A STUDY OF ORAL ACADEMIC PRESENTATION TASKS
FROM A LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION PERSPECTIVE

by

NAOKO MORITA

B.Ed., Tottori University, 1990

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Department of Language Education
(TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 1996

©Naoko Morita, 1996
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Language Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date October 7, 1996
ABSTRACT

This study explored the language socialization of university graduate students through their exposure to and participation in oral academic presentation tasks. Recently, classroom tasks have received increasing attention as a research topic in second language learning literature. The majority of task-based research has stemmed from the input/interaction approach in second language acquisition where experimental tasks are often employed to determine task features which facilitate conversational interactions and, presumably, acquisition. However, such research does not take into account the fact that a classroom is a unique social, cultural, and historical context and that student tasks employed there have layers of meanings, purposes, and histories.

This study thus investigated normally occurring classroom tasks from a sociocultural perspective. By taking an ethnographic approach and using data mainly from classroom observations, video-recordings of student presentations, interviews, and questionnaires, the study examined the social, cultural, historical, and cognitive aspects of language learning in relation to the oral academic presentation task. Forty lessons in two graduate seminars were observed for a school year (over a seven-month period). Twenty-five presentations performed in these courses were recorded and transcribed. The presentation discourse was then analyzed as embedded in the local culture of graduate seminars, being linked with ethnographically derived information.

The qualitative analysis of the oral academic presentation task suggested that the task was a socioculturally organized activity with specific goals, meanings, and histories, and constituted a rich locus, medium, and resource for the graduate students' language
socialization. Students gradually became socialized into the academic culture of graduate school through their repeated participation in this activity. The complex and dynamic nature of the activity was also highlighted. Finally, implications for L2 learning and teaching were suggested with respect to (1) the need to re-examine the “native speaker” versus “non-native speaker” dichotomy, and (2) possible ways to increase non-native speakers’ awareness of the tacit norms and skills of interaction involved in academic oral practices.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .......................................................... ii

Table of Contents .................................................. iv

List of Figures ....................................................... vii

Acknowledgments ..................................................... viii

Dedication ........................................................... ix

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1
  1.1 Background ...................................................... 1
  1.2 Research Questions ............................................. 5
  1.3 Significance of the Study ...................................... 7
  1.4 Organization of the Thesis .................................... 10

Chapter 2 REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH ..................... 13
  2.1 Task-based Research in Second Language Acquisition ........ 13
    2.1.1 Task as a Unit of Analysis ............................... 13
    2.1.2 Task as a Unit of Syllabus Design ....................... 13
    2.1.3 Task and SLA Research: Psycholinguistic Approach .... 14
  2.2 Sociocultural Approaches to Language Learning ............... 19
    2.2.1 Language Socialization .................................... 20
    2.2.2 Sociocultural Context of Learning and Development ... 21
    2.2.3 Socioculturally Organized Activities .................... 22
    2.2.4 Learning as Apprenticeship ............................... 25
    2.2.5 Language Socialization Research ......................... 28
      2.2.5.1 Language Socialization and L1 Research ............ 28
      2.2.5.2 Language Socialization and L2 Research ............ 30
  2.3 Research on Oral Performance of L2 University Students ...... 40
    2.3.1 Lack of Research on Academic Oral Skills/Tasks .......... 40
    2.3.2 Research on ITA Issues ................................... 43
    2.3.3 Pilot Study ............................................... 45

Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY .......................................... 49
  3.1 Ethnographic Research Methods ................................ 49
  3.2 Sites .......................................................... 51
  3.3 Participants .................................................. 53
  3.4 Class Structure and Oral Academic Presentation Tasks ....... 54
  3.5 Data Collection Procedures .................................. 56
    3.5.1 Classroom Observations .................................. 57
3.5.2 Video-recordings of OAPs ........................................... 59
3.5.3 Review and Interview Sessions (RISs) ......................... 61
3.5.4 Questionnaires .................................................. 64
3.5.5 Collections of Relevant Documents .............................. 64
3.6 Transcription Procedures .......................................... 66
3.7 Analysis ................................................................ 66
3.7.1 Unit of Analysis .................................................. 66
3.7.2 Procedures .......................................................... 68
3.7.3 Use of Computer Software: HyperQual2 ....................... 70

Chapter 4 CONTEXT OF LEARNING: NATURE OF GRADUATE STUDIES 72
4.1 Graduate School Culture ............................................. 72
4.1.1 Life as a Graduate Student ........................................ 72
4.1.2 Life as a Professor .................................................. 78
4.1.3 Intellectual Values and Academic Skills Promoted in Graduate School .................................................. 81
4.2 Classroom Culture .................................................... 89
4.2.1 Course Objectives and Content .................................. 90
4.2.2 Course Assignments ............................................... 93
4.2.3 Course Format ...................................................... 95
4.2.4 Instructors .......................................................... 99
4.2.5 Student Groups ..................................................... 103

Chapter 5 ORAL ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS (OAPS) .............. 107
5.1 Context of OAPs ....................................................... 107
5.1.1 Multiple Objectives of OAPs ...................................... 107
5.1.2 Status of OAPs in Class ............................................ 109
5.1.3 Instructor’s Modeling .............................................. 109
5.2 OAP Procedures ...................................................... 111
5.2.1 Premises of OAPs .................................................. 111
5.2.2 Sub-tasks of OAPs ................................................ 113
5.2.3 Standard Format and Variations of OAPs ...................... 116
5.3 Participation Roles in OAPs ......................................... 118

Chapter 6 PERFORMANCE OF OAPS .................................. 122
6.0 Introduction .......................................................... 122
6.1 OAPs as Performance ................................................ 122
6.1.1 Epistemic Stance ................................................... 123
6.1.2 Strategies to Engage the Audience .............................. 141
6.2 OAPs as Social Construction ....................................... 153
6.2.1 Multiple Voices in OAPs .......................................... 154
6.2.2 Constitution of Expert-Novice ................................... 157
6.2.3 Cognitive Bridges: Making New Connections .............. 163
### Chapter 7: Students' Perceptions of OAPS

- **7.1 Value of OAPs**
- **7.2 Performance of OAPs**
  - 7.2.1 Affective State of Presenter
  - 7.2.2 Peer Group as Audience
  - 7.2.3 Playing an Academic Game?
- **7.3 Non-Native Speakers' Perceptions**
  - 7.3.1 OAPs as a Challenge
    - 7.3.1.1 Linguistic Problems
    - 7.3.1.2 Sociocultural Problems
    - 7.3.1.3 Psychological Difficulties
    - 7.3.1.4 Strategies Used by NNSs
  - 7.3.2 OAPs as Opportunities

### Chapter 8: Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

- **8.1 Language Socialization Surrounding the OAP Task**
  - 8.1.1 Sociocultural Context of Task
  - 8.1.2 OAPs as Socioculturally Organized Activity
  - 8.1.3 Academic Apprenticeship Through Guided Participation
    - 8.1.3.1 Instructors' Guidance
    - 8.1.3.2 Communication of Knowledge in Guided Participation of OAPs
- **8.2 Complexity and Fluidity of OAP Task**
- **8.3 Implications for L2 Learning and Teaching**
  - 8.3.1 Re-examining the NS-NNS Dichotomy
  - 8.3.2 NNSs' Language Socialization
- **8.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

### Chapter 9: Reflections on the Research Process

- **9.1 Reflections on Data Collection Methods: Tradeoffs**

### References

- **Appendix A**
- **Appendix B**
- **Appendix C**
- **Appendix D**

vi
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Ochs' model for the role of activity in language socialization ............... 24

Figure 3.1 Time line for data collection .................................................. 65

Figure 5.1 OAP Procedures ................................................................. 118
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisory committee members, Dr. Patricia Duff, Dr. Margaret Early, and Dr. Bernard Mohan, whose insightful input, guidance, and emotional support made it possible for me to complete this thesis. I am especially grateful to my mentor, Dr. Patricia Duff, for her knowledge and vision about language socialization, ethnography, and other related issues, and for being the most caring, encouraging, and resourceful advisor any graduate student could wish for.

Dr. Donald Fisher provided me with encouragement and precious advice in the earlier stages of this study, which I appreciate very much.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to all the graduate students and professors who participated in this study and spared time for reviewing the video and answering my questions, in spite of their busy schedule and often heavy work load. Their input and co-operation made this research possible.

I am most thankful to my friends and family across continents for their continued support and encouragement. I am especially indebted to Oliver for not only proofreading my drafts and making sure the text says what I mean, but also helping me cope with stressful moments with his humor and patience. I also thank June and Michelle for helping me with the transcriptions.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of a Faculty of Education Graduate Student Research Grant funded by the Ministry of Education, as well as the support provided in the form of a Rotary Foundation Academic-Year Ambassadorial Scholarship.
To Kazue and Tetsuhiko Morita
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Over the past decade a growing number of students have left home to study in a foreign country as the world has striven toward increased global communication and its population has become more interconnected. As a result, in North American university classrooms an increasingly large proportion of students has been students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In second language (L2) learning/teaching literature this phenomenon has been captured and discussed from a variety of angles such as university ESL courses (e.g., Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995), adjunct programs (e.g., Snow & Brinton, 1988), ESL students’ academic skills (e.g., Leki, 1995), and international teaching assistant (ITA) education (e.g., Hoekje & Williams, 1992). This body of literature has explored the areas of difficulty that international students experience in their new academic environments as well as ways to reduce such difficulties and ultimately lead them to their academic success. There is, however, a lack of research which qualitatively describes the academic socialization of international students into the North American university classroom culture. Thus, questions such as the following remain relatively unexplored. What is it like to study at university in one’s second language? What do students have to learn, whether they are native speakers (NSs) or non-native speakers (NNSs), in order to become a competent member of the academic community? What specific areas of difficulty are faced by NNSs? How do they cope with such difficulties?
This study attempted to explore these issues in the context of Canadian graduate seminars by employing an ethnographic research approach.

The main analytical focus of this study is one type of classroom task which graduate students engaged in on a regular basis throughout the academic year. Classrooms are places, whether in an elementary school or in a graduate school, where students engage in a variety of academic tasks, such as listening to teacher lectures, reading a textbook, writing an essay, solving math problems, or participating in group discussions. There has been an increasing recognition in educational research that academic tasks provide a central classroom structure that governs students' information processing and that a careful description of academic tasks may shed light on how the curriculum is realized on a daily basis in classrooms (Doyle & Carter, 1984). It is only in recent years, however, that academic tasks or student tasks have received increasing attention as a research topic in L2 learning/teaching literature (e.g., Crookes & Gass, 1993a, 1993b). The two major areas of task-based research have been (1) task as a unit of syllabus design, and (2) tasks which facilitate conversational interactions. In both areas of research the ultimate goal has been to determine the effectiveness of different types of tasks or sequencing of tasks in L2 learners' language development.

Most often, student tasks in L2 literature have been conversational tasks in which L2 learners practice L2 speaking and listening. The majority of task-based research has stemmed from the input/interaction approach in second language acquisition (SLA). In this approach, conversational tasks are often employed in an experimental setting in order to determine task features which facilitate communication and, presumably, acquisition.
The ultimate concern of this psycholinguistic approach has been the development of learners' linguistic knowledge through their engagement in conversational tasks. This major trend in task-based research, however, does not take into account the fact that a classroom is a unique social, cultural, and historical context and that student tasks employed in such a context have layers of meanings, purposes, and histories. The experimental orientation of task-based research also seems to dismiss the idea that learners in actual classrooms not only develop linguistic knowledge but also acquire content knowledge as well as sociocultural knowledge through participating in academic tasks.

Recognizing these possible shortcomings of task-based research stemming from the psycholinguistic approach in SLA, this study examined the issue of tasks from the sociocultural perspective of language socialization (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b). Language socialization acknowledges that “social activities involving language are structured by linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and that children and other novices acquire knowledge in these two domains through participation in the structured activities” (Ochs, 1988, pp. 21-22). In this view, language and culture are treated as interrelated and thus the acquisition of language is understood as embedded in the socialization of knowledge. Seen from this perspective of language socialization, classroom tasks are socioculturally organized activities which become the locus, medium, and resource for students’ acquisition of linguistic knowledge as well as sociocultural knowledge.
The purpose of this study was thus to investigate the language socialization of university graduate students qualitatively by focusing its analysis on normally occurring classroom tasks. The study was conducted at the Department of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) at a major western Canadian university, hereafter, WCU. Two graduate courses, TESL 520 and TESL 570, were observed for the duration of an academic year. WCU is one of the largest universities located in Western Canada and students come from different parts of the world. Although the graduate students who participated in this study engaged in various academic tasks in the two graduate seminars, oral academic presentation (OAP) tasks were chosen for detailed investigation. In OAPs students presented a summary and a critique of an academic article (either a book chapter or a research journal article) and led a class discussion based on the article. It was also a mandatory student task performed regularly and frequently in the two courses under study. Thus, the OAP task was a potentially rich and complex locus for graduate students’ language socialization.

Unlike the majority of L2 research which has had an exclusive focus on L2 learners, this study considered it important to analyze the performance and perceptions of both NNSs and NSs who were taking the courses. Since it was not only NNSs but also NSs who were socialized into the academic culture of the graduate school as well as the culture of the discipline, it seemed necessary to document NNSs’ language socialization as embedded in the language socialization of graduate students in general.

---

1 Pseudonyms were used for the research sites (courses, department, and university) because of ethical considerations.
Then, I attempted to understand the similarities and differences between the language socialization of NNSs and that of NSs in the context of graduate seminars.

