most major change students indicated in the dialogue journal was an overall increased confidence related to oral participation after initially reporting a great deal of shyness and anxiety. Students indicated decreased stress and anxiety about mistakes and being misunderstood by classmates after a semester of small group discussions. Students also began to understand the academic strategies necessary for oral participation, such as critical thinking, listening to group members and improving pronunciation and productive vocabulary. Students reported gradual improvements in their English ability. Finally, students kept an optimistic attitude about improving their English speaking ability despite fears or setbacks. This may be similar to the "self-motivating inner dialogue" as described by Cervatiuc (2009).

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, findings, limitations, further research, and pedagogical implications are discussed. While the themes which emerged from each of the methods is discussed in detail above, it is also important to examine and compare the themes between data sets, especially those that appeared across the methodology, in order to determine the most significant findings of this research.

The first finding is related to the themes of listening and the ability to speak and be understood, which appeared in both stimulated recall and the discussion journal. Listening was identified as an important academic strategy in small group discussions, likely because students placed a high emphasis on understanding others and a fear of being understood. Alex explained that he felt everyone participated more when they could listen to him: “Everyone is participating and they are listening to my views. It feels good for me. They were listening to me.” It is important to briefly highlight the importance of these themes in the research. Bourdieu states, “Competence is also the capacity to command a listener...hence the full definition of competence is the right to speech” (p. 648). While students like Alex felt an innate right to speech, others struggled with it. The concept of the “freedom to speak” was brought up by Wayne during stimulated recall, and Ryo was looking for the “timing to speak.” Similarly, Marie linked power in her native language to her increased confidence.

The next finding was that changes occurred from the beginning to the end of the semester in regards to students’ perceptions and attitudes as indicated in the stimulated recall, discussion journal, and questionnaire methods. Students self-reported an increase in confidence and

perceived English ability despite initial anxiety. Changing identity appeared in the questionnaire and the discussion journal as linked with shyness.

The final finding was the importance of culture. Students commented on the process of socialization and the negotiation of their cultures with American academic discourse in small group discussions. In addition, they increasingly expressed a preference for small group discussions in the questionnaire, while explaining that the benefit of cultural exchange during small group discussions was interesting to them.

As for limitations, first of all, thematic analysis itself has come under some criticism. The data may be considered unreliable due to the level of interpretation conducted by the researcher. However, the themes that emerged were due to frequent and repeated comments given by students both orally and in writing, and in that regard could be said to speak for themselves. One component that brings strength to the research, the personal involvement by the researcher into the perceptions and participation patterns of participants, is also a limitation. As a participant-observer in the dialogue journal and occasionally in group discussions, it is possible that involvement may have skewed the data. However, because of students' limited use of the dialogue function of the journals, it is unlikely that any follow-up comments by the researcher impacted student responses. In addition, the researcher's role in the discussions was to support students and clarify questions about the prompts or language features. Still, the benefit of this research is the answers to the research question in the rich context of the classroom and the participants' inner worlds.

A secondary limitation is that the university students did not always attend every discussion session or complete every journal activity. First, students' attendance impacted the

ability to sample from the same topic during group discussions because some weeks there was only a pair of students. Still, data was compared from the beginning to the end of the 10 week tutorial. Secondly, while the discussion journal aimed to foster more back-and-forth communication between the researcher and the participants, lack of student involvement led to a minimal number of real discussions. While the researcher did ask follow-up questions and give comments, she rarely received follow-up responses from students. Students' limited discussion journal responses may have been due to the lack of a requirement in their assignment. The discussion during stimulated recall was more productive than the discussion journal because of the interview-like format and the natural conversational demand of an immediate response. Still, stimulated recall questions were all very general, like "What were you thinking there?" Responding to comments digitally may be less natural for students, despite the prevalence of texting, e-mail, and other digital forms of communication. The discussion journal could have yielded stronger results if students could access a computer lab in class and were given time in class to respond, but this was just not possible due to the limited resources in the building. In addition, the questionnaire was only used for emergent responses for the students who completed it during both the pre- and post- semester.

Another limitation is the lack of thorough quantitative data. If the quantitative counts were planned in advance, it could have yielded more data, but the fact is that this study employed primarily a qualitative, emergent design. This was intentional in order to most thoroughly answer the research questions to find out about students' attitude changes and perceptions, not necessarily the quantitative academic changes.

One final limitation may be the impact of video-recording of group discussions on students' participation. However, to minimize this effect, students were exposed to the camera during the first tutorial session before data was collected. Students themselves admitted in the dialogue journal that they became comfortable around the video camera.

Further research could still be conducted. The results serve as a contextual example of one classroom of students negotiating their identity and participation in an academic setting. Furthermore, this can be seen as a hypothesis-generating study. The data reveal information and patterns to generate further hypotheses about the interplay of identity, participation, and academic discourse socialization.