Language socialization has as its goal the understanding of how children and other novices become competent members of social groups and the role of language in this process (Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b). It has been argued that in order to achieve this goal, language socialization analysis needs “the linking of microanalytic analyses of children’s discourse to more general ethnographic accounts of cultural beliefs and practices of the families, social groups, or communities into which children are socialized” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, p. 168). The present study followed this argument and attempted to combine micro-level analyses of OAP discourse and more macro-level analyses of cultural values and practices of the graduate school under observation. The discourse data were collected through the video-recordings of students’ OAPs, while the macro-level data were gathered by ethnographically oriented data collection methods such as observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Analyses of these two kinds of data informed each other and contributed collectively to the understanding of graduate students’ language socialization. Multiple perspectives such as the researcher’s, students’ (NNSs as well as NSs’), and instructors’ perceptions of OAP tasks and performances were incorporated as much as possible in order to reach a better understanding of the nature of the tasks and language socialization surrounding the tasks.

1.2 Research Questions

This study investigated the language socialization of graduate students, both NNSs and NSs, in the natural classroom context of Canadian university graduate
seminars. The key unit of analysis was OAP tasks which students performed regularly in
the classroom. The discourse of OAPs as well as data derived from observations,
interviews, and questionnaires were analyzed and synthesized based on the theoretical
perspective of language socialization. The major research questions addressed in this
study were as follows:

1. What is the nature of graduate studies into which graduate students become
socialized? In other words, what are the social, cultural, and intellectual values
that are promoted in the graduate seminars and thus must be appropriated by
graduate students in order to become a competent member of the academic
community?

2. What is the nature of OAP tasks and graduate students' language socialization
in relation to OAPs? In other words, how do graduate students become
socialized into the academic culture of graduate school through their participation
in OAP tasks?

3. How do different participants perceive OAP tasks, their performance, and their
learning in relation to the tasks?

4. What are the similarities and differences involved in the language socialization
experience of NNSs and that of NSs? What kind of difficulties, if any, do NNSs
experience that are specific to them in performing OAP tasks? If they do
experience such difficulties, how do they cope with them?

It should be noted that these research questions were derived from the specific
context of the research sites involved in this study as well as from the theoretical issues of
language socialization. For example, although oral presentations such as the OAP task investigated in this study seem to be employed quite commonly in many graduate seminars across disciplines, they are not the only tasks which might facilitate the language socialization of graduate students. Thus, it was not my intention to investigate OAP tasks in order to make sweeping generalizations about graduate students' language socialization. Quite the contrary, I was aware of the context-specific nature of language socialization (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b) and my bias of having chosen the specific task of OAPs in a specific classroom context as the focus of my investigation. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyze and illustrate an example of language socialization rather than to seek for general principles in the language socialization of graduate students. Nevertheless, the main concern underlying the above research questions was to better understand various aspects involved in the language socialization of graduate students through their exposure to and participation in academic tasks.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study was conducted in the context of Canadian graduate seminars with both Canadian students and international students participating. As the number of international students in North American universities has increased over the past decade, these students' limited English proficiency and limited academic success have accordingly...
become an issue which needs to be explored. For example, the problems associated with the international teaching assistant (ITA) are one of the main areas which have received increasing attention in the field of higher education as well as in ESL literature (see Hoekje & Williams, 1992, for a review of literature in this topic). As a greater proportion of undergraduate education has fallen to ITAs with limited English proficiency, there has been a serious concern and effort to investigate this issue and develop ITA training programs which will equip non-native speaking ITAs with better English abilities and pedagogical skills (e.g., Rounds, 1987; Tyler, 1992; Williams, 1992; Young, 1989). This study will shed light on the issues related to NNSs in North American universities, the ITA issues in particular, not only because it was conducted in Canadian graduate seminars with NNSs, but also because it investigated how students performed and perceived oral presentation tasks which involved face-to-face interactions between presenters and their audience.

As I have noted earlier, in spite of the increasing attention which has been paid to student tasks in L2 learning/teaching literature, very few studies have investigated tasks qualitatively in natural classroom contexts (cf. Duff, 1993). The majority of task-based studies which stem from the psycholinguistic tradition of SLA seem to downplay the sociocultural meanings of classrooms and those of tasks employed in classrooms. Thus, this study considered a need for a qualitative investigation of normally occurring academic tasks in a natural classroom context. It attempted to uncover the rich and complex nature attempted to achieve generalizability in terms of the theoretical framework of language socialization rather than generalizability across contexts.
of academic tasks which embraced various goals, meanings, and histories in a specific sociocultural context of a Canadian graduate school.

Language socialization was the main theoretical framework which provided this study with insights in data collection methods, analytical categories, and interpretations of data. Traditionally, language socialization studies have been conducted mainly with children learning their first language (e.g., Heath, 1983, 1986; Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin, 1986, 1990; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986). Although language socialization is considered to be a life long process (Ochs, 1988), few studies have investigated adult language socialization whether in one’s first language or second language (cf. Duff, 1993; Poole, 1992). Thus, issues such as how L2 socialization differs from L1 and how adult language socialization differs from children’s remain relatively unexplored. Furthermore, there has been an increasing recognition in the field of L2 learning/teaching that more attention to the rich and dynamic sociocultural contexts of L2 learning is necessary to fully understand the complex nature of L2 acquisition (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Thus, an investigation of adult language socialization (both in L1 and L2) with a sociocultural focus seems to be important.

This study was also meaningful in terms of the research approach that was employed. In recent years, ethnographic approaches have gained wider acceptance in both educational and L2 research (Davis, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). It has been pointed out, however, that there is “surprisingly little ethnographic work on the language learning and cultural adjustment of adolescents and adults relative to the many experimental and correlational studies” (Johnson, 1992, p. 135). Much of the
ethnographic investigation (including language socialization research) has focused on younger language learners (e.g., Willett, 1987, 1995). However, considering the steadily increasing number of adult second language learners in universities and other various adult educational and workplace settings, it is important to better understand social and cultural dimensions as well as linguistic dimensions of adult L2 learning. Thus, more work on adult language learners which employs ethnographic approaches would be useful.

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 2 is a review of relevant literature. It first outlines the major task-based studies in L2 literature and discusses possible shortcomings of such research conducted in the framework of the psycholinguistic approach in SLA. It then examines literature which takes sociocultural approaches to (language) learning and outlines some of the key theoretical concepts discussed in this body of literature such as language socialization, socioculturally organized activities, and cognitive apprenticeship. It also reviews relevant research on the oral skills/performance of L2 university students, including the pilot study which was conducted prior to the present study.

Chapter 3 describes the ethnographic data collection methods used in this study comprising classroom observations, video-recordings of OAPs, review and interview sessions, and questionnaires, and also the transcription and analytical procedures. It also provides an overall description of the research sites and the participants.

Chapter 4 through Chapter 7 presents the findings of the present study. Chapter 4 illustrates the larger context of the study, the nature of graduate studies. It synthesizes findings mainly from observations, interviews, and questionnaires and describes the
culture of graduate school as well as the classroom culture of the two graduate courses under observation.

Chapter 5 characterizes the main unit of analysis, OAP tasks, in terms of its context (e.g., objectives of the task), procedures (e.g., formats of the task), and participation roles (e.g., student presenter, audience).

Chapter 6 provides analyses of the actual performance of OAP tasks. The discourse of 25 videotaped OAPs is analyzed in terms of the analytical categories such as presenters’ epistemic stance, strategies to engage the audience, and the social construction of OAP tasks.

Chapter 7 illustrates how students perceived the OAP task in general. It also discusses NNSs’ perceptions in particular, highlighting the kinds of difficulties they experienced in performing the task and their strategies to cope with such difficulties.

Chapter 8 synthesizes the findings of this study and discusses them in light of the original theoretical framework of the study, language socialization, and other related sociocultural perspectives outlined in Chapter 2. It attempts to provide answers to the original research questions described in this chapter and further poses new questions that are derived from the findings of this study. This chapter also provides pedagogical implications for L2 learning and teaching as well as suggestions for future research.

Finally, Chapter 9 summarizes some of my reflections on the research process used in this study. Since there has been a great deal of discussion on the ethnographic research approach and on researchers’ own reflexivity, as the approach has gained wider
acceptance in L2 research, I consider it useful to reflect on the ethnographic methods used in this study.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

2.1 Task-Based Research in Second Language Acquisition

2.1.1 Task as a Unit of Analysis

Since the beginning of the 1980s task has received considerable attention as a unit of analysis in studies of second language learning and teaching (e.g., Crookes & Gass, 1993a, 1993b; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Duff, 1986; Gass & Varonis, 1985; Long & Porter, 1985). Researchers have found it useful to employ a task-oriented perspective in work on second language acquisition, second language classrooms, material development, and curriculum design. In their introduction to two recent collections of task-based studies, Crookes and Gass (1993a, 1993b) point out that there have been two major foci in the body of task-related literature: (1) task as a concept used in second language curriculum design, and (2) task as an aspect of the research methodology used in studies of second language acquisition. I will discuss each of these two areas in the following sections.

2.1.2 Task as a Unit of Syllabus Design

One major area of task-based literature stems from the idea of using student tasks as a basic building unit for designing the language curriculum or syllabus. Nunan (1988) has illustrated the contrast between the traditional synthetic syllabus design and the analytic syllabus design. Examples of synthetic syllabuses include grammatical syllabuses and functional-notional syllabuses in which the different elements of language (e.g., grammar points, language functions) are taught separately so that acquisition becomes a process of reintegration of such elements. In contrast, analytic syllabuses are those in
which large “chunks” of language based on themes, topics, and situations are presented so that acquisition becomes a process of extracting linguistic patterns and regularities from them. According to Long and Crookes (1992, 1994), task has been considered the most useful building unit for such analytic syllabuses. They have identified and evaluated three types of task-based syllabus or approach, all of which use task as the basic unit: procedural syllabus (e.g., Prabhu, 1987), process syllabus (e.g., Breen, 1987; Candlin, 1987), and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (e.g., Long and Crookes, 1994).

One problematic aspect of task-based syllabuses is that there is little agreement on how to define the building unit, task, among researchers and practitioners. Just to list some examples, Crookes (1986) defined it as a piece of work with a specific objective, Breen (1987) as a work plan with the purpose of facilitating language learning, Candlin (1987) as jointly planned problem solving activities, and finally Long (1985) as “nothing more or less than the things people do in everyday life” (Long, 1991, p. 280). As the very general definition by Long illustrates, there has been some confusion about the conceptualization of task, not to mention the determination of task characteristics.

The second focus, task as an aspect of the research methodology used in studies of second language acquisition, is in more direct relation to the present study and therefore I’ll discuss it in greater detail in the next section.

2.1.3 Task and SLA Research: Psycholinguistic Approach

The second major area of task-based literature is task-based research in second language acquisition (SLA). The main goal of task-based research has been to identify specific variables which affect the conversational interaction that occurs when learners
perform a task. The following are typical examples of SLA research tasks, taken from Plough and Gass (1993, p. 39), which are widely used:

A. **Spot the difference** (a two-way task): Each participant has a picture which differs in 12 ways from that of his/her partner. The task is to verbally describe the picture so as to identify those 12 differences.

B. **Who will survive** (a decision-making task): The participants are given a list of ten people, only six of whom can be selected to survive a nuclear war. The task is to come to an agreement as to which of those six are to be allowed to board an airplane which would take them to safe land.

A large number of task-based studies using the framework of the input and interaction approach in SLA have examined similar tasks in order to determine what task types or task features facilitate conversational interactions and ultimately contribute to second language acquisition. Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) provided a comprehensive overview of such studies by classifying them in the task framework that they proposed. Their framework was based on two general dimensions of communication tasks: (1) interactional activity, that is, the direction of the information flow among interlocutors (e.g., one-way versus two-way) and whether the information exchange is required or optional, and (2) communication goal, that is, whether the goal is divergent or convergent and whether only one or more than one outcome is possible. Based on these, Pica *et al.* identified five task types: jigsaw, information gap, problem solving, decision-making, and opinion exchange. Among a number of studies which attempt to determine task types that are more effective for language acquisition than others, some of the influential works have demonstrated that: (1) two-way tasks produce more and better negotiation work than one-way tasks (e.g., Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long, 1980;), (2) closed or convergent
tasks produce more and better negotiation work than open or divergent tasks (e.g., Duff, 1986). Thus, these studies have provided insights into second language acquisition by analyzing and assessing the effectiveness of various communication tasks.

The theoretical rationale for these studies stems from Long’s (1980) input/interaction research and Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis. Long introduced the concept of modified interaction which refers to the interlocutor’s modification and reconstructing of conversation through conversational repairs such as comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests. These interactional features have been claimed to assist in second language acquisition, particularly when learners negotiate meanings toward mutual comprehension. The input and interaction task-based studies often count the frequency of these interactional features appearing in the conversational discourse, since tasks or task types which elicit more modification are considered more effective to the development of the learner’s linguistic knowledge than those which elicit less.

Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis also provides the basic rationale for the psycholinguistic approach. It considers comprehensible input as the only causal variable in second language acquisition. He claims that in order for linguistic development to take place, learners must be exposed to comprehensible input which is slightly beyond their current knowledge level. In his view, the most important factor in instruction is to provide learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input, which ultimately leads to the learner’s linguistic development. On empirical grounds, however, Swain (1985) found evidence that even after receiving comprehensible input for years, students
in French immersion classrooms were still far from native-like in their L2. She argued that it was the productive language use, in her terms, *comprehensible output*, rather than comprehensible input, which allowed the learner to "move from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it" (p. 252). In both of these two claims, the ultimate concern again is the learner's mastery of linguistic knowledge through conversational interactions.

It is common in the input/interaction task-based studies for researchers to use experimental designs in order to isolate task features such as one-way versus two-way, and divergent versus convergent, mentioned above. Learners' utterances are often analyzed quantitatively (e.g., number of T-units, frequency of interactional modification in the discourse). In this experimental approach, learners are seen as "subjects" who engage in experimental tasks, and task features are considered as "independent variables," while characteristics of interactions are seen as "dependent variables." As Mohan and Smith (1992) have pointed out, it is assumed here that: "(1) all subjects share the same 'definition of the task'; and (2) the 'definition of the task' is constant for the duration of the experiment (p. 84)." However, these assumptions do not always hold as valid outside the experimental setting: in the real classroom where the actual learning occurs, the same task may be perceived, understood, and approached differently by different learners (e.g., Mohan & Smith, 1992), or by the same learner over time (e.g., Coughlan & Duff, 1994), due to various contextual and personal factors. Thus, the central shortcoming of the experiment-oriented task-based research seems to be that it does not consider a classroom as a unique social context where individual learners and teachers bring to bear various
backgrounds and goals, and where tasks have layers of meanings, purposes, and histories which influence the individual learner's perceptions and performances of these tasks. Therefore, although experimental studies may provide useful insights into identifying task characteristics and assessing their effects on language learning, we cannot simply assume that results gained in experimental settings will apply to the actual classroom context.

Another possible limitation of the input and interaction approach to tasks is that it mainly addresses the learner's development of linguistic or grammatical knowledge. Since, even before Long's research cited above, Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) found that conversational interaction is a locus for the development of syntax, it has been argued that conversational or communication tasks provide learners with opportunities to acquire grammatical knowledge. As cited in Crookes and Gass (1993a, 1993b), Ellis explains how interaction contributes to learners' linguistic development:

... interaction contributes to development because it is the means by which the learner is able to crack the code. This takes place when the learner can infer what is said even though the message contains linguistic items that are not yet part of his competence and when the learner can use the discourse to help him/her modify or supplement the linguistic knowledge already used in production. (emphasis mine, Ellis, 1984, p. 95)

As is clear in the above statement, the theoretical rationale for the input and interaction approach goes back to the psycholinguistic tradition where the ultimate goal is the individual learner's mastery of linguistic items and rules of the language. Studies taking this perspective, then, tend to ignore factors such as the individual learners' perceptions of a task, the content matter, and social, cultural, and interpersonal messages they exchange during their engagement in the task. These factors, however, become significant
once we take a view that language learning is not restricted to the acquisition of a linguistic code, but includes learning how to use the language appropriately in a given social context. As Mehan (1979) argued, students in the classroom must know “with whom, when, and where they can speak and act, and they must provide the speech and behavior that are appropriate for a given classroom situation” (p. 133).

So far, I have argued: (1) student tasks in the classroom have received increasing attention as a unit of analysis in the second language learning literature; (2) the majority of task-based studies stem from the input and interaction approach in SLA where experimental tasks are often employed in order to identify task features which facilitate conversational interactions; and (3) the ultimate concern of this psycholinguistic approach is the development of learners’ linguistic knowledge and therefore it tends to downplay the sociocultural aspects of classroom learning and language learning.

2.2 Sociocultural Approaches to Language Learning

In this section, I will look at the body of literature which comes from an anthropological, sociohistorical, and sociolinguistic tradition that takes a different perspective on language learning than one based on psycholinguistics. An important difference between these two traditions is that while the psycholinguistic tradition views language learning as essentially individual linguistic development, the other tradition considers the social context as playing a crucial role in language learning. I will call approaches coming from this latter tradition “sociocultural approaches,” including the language socialization approach and sociocultural approaches to developmental psychology. First, I will discuss some of the important theoretical concepts central to
sociocultural approaches, concerning language learning and the human cognitive
development. Second, I will review the body of literature which applies sociocultural
approaches to studies in first and second language learning in particular.

2.2.1 Language Socialization

*Language socialization* is a concept articulated by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a,
1986b), which considers language learning as the simultaneous acquisition of linguistic
knowledge and sociocultural knowledge. Children, for example, do not learn linguistic
codes in isolation, but learn about the world as they learn a language. Ochs (1988)
described language acquisition as a process of language socialization:

A basic task of the language acquirer is to acquire tacit knowledge of principles
relating linguistic forms not only to each other but also to referential and
nonreferential meanings and functions. Given that meanings and functions are to a
large extent socioculturally organized, linguistic knowledge is embedded in
sociocultural knowledge. On the other hand, understandings of the social
organization of everyday life, cultural ideologies, moral values, beliefs, and
structures of knowledge and interpretations are to a large extent acquired through
the medium of language. (p. 14)

Thus, the language socialization approach views language learning and sociocultural
learning as intertwined. Schieffelin (1990) conceptualized two components of language
socialization:

The study of language socialization has its goal understanding how persons
become competent members of their social groups and the role language has in this
process. Language socialization, therefore, concerns two major areas of
socialization: socialization through the use of language and socialization to use
language. (p. 14)

In this perspective, then, language is seen as a major and powerful medium of
socialization, and by the same token, socialization is a key to language learning. This
view of language and language learning is fundamentally different from the psycholinguistic approach which views language as a linguistic code, and the ultimate goal of language learning as the development of linguistic competence. On the other hand, the language socialization approach takes into consideration the social and cultural factors as an inseparable part of language learning.

In what follows, I will discuss some important aspects or concepts related to the theoretical perspective of language socialization and other sociocultural approaches: the importance of sociocultural context, socioculturally organized activities, and learning as apprenticeship.

2.2.2 Sociocultural Context of Learning and Development

The language socialization approach recognizes the significance of the sociocultural context in language learning. It examines the language learning of children and other novices in relation to the contexts in which and about which they learn. The sociocultural approach to developmental psychology also recognizes the need to look at the cognitive development of human beings as embedded in the sociocultural context. Wertsch (1991) has argued that research in American psychology is often based on the assumption that it is possible and desirable to study the individual in isolation, and further claims that this assumption has led to a major weakness of the discipline: "psychology has become increasingly less capable of providing insights into the major social issues of the day" and has "had very little impact on broader social and cultural issues such as educational failure and educational reform" (p. 2). The sociocultural approach advocated by Wertsch and others has its goal "to create an account of human
mental processes that recognizes the essential relationship between these processes and their cultural, historical, and institutional settings" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 6). In a similar argument, Rogoff (1990) has noted that children's cognitive development has until recently been considered a solitary endeavor, and that “[as] researchers, we have only recently begun to notice the social context of individual achievement and to develop methods for studying the real complexity of life rather than trying in vain to isolate human specimens for study” (p. 4). Rogoff emphasizes the importance of viewing individuals, their social partners, and the sociocultural context as differing angles of analysis of an integrated process, rather than as independent influences or factors of development. Thus, researchers taking sociocultural approaches to the study of cognitive development (including language development) have begun to examine closely the sociocultural context of development.

2.2.3 Socioculturally Organized Activities

I have discussed the notion that both the language socialization approach and the sociocultural approach in developmental psychology recognize the importance of investigating the sociocultural context of the human cognitive development, including language development. For these approaches, the basic unit of analysis is no longer the linguistic element nor the individual (although both language and individuality are fundamental), but the sociocultural activity in which members of a social group actively participate. From a language socialization perspective, activity is considered to play an important role in mediating linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, and therefore is a useful unit of analysis. Ochs (1988) argues that children acquire linguistic and
sociocultural knowledge through their participation in socially and culturally organized
activities or practices. She provides a model (Figure 2.1) which illustrates that “activity
mediates linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and that knowledge and activity impact
each other” (p. 15). In other words, children acquire linguistic and sociocultural
knowledge hand-in-hand when they engage in language activities, and at the same time,
language activities are in part created and structured by their linguistic and sociocultural
knowledge.

Activity or human action is also central to the sociocultural approach to cognitive
development. Wertsch (1991), for example, described the idea of studying human action
as a unit of analysis:

When action is given analytic priority, human beings are viewed as coming into
contact with, and creating, their surroundings as well as themselves through the
actions in which they engage. Thus action, rather than human beings or the
environment considered in isolation, provides the entry point into the analysis.
This contrasts on the one hand with approaches that treat the individual primarily
as a passive recipient of information from the environment, and on the other with
approaches that focus on the individual and treat the environment as secondary,
-serving merely as a device to trigger certain developmental processes. (p. 8)

The concept of activity found in these approaches is rooted in the work of
Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and others (e.g., Leont’ev, 1981). The Vygotskian school of
psychology or sociohistorical approaches to cognitive development promote the idea that
higher mental functions of individuals develop through their participation in socially and
culturally organized activities. Here, language is seen as a tool used in such activities,
mediating the development of higher mental functions. An important claim has been
made by scholars taking this view of cognitive development: “different social and cultural
Linguistic knowledge ↔ Activity ↔ Sociocultural knowledge

**Figure 2.1** Ochs' model for the role of activity in language socialization

Structuring of activities (demanding different cognitive skills) across social groups at particular historical moments will differently impact the development of certain higher mental functions (e.g., abstract thinking)” (Ochs, 1988, p. 15). In other words, development of certain cognitive skills is shaped in part by the culturally specific activity in which these skills are used. Rogoff (1990), citing works by Scribner (1975, 1977), provided an example which illustrated this point: the logical solution of syllogisms as a culturally specific problem solving activity. While the literate subjects solved the syllogisms in the desired manner, based on the premises of syllogisms, many nonliterate subjects refused to do so by protesting that they could only judge what they had seen. Scribner argued that it was not the case that nonliterate people failed to think hypothetically. But rather, they were totally unfamiliar with this specialized language genre or activity, verbal syllogisms, which is practiced in institutions such as schools and “becomes easier to handle with practice and with understanding of the specialized form of this kind of problem” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 51). This example illustrates that individuals’ thought processes, in this case, problem solving processes, are closely connected to the culturally structured activity or problem solving task (i.e., logical solution of syllogism). It becomes critical, then, to examine how activities are structured and practiced in certain sociocultural contexts, in order to understand people’s cognitive development. By the same token, in order to fully understand language development, it is necessary to examine
how language practices are socially and culturally organized and how language is used in these practices.

2.2.4 Learning as Apprenticeship

So far in this section, I have discussed how sociocultural approaches consider how people develop cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural skills through their participation in socially, culturally, and historically organized activities. The important question to ask here is how in fact people organize and participate in such activities in order to facilitate the member’s development of these skills. Sociocultural approaches to learning and development have provided an important metaphorical concept or a model as a general answer to this question—learning as a form of apprenticeship.

The notion of apprenticeship describes the process when novices or newcomers in a social group acquire their skills and structures of knowledge through participation in culturally organized activities with assistance of experts or more competent members of the group. According to Vygotsky (1978, 1987), children’s cognitive development occurs in situations where adults guide children in their problem solving by structuring and modeling the appropriate solution to the problem in their zone of proximal development, which is the distance between children’s “actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving” and the higher level of “potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (1978, p. 86). Bruner (1983) called such adults’ guidance scaffolding and illustrated examples of scaffolded interaction between children and their caregivers. He described in detail how caregivers guided or scaffolded children’s
participation in games such as peek-a-boo, and how children gradually mastered the transactional routines, concepts, and language used in the game. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) identified six features of scaffolding, such as recruiting interest in the task, simplifying the task, and demonstrating an idealized version of the act to be performed, which provide children and other novices with a good environment for learning both linguistic and sociocultural structures.

Drawing heavily on the theory of Vygotsky and Piaget, Rogoff (1990) described her analysis of children's cognitive development as cognitive apprenticeship: for Rogoff, children were apprentices in thinking, who were "active in their participation with peers and more skilled members of their society, developing skills to handle culturally defined problems with available tools" (p. 7). Central to her concept of cognitive apprenticeship was what she called guided participation:

Guided participation involves children and their caregivers and companions in the collaborative process of (1) building bridges from children's present understanding and skills to reach new understanding and skills, and (2) arranging and structuring children's participation in activities, with dynamic shifts over development in children's responsibilities. Children use social resources for guidance--both support and challenge--in assuming increasingly skilled roles in the activities of their community. (p. 8)

Rogoff emphasized several aspects of guided participation which indicated that it was much more than just a simple transmission of knowledge and skills from experts (i.e., adults) to novices (i.e., children). First of all, Rogoff stressed children's active role in making use of social guidance: children actively seek, structure, and even demand the assistance of adults or more competent peers in learning how to solve problems. Second, she pointed out the importance of tacit and routine arrangements of children's activities
and their participation in skilled cultural activities that were not always conceived as instructional. This view, she argued, contrasted with the more usual focus on explicit and even didactic communication that had characterized Vygotskian theories. Third, she provided evidence for cultural variations in guided participation, suggesting that cultural variations resulted from different skills and values that were promoted in different cultures, as well as different means of communication used between caregivers and children (e.g., the relative balance in the use of verbal and nonverbal communication).

Lave and Wenger (1991) examined the notion of apprenticeship by reviewing five accounts of adult apprenticeship, such as Yucatec Mayan midwives in Mexico (Jordan, 1989) and butchers in U.S. supermarkets (Marshall, 1972). Central to their theory of learning as apprenticeship was a similar concept to Rogoff’s guided participation—legitimate peripheral participation (LLP):

"Legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. (p. 29)

Lave and Wenger emphasized that newcomers acquired skills to perform by actually engaging in the sociocultural practice of a community, rather than by being transmitted abstract knowledge about the practices. Thus, they considered learning as “situated” in the practices. LLP was a conceptual framework by which they explained the structure of such learning. It is important to note that “peripherality” in LLP did not suggest that
there was a single core or center in a community of practice, nor that newcomers or apprentices were only given a role at the very edge of a larger process. Rather, the term suggested that “there [were] multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and -inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community” (pp. 35-6). Thus, in their usage, peripherality was a positive term which characterized the various roles taken simultaneously by newcomers and expert practitioners, and the diversity of relations involved in the community of practice.