Additional research should be conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively to examine the reasons behind students' initial lack of confidence, the factors which contribute to growing confidence, and focused shifts in identity. Both quantitative research as well as qualitative in-depth case studies and ethnographies could provide further insight into this topic. While the data seemed to emerge regardless of country of origin or amount of time spent in the United States, further research could also examine whether additional factors may affect how students become socialized into academic discourse. One specific area for future research would be that while this study looked at the frequency counts of turns, it did not include the duration of utterances, which could potentially reveal additional insight into this topic. Additional research could also repeat this study examining participation between international students and non-international students, which is the classroom condition in most mainstream university classes outside of EAP.

The pedagogical implications may be applied in any ESL classroom with learners from various cultural backgrounds. Participants' perceptions about participation and identity

throughout this process provide insight for language teachers and second language learners. Specifically, teachers in English for Academic Purposes programs will benefit from understanding more about students' identities and their relationship to participation and academic socialization.

One question that frequently came up in conversations with colleagues as mentioned in the introduction was: How can an instructor aid students' participation? Based on this data, focusing on classroom discourse skills such as critical thinking, listening, etc. can help students function in university classrooms. The research illuminated the power of small group discussions for developing students' confidence. It also gave some merit to the use of journals for students to help students reflect upon the process of learning about and adjusting to academic discourse.

In addition, the significance of the study reveals insight into learners' perspectives about participation as related to their identities, insight which can be considered as significant for all learners. Students gained a recognition of the strategies needed for academic speaking tasks such as listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary, and this likely increased their motivation and buy-in for class work related to these aspects.

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Appendix A: INFORMED CONSENT

Title: Academic Discourse Socialization through Oral Practices: The Negotiation of Participation and Identity amongst University ESL Learners

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Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study about the relationship between identity and participation amongst university-level ESL students. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a student in Mrs. Holmes' College ESL course in the spring of 2015. This research project is being conducted by Rebekah Holmes to satisfy the requirements of a Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language program at Saint Cloud State University.

Background Information and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gather information about what students think about class participation and how they participate in small-group discussions. The study will examine how students' backgrounds and identities are related to their participation in small-group work in the academic setting.

Procedures

If you decide to participate, you will give permission for Mrs. Holmes to use your data from an online journal and your small-group discussions in tutorials. If you decide not to participate, you will still complete these activities, but your information will not be used for research.

The first activity is online journaling, which will use a free website called Penzu. You will write about a topic and the instructor will respond to your journal entry. Included in this journaling will be a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the semester. This questionnaire will ask you to share your thoughts and feelings about participation and questions related to your identity.

The second activity is small-group meetings of 3 students which will meet 10 times throughout the semester outside of class time. These group meetings will be 1 hour in length and will cover activities in the class textbook. These meetings will be video recorded for use by the researcher and you will view the video with the researcher and comment on your participation. Your comments will be audio-recorded. These files only and kept on the University's secure digital filespace and in a locked private office in the researcher's home on DVD. These meetings will meet your requirement for tutorials in the class. If you decide not to participate in the study, you will follow the regular College ESL procedure for tutorials.

Risks

The utmost attention will be paid to confidentiality. Your writing samples and audio and videos of small group meetings will be seen by only the researcher and her advisor. In addition, this study will ask to you discuss your cultural background and identity and you may experience some feelings of discomfort depending on your background. Subjects may withdraw at any time if they experience discomfort and their grade will not be affected.

Benefits

The results of this study will benefit future students and classrooms. This study will help to gain an understanding of international students' identities and participation in American academic classrooms.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. You will not be identified by your name in any published material. The data will be reported in aggregate and pseudonyms will be used as well as no more than 1-2 identifiers will be used in the thesis. There is a possibility that you may be identifiable by your comments in the published research. You will have an opportunity to review the text and withdraw comments prior to publication. All data will be kept in a file cabinet in a locked office and digital data will be secured on the University filespace, then deleted after field notes are taken or when this thesis is complete. Data from this study will be used only for research in this thesis project.

Research Results

Upon completion, this thesis will be placed on file at St. Cloud State University's Learning Resources Center. In addition, students can contact Mrs. Holmes for a copy of the study results.

Contact Information

If you have questions right now, please ask. If you have additional questions later, you may contact me at 612-203-1972 or hore1301@stcloudstate.edu or my adviser, Dr. Kim, at ckim@stcloudstate.edu. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, the researcher, the College ESL Program. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Acceptance to Participate

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.

Subject Name (Printed) _____

Subject Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B: PENZU JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

You will be participating in a continuing, private, written conversation with the teacher. This is an opportunity to reflect upon your experiences as a language learner with a focus on listening and speaking, participation, and small group discussions.

Please complete one journal each week using the website “Penzu” according to the table below. Journals should be at least 200 words in length.

Due Dates & Topics

Wednesday, January 21	Journal 1 Due	Topic: Questions about you
Wednesday, January 28	Journal 2 Due	Topic: Journaling
Wednesday, February 4	Journal 3 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, February 11	Journal 4 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, February 18	Journal 5 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, February 25	Journal 6 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, March 4	Journal 7 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, March 18	Journal 8 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, March 25	Journal 9 Due	Choose from list
Wednesday, April 1	Journal 10 Due	Topic: Questions about you

To sign up, go to the following website: <https://classic.penzu.com/l/jg/BA0B9>

Click “Sign Up!” then enter your information including your school e-mail address.

penzu

Home | Log In

Free Sign-Up

Create your *free* journal in seconds!