In this section, so far, I have reviewed key theories and concepts involved in sociocultural approaches to learning and development. In these approaches, it is generally considered that children and other novices acquire knowledge and skills through their participation in socioculturally organized activities with the presence of more experienced or knowledgeable members of a community. An important metaphor for this process is the notion of apprenticeship. I have discussed how theorists have examined the issue of “learning as apprenticeship” from different angles, emphasizing various aspects that are involved. In the next section, I will look at how studies in language learning, especially in second language learning, have examined the issue of language learning as a sociocultural process.

2.2.5 Language Socialization Research

2.2.5.1 Language Socialization and L1 Research

In the field of language acquisition, the important link between language acquisition and its sociocultural context was originally suggested by Hymes (1974), who proposed the term \textit{ethnography of speaking}. This term describes a new cross-
disciplinary area of study which attempts to link the study of anthropology to that of linguistics. The main concern of this field is to investigate what people need to know in order to communicate appropriately in a community, and how they acquire and use such knowledge (Saville-Troike, 1989). Analyses focus on the system of speech events in which members of a social group communicate in a culturally specific way.

Rooted in this tradition, the study of language socialization has examined the ways in which members of different cultural groups interact and acquire linguistic and sociocultural knowledge. The majority of language socialization studies have examined interaction between children and their caregivers in various sociocultural settings: Ochs (1988) studied language socialization of Samoan and white middle class American children; Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1986) Melanesian children in Solomon Islands; Heath (1983, 1986) white middle-class, white working-class, and black working-class American children; Schieffelin (1986, 1990) Kaluli (New Guinean) children; and Crago et al. (1993) Inuit children. These studies illustrated how language socialization differs across cultures, and how its patterns are closely related to cultural values and beliefs. For example, Ochs (1988) demonstrated contrasting patterns of clarification between Samoan and white middle-class American caregivers: while white middle-class American caregivers typically expanded or guessed children's unclear utterances, Samoan caregivers simply asked children to repeat when they didn't understand what children were saying. Ochs argued that these different patterns of language socialization came from different value systems underlying the two cultures: guessing and speculating what others were thinking was considered appropriate in the American culture, while it was not in the Samoan culture.
Thus, by simply asking for repetition, Samoan caregivers were socializing their children into the tacit knowledge that it was not appropriate to speculate about the mental states of others, and at the same time implicitly teaching them an appropriate use of the language.

Heath (1983, 1986) conducted an extensive ethnographic investigation of children learning to use their L1 at home and at school. Comparing children growing up in three different communities, white middle-class, white working-class, and black working-class households in the southeastern United States, Heath illustrated how children from each community had different experiences with “literacy events” (i.e., events in which written language is used, such as reading aloud written narratives) and developed different expectations, behaviors, and attitudes surrounding such events, which eventually led to different levels of school achievement. For example, many children from the working-class black community faced difficulties in certain school literacy events which expected depersonalized and decontextualized verbal knowledge, since such knowledge was not part of their home literacy experiences. On the contrary, children from the white middle-class community were advantaged because there was a greater continuity between language use at home and at school. Thus, this study shed light on the close relationship between the patterns of children’s language development and their home language socialization.

2.2.5.2 Language Socialization and L2 Research

Traditionally, as I have discussed above, the study of language socialization has concerned children’s first language acquisition and socialization and examined interactions
between children and their caregivers. What relevance and implications, then, does language socialization have in second language learning? First of all, it has been argued that language socialization is a lifelong process and that there are many contexts of secondary language socialization such as schools, work places, and other new living environments (Duff, 1993; Hall, 1993a, 1995; Heath, 1983; Ochs, 1988; Poole, 1992; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b). In other words, it is assumed that people not only experience their primary language socialization in their childhood, but also continue to experience language socialization throughout their lives as they enter a new sociocultural context and take up new roles in the society. In this framework, then, L2 learning in various contexts would involve secondary language socialization, and therefore it would be important to investigate L2 learning from a language socialization perspective. Second, L2 researchers argue that the theoretical orientation of language socialization and other sociocultural approaches would provide considerable insights and implications to the study of L2 learning: it has been argued that studies in L2 learning over the past four decades have focused on individuals, paying limited attention to the complex social context, and as a result, provided inconclusive or contradictory findings (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, cited in Willett, 1995). Some L2 researchers have now realized that attention to the rich and dynamic sociocultural contexts of L2 learning is necessary to fully understand the complex nature of L2 acquisition. In what follows, I will review some of the main empirical studies which discuss and investigate language socialization of L2 learners.
Although there haven’t been many studies yet which investigate sociocultural aspects involved in L2 learning, there are a number of important works conducted in a variety of L2 learning settings, focusing on different aspects of language socialization. Willett (1987) conducted a case study of two preschool children who had just arrived in the United States. She found that the two girls, one from Korea and the other from Brazil, displayed different interaction patterns in the preschool and employed different learning strategies, which in part led to different patterns of L2 development. The Korean girl mostly sought out interactions with adults whose emphasis on semantic and syntactic clarity allowed her to develop these aspects of L2 first. The Brazilian girl, on the other hand, made use of interactions with her peers, acquiring formulaic routines and native-like pronunciation first. Willett concluded that the girls’ interactional styles reflected the respective values of their home cultures. Although she did not suggest that there was a fixed relationship between cultural values, social strategies, and learning styles, she nevertheless emphasized that an understanding of how cultural assumptions influenced interaction and learning patterns could help educators interact with children more effectively. This study thus has provided an important insight to L2 acquisition: language socialization patterns of learners’ home cultures can affect the way they interact in their L2, and as a result, the way they develop their L2 proficiency.

In another ethnographic study, Willett (1995) investigated the classroom behaviors of four ESL first graders, working on classroom tasks. She described how three ESL girls not only completed the tasks collaboratively and successfully but also jointly constructed their identities, social relations, and ideologies in the local classroom culture.
She suggested that the girls' academic achievement as well as their L2 development were in part motivated by their identity as independent, and therefore high-status students in the classroom. On the contrary, the other ESL student, a boy, had difficulty in getting help from peers, and as a result had to rely on the teachers much more frequently than the girls. This led him to gain an identity as a “needy child” who could not work independently. Willett interpreted the difference as a result of wider society’s gender and academic socialization, suggesting that the boy did not ask help from his female seatmates because it went against classroom and playground norms. This study thus illustrated how the sociocultural contexts of classroom, school, community, and wider society shaped the ESL children’s identities, social interactions, ideologies, and L2 development.

Crago (1992b) also explored young children’s language socialization when they were exposed to a second language environment. In the larger ethnographic study of Inuit family socialization of language, Crago found important differences in the patterns of communicative interaction between Inuit families and non-Inuit second language teachers, which often caused communication problems between Inuit children and non-Inuit teachers. For example, Inuit parents did not normally ask their children to display knowledge that they as parents already knew, whereas non-Inuit second language teachers used display questions to instruct and interact with children in the classroom.\(^1\) Crago noted that since language teaching and learning were intertwined in a fundamental manner with culturally integral ways of communication, teaching strategies for second language

\(^1\) It has been argued that display questions or referential questions are customarily used by white middle-class North American teachers (e.g., Cazden, 1988).
acquisition in Native children needed to be grounded in the knowledge of what comprised cultural membership for these children.

It is not just young children who go through secondary language socialization when acquiring an L2. Poole (1992) examined teacher-student interactions in two beginning-level university ESL classes in light of a language socialization perspective. Analyzing the classroom discourse of white middle-class female teachers and their students, she found that the routine interactional sequences in these classrooms were consistent with a number of Ochs and Schieffelin’s (1986b) interpretations of middle-class American caregiver language. Such interactional features, also similar to the ones used by the white middle-class teachers in Crago’s study, included: (1) expert accommodation of novice incompetence (e.g., the expert’s use of display questions, expansions, and scaffolding), (2) viewing of tasks being individually accomplished (e.g., the use of the first person plural pronoun in the openings and second person in the closings of the task), and (3) tendency to avoid overt display of asymmetry (e.g., the expert’s avoidance of direct implementation of their agendas). This study suggested that second language classroom contexts included cultural dimensions that powerfully affected both the teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, these cultural messages were not conveyed overtly but implicitly through routine interactional patterns of the classroom.

While Poole (1992) focused on the teachers’ accommodation evidenced in classroom discourse, Donato (1994) looked at how students as peers interacted among themselves. He analyzed protocols of American university students of French engaging in small group projects. Drawing on the notion of scaffolding, he argued that his data
showed that “learners were capable of providing guided support to their peers during collaborative L2 interactions in ways analogous to expert scaffolding documented in the developmental psychological literature” (p. 54). In conclusion, he suggested that it would be useful to consider the learners themselves as a source of knowledge in a social context.

Second language learners experience language socialization by engaging in not only oral interactions but also literacy practices in the classroom. A number of studies have demonstrated that differences in cultural norms in academic writing between learners’ L1 and L2 can negatively affect their academic success in L2 writing (e.g., Inghilleri, 1989; Land & Whitley, 1989; Santos, 1992; Silva, 1993). Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995) investigated this issue of socialization into literacy in American university writing programs. Taking an ethnographic approach, they explored the disjunction that L2 writers experienced when they crossed over from an ESL writing program to a mainstream composition program. The researchers argued that the L2 writers were disadvantaged by the different cultural norms advocated by the two programs: the ESL writing program emphasized “workpersonlike prose” (p. 560) which aimed at the clear, straightforward communication of facts and ideas, while the mainstream composition program in contrast valued complexity of thought, critical insights, and rhetorically effective expression. Further, pointing out that the educational ethnographic literature overwhelmingly emphasized the classroom and the classroom interactions, the authors claimed that this study placed its focus on the investigation of program-level norms and socialization practices rather than specific individual classroom practice, which helped develop a broader picture of ESL students’ language socialization.
As we have seen so far, many of the L2 studies that take sociocultural approaches have mainly investigated classroom interactions without a specific focus on classroom tasks. In fact, there have been very few task-based L2 studies which take a sociocultural perspective. As I have discussed earlier, the majority of task-based research in L2 learning and teaching literature takes a psycholinguistic approach (see 2.1). This approach views classroom tasks, especially conversation tasks, as a stimulus for increasing optimal input and output, and thus increasing opportunities for negotiation of meanings and practice of linguistic forms. On the other hand, in the sociocultural approaches that I have outlined earlier (see 2.2.3), tasks or activities are seen as locus for sociocultural learning and cognitive development as well as linguistic development. Likewise, classroom tasks would be viewed as socially, culturally, and historically organized activities where members of a certain cultural group interact and exchange cultural messages. Next, I will discuss two L2 studies in detail which have a specific focus on classroom tasks as sociocultural activities and therefore provide important insights to the present study.

Mohan and Smith's (1992) case study investigated how a group of Chinese students with limited English proficiency managed to succeed in a graduate adult education course. The students' successful accomplishment of the course requirements was mainly attributed to the instructor's careful planning and structuring of the course, including lecture structure, discussion groups, group tutorials, and carefully designed assignments. It was argued that "the instructor, as expert, had structured the course interaction and the series of assignments so that the novices could participate in the
activity and undertake tasks that were beyond their unaided capabilities, but within their 'zone of proximal development'." (p. 98). As a result, the students were able to see their assignments not as isolated exercises, but as sub-tasks within the larger activity of educational planning, the main content of the course. Thus, the whole course process was seen as an example of guided participation where novices (i.e., Chinese students) developed sociocultural as well as linguistic knowledge and skills with assistance of an expert (i.e., the instructor), through their engagement in carefully organized classroom tasks. Mohan and Smith pointed out that this study showed "a number of differences from cultural studies of learning where the novices were young children or the activity was, like weaving or tailoring, more physical than symbolic" (p. 98). One such difference they listed was much greater reliance on discussion and explanation of the activity in the graduate course than in child-caregiver interactions. Thus, this study provided for future studies some more complex issues of analysis in language socialization: How does child language socialization differ from adult language socialization? "What are the relationships between cultural activity and discourse connected with the activity as they are revealed in the process of cultural learning?" "How does the communicative process of learning a cultural activity differ between first and second language learners?" (p. 99).

Duff (1993, 1995, 1996a, in press) conducted an innovative study which considered the dynamic relationships among the classroom tasks, educational discourse, and broader sociopolitical and cultural contexts of the foreign language education in Hungary. Recognizing that traditional approaches to L2 research, including product-oriented FL immersion research and even process-product classroom interaction analysis
(e.g., Chaudron, 1991; Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1990; Spada, 1990, all cited in Duff, 1995), tended to overlook sociocultural, political, and historical aspects of L2 learning. Duff investigated these aspects in the context of history lessons at Hungarian secondary schools with English immersion programs. Among the various issues she discussed in this study, the most important was her linking of the "macro-level changes" of sociopolitical transformations in Hungary and the "micro-level changes" in classroom discourse. The macro-level changes were characterized by the political innovations of the time (from the mid-1980s to the 90s) including the fall of communism, rejection of Soviet-influenced policies, and following political independence of Hungary. Parallel educational reform included a much stronger emphasis on English education instead of Russian, and the rise of innovative dual-language (DL) programs and other EFL programs. These broader sociopolitical, cultural, and historical changes were related to her "microobservations" of history classrooms in DL and non-DL schools. By employing ethnographic data collection methods such as videotaping, observations, and interviews, Duff examined "the processes and problems of juxtaposing existing and new (or at least newly legitimized) ideologies, languages, and assessment procedures in the schools" (1995, p. 510), in order to explore language socialization in this unique context.

As the unit of closer analysis of classroom discourse, Duff selected two types of speech events which involved segments of extended student talk. The baseline event was the Hungarian-medium recitation, known as _felelés_, a traditional, very demanding genre of oral assessment which was conducted primarily in non-DL classes. In most DL classes, this daily recitation practice was replaced by a new type of speech event, student
presentations or lectures, and other more open-ended discussions, which were less “rigid” and “nerve-wracking” and more “democratic” than the traditional felelés (1995, p. 516). Conducting intensive discourse analysis of these two types of speech events, Duff demonstrated how the “[felelés], a local linguistic and sociocultural phenomenon with a long history of its own in the service of language socialization, is an activity which has been impacted by systematic changes and has in turn had an impact on the evolving educational discourse” (1993, p. 443). Thus, these micro-level changes of educational and classroom discourse were after all manifestations of the macro-level changes that were taking place in the larger sociocultural contexts.

Although the present study was conducted on a smaller scale in a different context, Duff’s study provided it with considerable insights in terms of theoretical perspectives, data collection methods, and analytical procedures, especially because both studies looked at variations of student presentation tasks as the center of the analysis.

In this section (2.2.5), I have reviewed empirical studies which investigate language socialization of L1 and L2 learners. Typically, language socialization research has investigated child-caregiver interactions in L1 and explored different patterns of language socialization in various sociocultural settings. These studies have described how children acquire linguistic and sociocultural knowledge through their exposure to and participation in culturally organized activities or events. Further, it has been demonstrated that language has an important role in children’s socialization process and that different types of language use reflect different cultural values and belief systems. Studies in L2 learning have also explored language socialization of L2 learners in various
learning contexts, such as different levels of schooling (preschool, elementary, secondary, and university), ESL, immersion programs, mainstream classrooms, and EFL learning situations. Although these studies have focused on different aspects of language socialization and provided various insights and implications into second language learning, they collectively seem to suggest the close and complex relationship between second language learning and its sociocultural contexts.

2.3 Research on Oral Performance of L2 University students

The present study investigated oral academic presentation tasks performed by university graduate students, including native speakers of English and ESL students. In this section, I will review relevant research on the oral skills/performance of L2 university students.

2.3.1 Lack of Research on Academic Oral Skills/Tasks

As an increasing number of ESL students study in North American universities, L2 researchers have paid much attention to the academic skills that L2 students need to have for their academic success. A great deal of this previous research, however, has focused on academic literacy skills. In English for Academic Purposes (EAP), many studies have explored what reading and writing skills students are expected to have to function effectively in North American university classrooms and how to prepare ESL students for these skills (e.g., Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Currie, 1993; Horowitz, 1986a, 1986b; Johns, 1993; Leki, 1995; Leki & Carson, 1993; Silva, 1993; Spack, 1988). Although less attention has been paid to the investigation of academic aural/oral skills compared to literacy skills (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b), a number of studies have
recently described and explored ESL students' difficulties in and strategies for listening to and understanding university lectures (e.g., Dunkel & Davis, 1995; Flowerdew, 1995; Mason, 1995; Olsen & Huckin, 1990; Thompson, 1994). To my knowledge, however, there have been fewer studies that investigated ESL students' academic speaking skills or their performance of oral tasks in university classrooms.

Recognizing the relative lack of research on academic listening and speaking tasks or requirements in academic settings, Ferris and Tagg (1996a, 1996b) conducted a survey of the expectations of U.S. college/university instructors with regard to aural/oral tasks. Content-area instructors at four different institutions and in various academic disciplines were surveyed about the aural/oral tasks they require of their students in general and the ways in which ESL students in particular struggle with these expectations. Their analyses of the survey results indicated that: (1) instructors' requirements vary across academic discipline, type of institution, and class size; (2) instructors' lecturing styles are becoming more interactive, which places new expectations upon the students; (3) instructors felt that their ESL students have great difficulty with class participation, asking and responding to questions, and listening comprehension; (4) instructors suggested strongly that ESL teachers strive for authenticity in their EAP activities by providing ESL students with opportunities to practice listening to real lectures or interacting with NSs. As Ferris and Tagg acknowledged, however, their survey project was broad and lacked detailed analyses on the issues that had emerged (also, the response rate of the survey was fairly low, 25.6%).
Weissberg (1993) investigated the university graduate student seminar presentation as a speech event (and also as a genre) and its specific task demands on non-native speaking graduate students. He observed 10 student presentations performed in graduate seminars in the departments of animal science and agronomy, and interviewed the faculty members and students participating in the seminars. His analysis of the speech event suggested that the graduate seminar presentation was “an instance of the graduate student moving from apprentice to peer within the speech community” (p. 26). It was a graded class presentation where graduate students had to display their knowledge to the faculty members, but at the same time it was a professional speech presenting aspects of original research to fellow researchers in the field. He also found discrepancies between the professors’ expressed genre expectations and NNSs’ performance of seminar presentations: although the professors preferred the extemporaneous, conversational style as a more “audience friendly” presentation, most of the NNSs provided a well-rehearsed presentation which was characterized as “orally delivered written text.” Two possible explanations for the discrepancy were offered: (1) the NNS’s own culturally determined notions of what constituted acceptable academic speech differed from the expected genre of the seminar presentation, and (2) the linguistic demands of extemporaneous speech might have been too formidable for the NNSs to undertake, given the pressures of speaking in front of a critical audience. As Weissberg noted, however, this project was only preliminary and there is a need for more investigation into the genres of oral academic presentations such as a thesis/dissertation defence.
In summary, there is a relative lack of research in L2 literature which investigates, from the perspectives of ESL students, native-speaking students, or instructors, the nature of academic speaking tasks such as oral presentations required in university settings. It remains relatively unexplored what oral skills are expected of university students and how students, both NSs and NNSs, perform and perceive oral tasks. The two recent projects that I have reviewed here (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Weissberg, 1993) were both preliminary, as the researchers themselves acknowledged, and there is a need for more detailed investigation in this area.

2.3.2 Research on ITA Issues

A research area which is closely related to the oral performance of L2 university students and has been given increasing attention in recent years, is the issue of the international teaching assistant (ITA) with limited L2 proficiency. The problems associated with the ITA have been investigated from a variety of angles, and there has also been much effort in developing an appropriate language test and effective training program for the ITA. Traditionally, the ITA’s problem was seen primarily as a linguistic one, mainly associated with pronunciation and fluency (e.g., Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler, 1992; Anderson-Hsieh, & Koehler, 1988). However, there has been a growing realization that the ITA problem is more complex in nature, involving various factors other than pronunciation and fluency. One such factor is ITAs' use of discourse markers or their discourse competence. A number of studies found that unsuccessful (or less comprehensible) ITAs often failed to use overt organizational markers and cohesive links between ideas in their presentations (e.g., Rounds, 1987; Tyler, 1992, Williams, 1992).
Another important factor is ITAs’ use of compensation strategies or their strategic competence. Studies have identified a number of compensation strategies that ITAs can use to overcome their deficiencies in linguistic skills and increase their effectiveness as TAs (e.g., Douglas & Myers, 1989; Hoekje & Williams, 1992). Hoekje and Williams (1992), for example, identified two types of such strategies: (1) the use of discourse markers and elaboration of key concepts, and (2) nonlinguistic strategies such as the extended use of written material on handouts or an OHP. However, some studies have suggested that there may be a threshold level of language proficiency below which compensation strategies may not be effective (e.g., Ard, 1989; Halleck & Moder, 1995).

In addition to the ITAs’ linguistic and strategic competence, it has been suggested that their sociolinguistic competence or cultural knowledge about the North American classroom can also affect their success as a TA. Hoekje and Williams (1992) pointed out, however, that researchers are just beginning to understand what is involved in adequate sociolinguistic competence for TAs.

Although many studies have investigated the ITA issue as I have briefly reviewed above, there have been very few studies, to my knowledge, that have qualitatively (and extensively) explored this issue from the point of view of ITAs or native speaking TAs. It is often the case that the performance of TAs is analyzed and compared without much attention to their perspectives or the social, cultural, and historical context in which they teach. Given the complexity of the ITA issue, however, it seems important to investigate the issue from a sociocultural perspective, incorporating a detailed analysis of the ITA classroom context and the emic view of the participants.
2.3.3 Pilot Study

The review of the relevant research so far seems to suggest the following points:
(1) In spite of the increasing attention to classroom tasks in the L2 literature, there is a lack of studies which investigate tasks and language learning surrounding tasks from a sociocultural perspective (cf. Duff, 1993 and others; Mohan & Smith, 1992), particularly in contexts of adult education; (2) there is a relative lack of research which explores the oral performance/skills of L2 university students, compared to research on their reading, writing, and listening performance/skills (cf. Weissberg, 1993); (3) although many studies have investigated the oral performance of ITAs, few studies have examined qualitatively the sociocultural context of the ITA classroom, including ITAs’ perspectives.

Considering these points, it seems useful to explore from a sociocultural perspective the L2 students’ performance of oral tasks in the context of university classrooms. The present study, therefore, examined the graduate students’ performance of oral academic presentation tasks from a language socialization perspective. Although an oral academic presentation is a task which graduate students in various academic disciplines often perform in graduate seminars or in their thesis/dissertation defences, there has been no study, to my knowledge, which investigates such tasks from a sociocultural perspective for an extended period of time.

Prior to the present study, I conducted a pilot study on a smaller scale from January to March, 1995 (i.e., the duration of the second semester of the 94-95 academic year). In the pilot study, I examined the oral presentation tasks assigned in three graduate seminars offered by the Department of TESL at WCU in which I participated as a
student. Two of these seminars were TESL 520 and TESL 570, which were observed subsequently in the present study. The sources of information used in the pilot study were as follows: (1) observations of students' (both NSs and NNSs) oral presentations, (2) questionnaires answered by 12 students (six NSs and six NNSs), (3) interviews with four NNSs and two instructors, (4) four audio-taped oral presentations (two by NSs and two by NNSs), and (5) relevant documents such as the course outlines, presented material, and handouts. Two types of data analysis were conducted: (1) the analysis of data from observations, questionnaires, interviews and relevant documents, and (2) the discourse analysis of the four audio-taped presentations. The former was mainly concerned with: (1) how the oral presentation task provided a locus and medium for the language socialization of graduate students, (2) how students and instructors viewed the task and the learning surrounding the task, and (3) the difficulties that NNSs experienced in performing the task. The discourse analysis examined the presenters' use of theoretical and practical discourse (Mohan, 1986), and the features of interactions between the presenter and the audience. The task was also analyzed into the seven interactional resources of oral practices (Hall, 1993a, 1995) (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of oral practices).

---

2 Mohan (1986) provided the Knowledge Framework which was divided into theoretical/generic knowledge and specific practical knowledge. He suggested that discourse generated based on such knowledge can be divided into theoretical and practical discourse, respectively. In the discourse analysis conducted in the pilot study, I identified these two types of discourse in the following way: (1) theoretical discourse included, (a) reproducing information given in the presented material, (b) making critical or evaluative comments on the material, and (c) asking theoretical questions about the presented topic; (2) practical discourse included, (a) referring to personal experiences, (b) making organizational comments and directions, and (c) asking organizational/practical questions.
The main findings of the pilot study were as follows: (1) The oral presentation task was given an important status in the structure of the graduate seminars and seemed to play a significant role in the language socialization of graduate students; (2) in addition to linguistic knowledge, the students' understandings of the subject matter, the expected role of presenter, and the often implicit classroom culture (e.g., the norms of interaction) of Canadian graduate seminars were also important in performing a good presentation; (3) students developed such understandings through observing and performing the task repeatedly; (4) NNSs seemed to experience a variety of linguistic and sociocultural difficulties in performing the task; (5) the discourse of the four audio-taped presentations showed variation in the presenters' use of theoretical and practical discourse and their interaction with the audience;\(^3\) (6) the analysis of the oral presentation task as an oral practice suggested its complex nature.

Although the pilot study was only preliminary because of the limited amount of data collected and analyzed and the relatively short duration of the study, its findings suggested that the oral academic presentation task was a potentially rich locus, medium, and resource for the language socialization of graduate students and merited further in-depth investigation. The pilot study also provided implications and directions for the present study with regard to data collection methodologies. For example, it was suggested that the video-recording of presentations (instead of the audio-recording) would be useful for a detailed analysis of presentations. Furthermore, my earlier observations of

\(^3\) For example, while the two NSs used theoretical and practical discourse alternately, the discourses of the two NNSs' presentations were dominated by theoretical discourse. The NSs interacted actively with the
the two courses (TESL 520 and TESL 570) in the pilot study added to the present study some historical aspects of the courses and the oral presentation tasks.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the relevant research and discussed the theoretical (or research) background of the present study. In the next chapter, I will describe in detail the methodologies used in the present study, including the sites, participants, data collection procedures, and analytical procedures of the study.

audience along the way and generated a lot of input from them, while the NNSs basically provided a long monologue without much interaction with the audience.
3.1 Ethnographic Research Methods

As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of task-based studies in L2 literature have followed the psycholinguistic tradition and adopted quantitative research methodology, including experimental designs and quantification of conversational features. The ultimate goal of these studies has been to identify task types or features which reportedly contribute to L2 linguistic development. The goal of the present study, on the other hand, is not to determine effectiveness of certain tasks, but to understand how student tasks performed regularly in the classroom are a locus for the language socialization of graduate students. To pursue this goal, this study examines from a sociocultural perspective a natural classroom environment where students engage in normally occurring classroom tasks, by employing ethnographic research methods. In the next paragraph I will outline some of the important principles related to ethnographic research methods.