First Name

Last Name

Email

Confirm Email

Password

Retype Password

I agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

Submit

[Under 13 years old? Signup here!](#)

[Are you a teacher? Get Penzu Classroom here!](#)

To access your journal after signing up, go to the website <https://classic.penzu.com>. Log in with your e-mail address and password and click on Mrs. Holmes Class page. Here you will find your journal assignments.

Appendix C: DIALOGUE JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Directions: You will be participating in a continuing, private, written conversation with the teacher. This is an opportunity to reflect upon your experiences as a language learner with a focus on listening and speaking. Please complete one journal each week using the website “Penzu.” You will be instructed on how to use this website. Journals should be at least 200 words in length.

- What does the word "journaling" mean to you? Have you ever written a journal before? If so, in what context? What purposes are journals used for in your country? How do you feel about talking about personal topics in writing? How do you usually share your thoughts and feelings and with whom?
- What are the differences in group participation between your home country and the US?
- What do you think you'll learn from group participation?
- Describe typical class participation in your home country.
- What is easy and difficult for you when speaking English? Think about class, group discussions, and outside of class.
- What strategies do you know and use when participating in classroom and group discussions?
- Describe any situation when you participated in a small-group discussion.
- How does your participation differ in your home country and native language compared to in American classrooms using English?

Appendix D: QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre- and Post- Questionnaire [adapted from Zheng (2010) and Lee (2009)]:

- Name:
- Home country:
- First language:
- How long have you been studying English?
- How long have you been in the US?
- Have you taken any other classes in the US?
- What is your major?
- How do you describe yourself?
- How did you learn to adapt to American culture/language?
- What factors do you consider important to class discussion?
- Do you participate in class verbally? When and how? Why or why not?
- How do you feel when you talk in class?
- What discussion formats (whole class, small group, or online) do you think help you talk in class?
Why?
- How do you feel about group work?

Appendix E: GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Week 1: Collaborative Introductory Assignment

First, as a group, please talk about group discussions. Here are some guiding questions.

You can talk about any of these questions.

- What are your experiences in group discussions in English? What activities have you done in small groups?
- What are some strengths that you bring to the group?
- What are some difficulties or problems in group discussions?
- What can you do to prevent those problems?

Now, as a group, please make a list of the three most important strategies to use during group discussion.

Week 2: p 10

Talk about some specific television ads that you like. Explain why you like them.

Possible Ideas

The ads for this product always use good music.

The ads are for products that I am interested in.

My favorite celebrity is in the ads.

Week 3: p 23

Think of a business you have worked in or would like to work in.

- What kind of business is it?
- What kind of work did/would you do?
- How would you describe the work environment (office, retail store, etc.)?
- How would you describe your co-workers?
- In what ways could your ethics be tested in this business? Use your imagination, and think of some possible examples.

Week 4: p. 37

Consider the following media activities: Watching video, Listening to music, and Reading

- How have these media activities changed in the last few decades?
- What devices do people normally use to do these activities?
- Which media activity is the most entertaining for you? Why?
- Which media activity is the most informative/educational? Why?

Week 5: p. 51

What role does music play in your daily life? Where, how, and when do you usually listen to music? During which activities are you most likely to listen to music?

Do you have a song that you associate with a particular event in your life? What song is it, and why does it remind you of that event?

Week 6: p. 63

What do you think are the three most important considerations when choosing a medical treatment? Use the list below or come up with your own ideas.

- It is scientifically proven to work.
- It has few known side effects.
- It is affordable.
- It has helped people you know.
- You understand how it works.
- Your doctor recommends it.
- It is the most common treatment for your condition.
- It has made you feel better before.
- IT is natural (doesn't involve using chemical medicines).
- Other:_____

Week 7: p. 74

Imagine that you work for a company that sells robots and intelligent machines. You are on a design team that needs to develop and market a new robot or intelligent machine.

What would your machine be like? Consider these questions:

- What will it look and sound like?
- What will it be able to do?
- Who will be able to use it?
- Who is the target market?
- How much will it cost?
- How will you advertise it?
- Where will you advertise it?

Discuss your different opinions and work together to reach a consensus on what the machine will be like and how it will be sold.

Week 8: p. 75

1. **What are the three most significant tasks or activities that a machine could never do better than a human?**
2. **What are the three most significant tasks or activities currently done by humans that should be done only by machines?**

Week 9: p. 89

1. **How would you describe the ideal family? This about the following aspects of a family:**
 - Family size
 - Sibling relationships
 - Parent/child relationships
 - Roles and responsibilities of family members

- Time spent together
- Role of grandparents and other extended family members
- Household income level
- Physical location (house/apartment, city/small town/country)
- Shared or separate bedrooms

2. Would you like to be a twin? Why or why not?

Week 10: p. 127

In a group, choose a room at your institution (classroom, library, etc.) or in your community (hotel lobby, interior of a bank, etc.) to critique. Share your opinions about how well the design suits the purpose of the room. As a group, make a list of suggestions for improving it.