Recently, ethnographic methods have gained wider acceptance in both educational and ESL research (Davis, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Ethnography is one of many kinds of qualitative research methods used to study the cultural behavior of a group in naturally occurring, ongoing settings (see Jacob, 1987; Tesch, 1990; Wolcott, 1992, for a taxonomy of qualitative research methods). Although what constitutes ethnography is not necessarily clear and straightforward (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), scholars have agreed on a number of principles and characteristics in
ethnography: a focus on people in cultural groups, holism, insiders' (emic) perspectives, and what Geertz (1973) calls thick description (Davis, 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Heath, 1983; Jacob, 1987; Johnson, 1992; Nunan, 1992; van Lier, 1988; Watson-Gegeo, 1988; Wolcott, 1988). Ethnographers are usually concerned with a group since they are interested in cultural behavior which is by definition shared behavior. For example, the classic ethnographic study by Heath (1983, 1986) investigated language use in literacy events by comparing three different cultural groups, black working-class, white working-class, and white middle-class communities (see Chapter 2). Attention to context (i.e., holistic approach) is another crucial characteristic of ethnography. Ethnography, as holistic research, takes into account the contexts in which cultural behavior under study occurs. Duff (1993), for example, interpreted instances of teacher-student interaction in history lessons in Hungary as embedded in larger (or more macro) institutional and political contexts of the country (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, ethnographers seek to understand cultural behavior of people by discovering the insider’s view, the emic view. Watson-Gegeo explains that “emic refers to culturally based perspectives, interpretations, and categories used by members of the group under study to conceptualize and encode knowledge and to guide their own behavior” (1988, p. 580). The concept of thick description refers to the kind of description which involves this emic view. Davis (1995) explains thick description by contrasting it with “rich description” (Erickson, 1986, cited in Davis): thick description “involves an emic perspective, which demands description that includes the actors’ interpretations and other social and/or cultural information,” while rich description “assumes a positivist, behavioral, and thus etic [i.e., outsider’s]
perspective" (p. 434). In short, the value of ethnography lies in its close attention to cultural context and holistic interpretation of insiders' perspectives.

The present study shared some of the characteristics with ethnographic methods outlined above. The most important aspect of the study was its attempt to examine from multiple perspectives one type of classroom task as embedded in the cultural context of a graduate classroom. It investigated how a group of graduate students and instructors organized, perceived, performed, and evaluated the task by taking a variety of roles associated with the task. Thus, this study was a qualitative analysis of classroom tasks characterized by its attention to local contexts and the interpretation of insiders' perspectives. In what follows, I will describe the general context of the present study (sites, participants, class structures, and tasks) and the procedures of data collection and analysis used in this study.

3.2 Sites

This research was conducted in two graduate courses, TESL 520 and TESL 570, offered by the Department of TESL in WCU. Both were required core courses for the Masters of Arts and Masters of Education programs in TESL, and the main content of these courses included theory and research in second language learning and teaching. These courses were chosen for investigation for a number of reasons: (1) Most of the first year students in the graduate programs were taking one or both of these courses; (2) both courses lasted two semesters (approximately seven months in total), rather than for one semester, thus allowing me to stay longer in the research site; (3) students were likely to stay enrolled since both courses were required; (4) both courses had a similar type of oral
academic presentation task as one of the main student activities performed in class, and
(5) I took both courses as a first year graduate student a year before and thus had some
background knowledge of the course content, materials, and procedures.

It is important to note here that the fact that I had taken the two courses prior to
conducting this research project had advantages as well as disadvantages. Being already
familiar with the instructors, content, materials, and procedures of the courses saved me a
great deal of time and effort in getting to know them, but at the same time there was a
danger that I might take certain things for granted. Delamont (1992) discusses the issue of
familiarity by pointing out that “central features of education are so
taken-for-granted that they are invisible” (p. 42). She suggests four strategies to fight
familiarity and make the familiar novel: in short, (1) to study unusual or different
classrooms, (2) to study schools and classrooms in other cultures, (3) to study non-
educational settings, and (4) to adopt gender as the main focus of the study (pp. 45-49).

One strategy that I used for this study was to observe different modes and contexts of
oral academic presentation outside of the immediate research domain. I joined in and
observed a number of related professional/academic speech events, such as an oral defence
of a doctoral dissertation, presentations of research by professors, and class presentations
performed in different departments in the university. This helped me to realize some of
the peculiarities and commonalities of oral academic presentations that I observed in the
two courses under study. In addition, the fact that I was an international student here in
Canada and came from a different cultural background helped me see the Canadian
classroom culture as somewhat foreign and unfamiliar, and yet, at the same time familiar
from extensive personal experience. This provided a relatively balanced analytical view.

3.3 Participants

Participants in this study were 21 graduate students who were taking either or
both of the two courses and the two instructors who were teaching them. Out of ethical
considerations, pseudonyms are used for all participants’ names in this study. The two
courses are also indicated by pseudonyms, TESL520 and TESL570. In this section, I will
only provide general characteristics of the participants taken as a whole. More detailed
descriptions of the participants in each of the two courses will be provided in Chapter 4.

Among the 21 graduate students who participated in the study, six were non-
native speakers (NNSs) of English and 15 were native speakers (NSs). The six NNSs
were all from East Asian countries. Ten of the 21 were part-time graduate students, while
the other 11 were full-time. Among them, there were eleven females and 10 males.
Twelve were first year graduate students, while the other nine were in their second, third,
or fourth year of graduate studies. The age of the participants ranged from the late 20’s
to early 50’s, but the majority were in their 30’s. Each of the courses had an almost equal
number of male/female and part-time/full-time students.

The instructors for the two courses were both female professors. Dr. Karen Frost
had been a professor in Canada for about eight years and had taught TESL520 at WCU
for four years. Dr. Diane Cory had been a professor in Canada for about two years and
had taught TESL570 at WCU for two years. Among students in the department, both
professors were well known for being highly knowledgeable and resourceful.
3.4 Class Structure and Oral Academic Presentation Tasks

For both courses, classes started at 4:30 p.m. and lasted until around 7:00 p.m., including about 15 minutes of break-time. These weekly evening courses were designed to meet the needs of part-time graduate students who taught ESL and/or mainstream content courses in the public school system full-time in the day time (and could only come to classes in the evening). Both courses were structured mainly as graduate seminars where students were expected to engage in active discussions of relevant issues. Like most of the graduate courses offered in the department, the main requirements of the courses included: (1) to read assigned materials, (2) to write academic essays and research papers, (3) to perform oral academic presentations, and (4) to participate in class discussions and exercises. The actual class format of TESL520 and that of TESL570 were similar but different in some important ways, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 4.

The main focus of the present study was oral academic presentation (OAP) tasks which were regularly performed by students in class. In this section, I will only explain the rationale for my having chosen this particular classroom task as the unit of analysis (more detailed analysis of the local cultures of OAPs performed in each course will be provided in Chapter 5). There were several reasons for choosing the OAP task as the focus over other kinds of activities in which students engaged in class (e.g., teacher-led discussions). First of all, OAPs were repeated regularly in class (one or two in every class in TESL520 and a little less frequently in TESL570), and therefore a highly routinized part of the classroom life. In addition, student oral presentations were also a common practice not only in other courses offered by the Department of TESL but also
in other academic disciplines. In light of language socialization perspectives, I could anticipate that this kind of common routinized practice was a potentially rich and complex locus for language socialization, in this case, in a highly academic setting (e.g. Ochs, 1988).

Second, in OAPs it was students, not instructors, who were primarily responsible for taking control, maintaining the floor, and leading class discussions. Furthermore, the students’ OAP performance was mandatory and contributed to the student’s grade, consisting of 10 percent of the entire mark. Thus, I could expect a serious commitment to the task in terms of students’ overt participation, and the investment of their time and energy to prepare for and perform the task. It was, furthermore, expected to reveal not only students’ knowledge of the subject matter but also their patterns of interpersonal and cognitive interactions with their peers and instructors, either in the role as presenter or audience member. Third, students in the future would have to perform oral presentations in other academic settings such as a thesis defence and professional conferences, and therefore OAPs assigned in the courses seemed to involve elements of academic apprenticeship. Dr. Cory specifically noted in her description of the OAP task in the course outline the aspect of academic apprenticeship incorporated in the task:

**NOTE:** Conference presentations are often 20 minutes in length, as are presentations in a thesis defence. Therefore, it is very important that you adhere to the criteria that are presented; this will provide useful practice in this kind of academic activity. I will offer some oral feedback and will monitor the time.

Finally, I chose the OAP task in particular in consideration of non-native speaking students’ behaviors and needs in class. Judging from my observations in six different
graduate courses that I had taken prior to this research project, it was often the case that NNSs participating in graduate seminars, including myself, tended to be quieter than NSs in class discussions. However, in OAPs, NNSs assigned the presenter role had no choice but to speak in front of the class. In some cases, an OAP was the only classroom activity where a NNS maintained the floor for an extended period of time. It has been argued that any students (NSs as well as NNSs, in this case) in formal learning environments not only must know the content of academic subjects but also learn the appropriate form of demonstrating their academic knowledge (Mehan, 1979). However, in light of language socialization perspectives, it is likely that NNSs who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds have to spend more time and energy to learn "appropriate" cultural, social, and linguistic forms of classroom behaviors in a Canadian English-speaking context. From this point of view, I hypothesized that since OAP tasks involved certain expected structures or formats (e.g., a standard format of presentations) and roles (e.g. presenter, backup, and audience), they were likely to provide useful opportunities for NNSs to learn the appropriate speech and behavior for a given classroom context.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

To ensure the credibility and robustness of this study, multiple methods were employed for data collection. Marshall and Rossman (1994) as well as Yin (1994) advocate the triangulation of multiple sources of data in qualitative research as a strategic choice to enhance the credibility of research findings; it can reduce the risk of observer or interviewer bias and other threats to validity. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), at the same time, recognize that triangulation is not a simple test and argue that "what is
involved in triangulation is not the combination of different kinds of data *per se*, but rather an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis” (p. 232). Next, I will describe the five types of data collection methods used in this study and also discuss how different methods were designed to elicit different kinds of data which were intended to offset various possible threats to validity. Data were collected in the following ways: (1) classroom observations, (2) video-recordings of OAPs, (3) interviews (both formal and informal, including review and interview sessions), (4) questionnaires, and (5) collections of relevant documents.

3.5.1 Classroom Observations

My observations of classes started in the first week of September 1995, and ended in the first week of April 1996. This was the 1995-96 Fall/Winter Session which consisted of two three-month semesters. Both TESL520 and TESL570 met once a week. TESL520 with Dr. Frost had 21 classes for the entire school year, while TESL570 with Dr. Cory had 24. I observed all the classes for both of the courses in the first semester (from September to December of 1995), and in the second semester (from January to April of 1996) I observed most of the classes in which students performed OAPs. In total, I observed 19 classes for TESL520 and 20 for TESL570. Since each class lasted two and half hours, 97.5 hours of class time were observed in total.

I was introduced in the first class of both courses as a participant observer. Dr. Frost told the class that I would be observing classes as a part of my research project while at the same time participating in class discussions. She also mentioned that I had
already taken the course and would be more than happy to answer any questions the
students might have about the course. Dr. Cory emphasized that I would be participating
in classes just like the other students, doing classroom activities and even performing an
OAP, although I was in the course for research purposes. It seemed that I blended into
the classes quite smoothly through participating in class discussions and doing
presentations just like the other students taking the courses. Besides, there were a
number of students with whom I had taken other courses together before, so I was not a
total stranger to the class.

In the second week, I explained my research project briefly and gave out informed
consent forms (see Appendix A) in TESL570. I told the class that I was interested in
exploring the language socialization of graduate students, NSs as well as NNSs, and would
be looking at student presentations as the focus of analysis. I also explained the
procedures for data collection, assuring them that their participation was voluntary. Dr.
Cory told the class that they could learn from my example about the kind of research
procedures that they would have to go through themselves in the near future, and
incorporated a brief lecture on some of the standard research procedures such as informed
consent. This seemed to be highly appropriate in this course since it dealt with issues on
research methodology as a part of the course content. In fact, throughout my fieldwork,
student participants asked me various questions, both practical and theoretical, about
preparing for and conducting research for an MA thesis. I gave out informed consent
forms to the TESL520 class in the third week, explaining briefly the purpose and
procedures of the project. All the students as well as the instructors for the two courses agreed to participate in the project.

I took field notes during my classroom observations. My main focus for the field notes was verbal and non-verbal interactions among students and instructors. I recorded as much as possible my observations about who offered what kind of comments or questions in what context, as well as who stayed silent. My particular interests, derived from theories such as language socialization and cognitive apprenticeship (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Rogoff, 1990; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b), were: (1) how instructors as more knowledgeable and mature members of the academic community interacted with students, (2) how students as less experienced members interacted with instructors and also with other students, and (3) how NNSs as members with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interacted with others.

3.5.2 Video-recordings of OAPs

Before I decided what method of recording OAPs would be most suitable for the purpose of the study and the various conditions of the classes, I needed to consider possible tradeoffs of using different recording devices. Obviously, the most unobtrusive one would have been not using any technological devices but, rather, my own eyes, ears, and language. However, I knew that this would seriously limit the quality as well as the amount of information which I could draw from an oral event because of my limited abilities of attending to and recording such an event as it unfolded in real time. Thus, using available technologies such as audio and video tape recorders was a more promising option, although the obvious tradeoff in this case was its obtrusive nature. Because an
OAP by itself could be a face-threatening task for a student presenter, I was not sure how participants would feel about being video-taped. So, I decided to leave the decision of either audio- or video-recording to each participant. All the participants, except one who preferred only audio-recording, agreed to be video-taped rather than just audio-taped. This did not mean that a video camera in the classroom, recording students’ OAPs, did not have any effects on their performance (see Chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion on the impact of a video camera in the classroom). However, this recording device proved invaluable. Although there were limitations as to what one video camera (as opposed to two, for example) in a small classroom could record, it still visually captured moments of participants’ non-verbal as well as verbal communication which could be reviewed and studied repeatedly. The video camera recorded the presenter’s facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and use of handouts and an overhead projector (OHP), which were important pieces of information and yet, would all have been lost in an audio-recording.

I first placed a tripod-mounted video camera in the very back corner of the classroom so that it would capture the presenter from a frontal view. This, however, failed to capture a useful view of the audience. Thus, from the second recording the video camera was placed at one side of the room in the middle of the presenter and the audience (usually sitting in two rows), capturing the presenter and the audience with a lateral view simultaneously. The video tapes almost always had good sound quality since the outside of the classroom was usually very quiet, except that it occasionally failed to capture the voice of somebody in the audience talking very softly. The picture was also of good quality except when the room light (usually only the front light) was turned off for the
purpose of a presenter’s use of an OHP. Even then, however, the picture was quite satisfactory. The camera could not capture everybody in the classroom at the same time since the classrooms were quite small, wide, and short. Therefore, most of the time I stood behind the camera, ensuring that speakers, either the presenter or the audience, were within the viewfinder. During a presenter’s long monologue I tried to get a picture of the audience occasionally. I usually began recording right before an OAP started and ended after the class moved on to the next activity.

In the end, I videotaped 11 OAPs performed in TESL520, and 14 in TESL570. Most of the recordings were conducted in the first semester, while a few were done in the second semester. I decided to stop recording OAPs after I videotaped at least one of every participant’s OAPs. Thus, in the second semester, I usually observed and took field notes of students’ OAPs without video- nor audio-recording, while at the same time participating in discussions as one of the members of the audience. All the recorded OAPs on 8mm videotapes were recorded on to VHS videotapes which were used in the review and interview sessions described below. They were also copied onto audio cassette tapes for the purpose of transcription.

3.5.3 Review and Interview Sessions (RISs)

The main criticism against the naturalistic method of observation is its exclusive dependence on researchers’ own perceptions which raises the risk of bias from their subjective interpretations of situations (Adler & Adler, 1994; Denzin, 1989). The most common method which is used in qualitative research in order to compensate for this weakness of naturalistic observations is interviews. Listening to and asking questions of
participants help researchers to collect *insider accounts* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In this study, both informal and formal interviews were conducted. Informal interviews were done as much as possible right after participants finished their OAPs. I conducted formal interviews with the two instructors during the winter break between the two semesters (December, 1995). The interviews took place at their offices and each lasted about an hour. The formal interviews conducted with students were called review and interview sessions (RISs). All the formal interviews were audio-taped.

After a student had finished an OAP, within a week, I met the student to have an RIS. Together, we reviewed the video of students' OAP, reflected on their performance, and then had an open-ended interview. RISs were held in a variety of settings, but most often we met in one of the empty classrooms where the students normally had classes. We usually met in the afternoon before class. In some cases, students preferred meeting in their homes, while in other cases they preferred reviewing the video at home by themselves and then doing the interview part by telephone.¹ A normal RIS lasted about an hour and a half, although in some cases students had a lot to say while reviewing the video and thus the entire session lasted over two hours.

There were two distinct parts in RISs: the video-reviewing part and the ensuing formal interview part. In the first video-reviewing part, I usually started by asking participants to freely comment on anything they noticed or wanted to comment on while reviewing the video. In some cases, participants had no problem with this general

---

¹ These were all part-time students who worked in the day time and therefore did not have time to come to school for an RIS.
direction and commented a lot while reviewing the video, while in other cases participants requested more information on what I expected them to look for and comment on. Even in such cases, I tried to keep my directions general and added that they could comment on what they had been trying to do, what they had been thinking about, or any kind of difficult or interesting moments that they had experienced during their OAP (see Chapter 9 for more discussions on RISs). My intention in keeping the directions general was to elicit as much as possible the participants' own ways of making sense of the event without me imposing my own structuring of the same event by asking them to look for specific elements in their OAPs. This idea is related to what Marshall and Rossman (1994) discuss as a fundamental assumption of qualitative research—"the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (p. 80).

After we watched the video, I asked a set of questions of the students. This more formal part of an RIS took a guided interview approach (e.g., Patton, 1990) where topics and issues to be covered were specified in advance in outline form (see Appendix B). I decided the sequence and the wording of questions in the course of each interview. This approach was more sensitive to the participants' creating their own discourse than a more structured approach, while at the same time the outline of questions prepared beforehand increased the comprehensiveness and systematicity of data across different respondents to some extent. I conducted interviews in English except with the four participants who shared the same first language with me.
3.5.4 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was filled out by the participating students in the last class of each semester for the two courses (see Appendix C). These questionnaires were anonymous and the questions were mostly open-ended. The main purpose of the questionnaire administered at the end of the first semester was to obtain information on participants’ views on and understandings of the OAP task in general at that point of time. The questionnaire administrated at the end of the second semester asked questions about their perceptions on the courses in general as well as their reflections on participating in this project. While the RISs were conducted in the immediate context of reviewing the students’ OAPs and therefore mainly elicited their reflections on their own OAPs, these questionnaires were intended to provide a different kind of context where they could also reflect on others’ OAPs, OAP tasks in general, and their learning experiences throughout the course (see Chapter 9 for a more detailed discussion on the role of the questionnaires).

3.5.5 Collections of Relevant Documents

Relevant documents were collected throughout the courses: (1) course outlines prepared by the instructors, (2) course readings, either chapters or research articles, which were presented in OAPs, (3) handouts prepared for OAPs by presenters, and (4) other course materials distributed by the instructors in class.

Figure 3.1 shows the time line for the data collection of the present study.
Semester 1


Classroom Observations
Collection of Documents
Informal interviews

OAP 1 → RIS
Video-Recording

OAP 2 → RIS
Video-Recording

OAP X → RIS
Video-Recording

Questionnaire 1

Winter Break (December, 1995)

Formal interviews with Instructors

Semester 2


Classroom Observations
Collection of Documents
Informal interviews

OAP Y → RIS
Video-Recording

*OAP Z → RIS
Video-Recording

Questionnaire 2

(*The recording of OAPs finished in January, 1996.)

Figure 3.1 Time line for data collection
3.6 Transcription Procedures

Both OAPs and RISs were transcribed by me and two students among the participants who were hired for assisting with transcribing only after all the data collection was completed. Interviews conducted in Japanese with four Japanese participants were translated into English as I transcribed them. I made copies of OAPs on audio cassette tapes from the videotapes so that we could transcribe from audiotapes. We first previewed a video of an OAP to get a sense of the context, then worked on transcribing the OAP from the audiotapes, and then finally verified the transcriptions against the videotapes. Non-verbal information was also added during the verification of the videotapes. The transcriptions were done according to standard conventions of classroom discourse analysis (e.g., Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Duff, 1993, see Appendix D).

3.7 Analysis

3.7.1 Unit of Analysis

A specific speech event or an activity (i.e. OAPs) was chosen as a unit of analysis in this study rather than an entire class consisting of various activities. The concept of activity as culturally constituted behavior is embedded in a theory of language socialization (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b) and sociohistorical approaches to cognition (e.g., Lave, 1988; Wertsch, 1985, 1991), as well as the notions of speech event and conversation-analysis (e.g., Duranti, 1985; Hall, 1993a, 1995; Hymes, 1974) (see Chapter 2). Ochs (1988), for example, argues that “activity mediates linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and that knowledge and activity impact each other” (p. 15).
Vygotsky (1978) and other neo-Vygotskyan theorists (e.g., Wertsch, 1991) tie the development of individual cognition to one's participation in conventionalized sociocultural activity. Following these theoretical orientations, this study employed one type of classroom activities as the unit of analysis to explore the language socialization of graduate students. Duff (1995) also notes that “[f]ocusing on one activity (whether an oral proficiency interview, an academic advising session, or a student’s oral presentation) permits the deconstruction of well-bounded discursive events and facilitates comparisons across contexts (classes, schools, cultures)” (p. 513).

This study also considered the linking of discourse data of OAPs to data from interviews, questionnaires, and other observations of the researched context. Crago (1992) calls this kind of data linking the hallmark of language socialization studies:

In keeping with the psycholinguistic tradition, naturalistic recordings of children and their caregivers are made from which detailed verbal and nonverbal information is transcribed. Information from the detailed analysis of such transcripts is then linked with ethnographically derived information gathered from several sources by using a combination of participant observation and ethnographic interviews. It is this linking of the microlevel analysis of discourse with the macrolevel information on social practices, social organization, and cultural values that has become the hallmark of language socialization studies (p. 29).

Thus, instead of isolating OAPs as a self-contained entity that could be analyzed apart from its surrounding context, the present study attempted to examine the activity as embedded in its local contexts by paying enough attention to ethnographically derived information.
### 3.7.2 Procedures

Analysis of data in qualitative research begins with data collection (Delamont, 1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Tesch, 1990). From the start of data collection, the qualitative analyst is "noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). In this study, the earlier data analysis during the data collection phase was mainly recorded in a research journal. After each data collection event (observations of classes and OAPs, RISs, observations of other relevant events), I recorded my reflections and analytical thoughts on the event in the journal, separately from field notes. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) value the construction of analytic notes and memos as "the sort of internal dialogue, or thinking aloud, that is the essence of reflexive ethnography" (p. 192). I recorded in the research journal insights and inferences which I was drawing from my observations and interviews as well as reflections on the data collection techniques.

After the data collection was finished in April 1996, two types of data analysis were conducted simultaneously: (1) the analysis of data from observations (i.e., fieldnotes and research journal), interviews, and questionnaires, and (2) the analysis of the OAP discourse. Findings from these two types of data analysis interacted on an on-going basis and were integrated in the final ethnographic account of the graduate students' language socialization.

Fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and questionnaire responses were first coded into broad tentative categories which derived from the questions in the interviews and questionnaires themselves and the recurrent themes recorded in the entries of the research
Examples of these broad analytical categories were: life as graduate student (or as a professor), intellectual values and academic skills promoted in graduate school, classroom cultures of the two courses, sub-tasks of OAPs, performance of OAPs, value of the OAP task, and NNSs' difficulties in performing OAPs. Then, each of these broad categories was further coded into smaller categories or themes which recurrently emerged from sorted data within each broad category. For example, performance of OAPs was coded into themes such as presenters' choice of article, background knowledge and performance, communication of epistemic stance, appropriate use of academic language, strategies used by presenters, explicit and implicit feedback, constitution of expert-novice, and audience of peers.

The discourse analysis of OAPs in this study was essentially qualitative: the transcripts of 25 video-taped OAPs were analyzed in terms of the themes such as communication of epistemic stance, strategies to engage the audience, multiple voices in OAPs, constitution of expert-novice, and cognitive bridges. These themes or categories emerged in part from the analysis of ethnographic data described above, but were also illuminated by the theoretical perspective of language socialization. In addition to my interpretations of the OAP discourse in terms of these categories, information obtained from RISs (i.e., students' perspectives or interpretations of their own OAP performance) were also analyzed and incorporated. The organizational aspects of OAPs were also analyzed in terms of different phases of OAPs, time used in each OAP and in different phases, and organization of participation.
3.7.3 Use of Computer Software: HyperQual2

The data management and analysis of this study was assisted by a computer program for the Macintosh, HyperQual2. It is one of the commonly used qualitative analysis programs developed for data that consist of narrative text, such as field notes, interview transcripts, open-ended responses to questionnaires, journal entries, documents, etc. (See Tesch, 1990, for a description of available computer programs for qualitative data analysis.) This program, as well as other programs for descriptive or interpretive analysis (as opposed to theory-building analysis), performs two basic functions, coding and assembling (or searching) of data segments. It allows one to attach codes to text segments in the data, and then it can search through your data for the segments according to the codes and assemble them. In the present study, the text data of fieldnotes, interview transcripts, questionnaire responses, OAP transcripts, and research journal entries were all entered into the program and segmented, coded, and assembled on the computer screen.

Although the use of a computer program itself does not guarantee a better quality analysis, the use of HyperQual2 in this study seemed to aid and facilitate the analysis in a number of ways. First of all, it saved analysis time considerably, compared to cutting and pasting data on paper manually. Second, the program made analysis procedures more systematic and explicit. For example, the program automatically kept track of the source

---

2 In addition to the two basic functions, HyperQual2 offers a set of enhancement functions such as follows: (1) the ability to code interview/questionnaire data electronically (or automatically) according to their questions, (2) the ability to code and segment data electronically according to words contained in the data, (3) the ability to search for co-occurring codes, (4) the use of graphic material, (5) the ability to create and search through researcher memos, and (6) the ability to enter, store, code, and search excerpts from the related literature (see Tesch, 1993).
of a coded data segment (e.g., data segment A comes from Question No. X of Interview No. Y). It also created automatically, and on an on-going basis, the list of codes used for the analysis. Third, the use of the program enhanced flexibility and revision in analysis procedures. For example, a unique and useful feature of HyperQual2 was that codes could easily be added, changed, or deleted on the screen. The program also allowed one to accumulate data segments without a category or a code name: the segments could be collated in a stack (i.e., a place to hold chunks of data) and coded later. I found these features of HyperQual2 especially useful because salient themes and categories (i.e., codes) were not necessarily pre-defined before the analysis but often emerged as I went through the data analysis iteratively.

In this chapter, I have described the methodology of the present study, including the sites, participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. In the following chapters (4-7), I will illustrate the findings of this study.
Chapter 4

CONTEXT OF LEARNING: NATURE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

4.1 Graduate School Culture

The main focus of this study is oral academic presentation (OAP) tasks performed regularly in the classroom by graduate students in two courses. The study looked at this task qualitatively, investigating the relevant contexts, participants’ perceptions, and performances of the task. Before I discuss the nature of the task and students’ language socialization surrounding it, I will describe the larger contexts of graduate studies and graduate seminars in which OAPs were performed.

4.1.1 Life as a Graduate Student

The 21 graduate students who participated in this study came from various backgrounds. Half of them were part-time students who taught in the day time: some taught ESL or mainstream in the public school system, and others taught ESL at private language institutions. The other half were full-time students who also had had various kinds of teaching experience before they joined the graduate school. Students’ age ranged from late 20s to 50s, and in general the full-time student group was younger than the part-time group. Fifteen students came from North America (two from the United States, 13 from Canada), and the other six came from East Asian countries. They were enrolled in either the M.A. or M.Ed. program in TESL and were at various stages in their two-year program: eleven students were in their first year, six in their second year, and four were part-time students in their third or fourth year.
Students joined the masters program for various reasons, having various goals in mind. Most of the North American students mentioned one or both of the two reasons represented in the following excerpts from interviews:

I wanted to learn more about the field. I just find it fascinating. I wanted to get more background knowledge on theories in second language acquisition and also learn about practical applications of these theories in my daily teaching. And so far it’s been a great learning experience.

On a purely practical level, we’re on a salary scale in the public school system. And a masters degree will put me in a good position. I mean I’ll get a better pay. And if I want to move around and have any flexibility choosing where I teach or even going more in an administrative position or a program coordinator or something more theoretical, there’s sort of a ceiling over my head unless I get another degree. Because I can’t get anywhere with just a bachelors.

Thus, for many part-time students who were currently teaching in the local school system, getting a masters degree meant more knowledge (theoretical and practical) of the field and a better position on a practical level (financially or career status related). For some full-time students, getting a masters was a step toward getting a Ph.D. degree, while for others it meant a better chance to teach English abroad at a higher level.

Students who came from outside North America also had a variety of reasons for joining a masters program in Canada. Some were recent immigrants and wanted a masters degree to establish themselves in Canada. Those who planned to go back home after getting a degree joined the program in order to improve their English, experience and learn about Canadian culture, and become familiar with current issues in ESL:

I’m a recent immigrant here. So I need higher degrees to get myself in a better position of finding a job here. Actually I already have a masters degree from my home country and I’m hoping to get into the doctoral program here in the future. (Interview)
I wanted to have experience in an English speaking country. I’ve learned English for a long time and taught for a while, but I still feel my English is not very good and I think as an English teacher their English should be perfect like a native speaker. Also I think culture is important to teach. If you actually have experienced the culture, you have more to say in class to the students when you go back. (Interview)

The main reason for me to come to Canada was I wanted to know the current issues in SLA. You can learn more about the current theories and research in Canada. Also I had a serious doubt about the EFL education in my home country, and so I wanted to find out what is wrong with it. (Interview)

For some students, trying to get a masters degree from abroad was in itself a big challenge they took upon themselves:

I also wanted to try something different. Something challenging. I knew it would be very hard for me to get a masters degree in Canada, but I thought it would be much more rewarding if I could do it in Canada. (Interview)

With some common and some different goals in mind, these graduate students spent a busy school year, trying to meet academic and other life demands. Part-time students who had a full-time teaching job often struggled balancing the multiple roles they had as a teacher, a graduate student, and also a family member:

Basically I struggle to juggle working and studying. Being a full-time teacher and trying to do well in the course has been extremely challenging. I managed it, but only just. (Interview)

It has really been a challenge being a graduate student simply because I am a working mother. Time is always a constraint. (Questionnaire 2)

Going to work full-time and WCU part-time is taxing. Finding enough hours in the day to fit everything in can be a problem, and as a result, I feel stressed often throughout the semesters—I’ve gotten more gray hairs in 8 months than in the last 8 years! (Questionnaire 2)

Although part-time students usually took one course per semester, full-time students took two or three courses while often working as a part-time teacher at a local
language school, a teaching assistant at the university, a private tutor, or a volunteer ESL teacher. So full-time students were also dealing with multiple responsibilities. The following is an excerpt from a class discussion where students were talking about their experiences as graduate students. Summarizing the main points of his preceding small group discussion, a full-time student said:

We spent our time mostly talking about the multiple demands on our time, energy, and thoughts. We have our academic demands which come and go in different spurts as we have papers and things to do. And we also have life or personal demands. The relationships we may have with other people who are very close to us. We have financial problems such as how we’re going to pay this rent, for some people. And some full-time students are working part-time. How stable is the work? Is it secure? Sometimes it’s very unstable and there’s the anxiety that can cause. And how much work can you take when you want to get your courses done. But you can’t take too many courses because you don’t have time to work. So you can’t pay for the courses you need. This kind of problem, the balancing act.

New students from overseas experienced additional stresses of getting used to the Canadian way of life, both daily and academic life (see 7.3 for more discussion on NNSs’ perceptions on the Canadian academic culture). Although many students from overseas said that they enjoyed studying in Canada, they occasionally felt frustrated, discouraged, and sometimes isolated. They said:

When I first came here I sometimes got very lonely and wanted to go back home. I thought my English wasn’t good enough to study at a graduate level and lost all my confidence. The courses were very demanding for me. They still are. And I wasn’t sure if my classmates understood my English. (Interview)

I like Canada. Yeah, I like studying here because I think people are more motivated to study. I think students are purely interested in their field of study. Not like in my home country. . . . But I sometimes feel very frustrated when people don’t understand my English. Even in the cafeteria at school I order something and the register person doesn’t understand me, and I feel very embarrassed and discouraged.
I kind of feel isolated from the rest of society. I don’t know many people here and I also don’t have a job. If I had a job, maybe I would meet more people. Actually, I often talk with my friends, my Japanese friends here, how difficult it is to make Canadian friends. People I meet in class already have their life here and they are also busy, so I don’t see them outside the class at all.

Thus, on top of academic stress, these students were also coping with various frustrations they felt in adjusting to Canadian life.

It was not only international students but also some Canadian students who reported the sense of isolation they felt as a graduate student. The theme of isolation came up in various kinds of data, such as interviews, questionnaires, and class discussions:

I find that I feel sort of detached from the university because all of our classes are in the evening. I find the same people in my three classes. So you get to meet those same 15 people. And a lot of those people are teachers and they’re there once a week and they have families and stuff so I don’t really get to know them very well. Just, they just sort of come and then they go. (Interview: NS)

For me, still, the thing that bothers me is that in this program there is this feeling of just being sort of a disconnected person who shows up here, you know. I still think that a university should be more like a community of learners . . . and of course in class there was a whole issue that came up about poor communication. In fact, nobody knows what’s going on. ((laughs)) Maybe it’s also the size of the university, too, this massive campus and maybe that’s just the nature of it. So I sort of feel like I show up here three times a week and that’s fine and I do my little assignments and things, but I still have this real feeling of disconnection. And maybe that’s like the nature of research. Maybe we are all supposed to be here as serious researchers, going to the library and researching, sitting in front of our modems. I don’t know. (Interview: NS)

It was mainly full-time students who mentioned their strong feeling of isolation. They felt that even though they were enrolled as full-time students, they lacked the sense of belonging to the academic community since they had very few opportunities to work
with other students on assignments or share ideas outside the classroom. In addition, they did not socialize very much as a group of friends outside the classroom, although some students did become friends on a one-to-one basis.

Being a graduate student also meant becoming familiar with the university system, the type of language used in the system, the expected role as a graduate student, and the available technology in order to access information. The following comments were both made by native-speaking students:

In terms of surviving in the system, you’re coming into a culture as a grad student that you’re not familiar with. You don’t know where to get information. You’re feeling very much like being in another country where you don’t speak the language. You don’t know where to find the resources you need. It’s not exactly sink or swim but it’s trial and error and it takes you a long time to find yourself comfortable speaking that language and understanding how people get what they need to survive. Some of the things that were mentioned was how much contact do we have with our advisors? How much is expected? The expectations of us is maybe unclear at least to us. (Class discussion)

At first I was overwhelmed by the new technologies that are used in the university system. Like with the registration you just do it over the telephone. You never get a piece of paper that says you are actually registered. You have to know how to use a computer, how to search literature by CD-Rom, or how to use e-mail. You also learn the technical terms associated with these things. You need to know these things to be successful, to do course assignments and so on. So, you want to be technology friendly for sure. (Interview)

As the above comments indicated, learning about the university system, learning to use the appropriate language, and becoming familiar with the technology which allowed efficient access to information, were all important parts of the language socialization of graduate students. Since the majority of the students had been out of the university system for at least a few years before they joined the masters program, and also because the university system had rapidly been changing in terms of technology, starting a
graduate student life was almost like learning a new language used in a new culture. I observed two class discussions where students talked about their needs as graduate students. The discussions were a part of the departmental review and led by the student representatives of the Department of TESL. One of the main issues of their discussions was how to obtain information (e.g., on available grants, conferences and meetings, job opportunities), given that they lacked close communication among themselves. Some students were more successful than others in receiving such information by actively making use of the university system and available technology. One student said:

I tried to learn and make use of the university system as much as I could when I started my program here. I went to all the workshops, you know like the ones they give at libraries and also international house, and talked to people, talked to my advisor, and learned how to use CD-Rom and got my internet account and all other stuff. I think we have to take initiative to get information we need. It's not given to you automatically. (Class discussion)

To summarize, graduate students in general dealt with multiple responsibilities they had in their academic, professional, and personal life. Time was always an issue. A strong student network was difficult to establish in that situation and there wasn't a lot of communication among students outside the classroom. With the limited amount of time when they could actually be in the university, they needed to become socialized into the academic community of the graduate school by going to classes, seeing their academic advisor, getting themselves familiar with the university system and available technology, and learning how to obtain necessary information.

4.1.2 Life as a Professor

(N=researcher, P=professor)

N: What is it like to be a professor at this university?
P: Just like a circus. It's just like a six ring circus. It's very frustrating, because you can never focus on one thing, even just preparing for your class. Now that the term is over, you think, how could things be so busy the rest of the time? Most graduate programs where you are teaching grad students, supervising grad students, and doing research, you teach only two courses each term, not three and three. And also you don't normally supervise a whole bunch of people, just a few. So here, you're not only doing teacher prep kind of courses and the grad courses and then trying to do your own research and writing which is of course required, but then giving all that kind of supervision, AND, if that weren't enough, then like hundreds of other committees and meetings and duties, like provincial ones or internal department review, and like letters of recommendation, and outside organization, or other conferences . . . So you always feel like you can't be your best, it is impossible. If you did your best in everything, I mean like really what you wanted to do, that kind of level, preparation and everything, you would be totally consumed. It's impossible. So you always feel you are doing something less than optimum. You just do as much as you can, but just always feel kind of rushed, and like something could have been better, could have been ready earlier.

Throughout the school year, it seemed that neither of the two professors who participated in this study had any time to waste. The above is an excerpt from the interview with one of the two professors who participated in this study. It was right after the first three-month semester when I interviewed them, and it was the first time since the beginning of the semester that I felt that I could ask them to spend some time to answer to my questions. During the semester, as described above, they were already dealing with an endless list of responsibilities as a professor and I did not want to ask them to spare time for the formal interview. The other professor also described her life as a professor in a similar way:

I think being a professor is a bit like trying to design a collage where it’s impossible to reach the standards that one would want. It’s very difficult. Maybe it’s possible, but I haven’t found it to be possible to find that many hours in a day. So to try to create a balance between being a good advisor, a good teacher, a good researcher, a good committee member, a good colleague, a good
person who does things for the community. It's a balancing act and one has to balance all of that with a life. With a life!... if you don’t have that you’re not going to be an interesting advisor, teacher... so I don’t know if that really answers the question as to what it’s like, but for me I really find that it’s a constant decision making activity, trying to balance it with all these things, not only each item but also in relation to your own desire, your own heart, and also other agendas. And as I say, they can be quite conflicting.

Furthermore, both professors mentioned that a great difficulty or irony they were experiencing as a professor was a conflict between what they valued as attributes of a good professor and what was valued by others. The following are also excerpts from the interviews:

We have so many things to do, but one of the most difficult things is to get a balance. A balance between doing what you know is important and you value and what is valued by the institution and by others, by your colleagues. They are not always the same thing.

When I’m teaching I don’t feel like I can sacrifice that... it’s very easy to postpone other kinds of things like research or those other kinds of obligations. But the great irony is that’s what you are evaluated on. You are evaluated on teaching but that counts very little... but really, what they want you to get is big grants and publications and all that stuff which, if you are going to do that, there’s no way you can spend time on your teaching.

One professor felt that although constantly trying to accomplish multiple tasks could be chaotic, it was at the same time exciting:

What’s really nice is the kind of variety. So you are learning at the same time as you are teaching as you are studying, writing, reading, doing this kind of administrative stuff, planning about the future of the department of the university, finding sources of funding, so you are kind of out looking around, and then being internationally active to the extent you can, so trying to be networked well. So that’s quite exciting, the variety. It’s great.

Another aspect she enjoyed as being a professor was to be able to deal with people a lot, in her terms, “people who have ideas and who are resourceful, like grad students.”
In this chapter so far, I have briefly described some of the salient aspects of the participants' life as graduate students and as professors, as they described them in the interviews, questionnaires, and class discussions. Both graduate students and professors felt that they were dealing with multiple demands in their academic, professional, and personal life, while trying to accomplish their best in all of such demands. One key term or theme that came up recurrently was balancing. Part-time students often struggled to balance being a teacher and being a graduate student. Full-time students also felt that they needed to have a balance between their academic work and personal life work. Professors felt that it was almost impossible to reach the standards that one would want in every task they had to fulfill, while trying to achieve a balance between the multiple roles they had as a professor and member of society.

4.1.3 Intellectual Values and Academic Skills Promoted in Graduate School

In this section, I will describe the intellectual values and academic skills that were promoted in the academic community of graduate school. Through interviews with professors and students, questionnaires, and class observations, I attempted to explore what kind of attributes and academic skills students were expected to have and what intellectual values were underlying at the graduate level.

First of all, graduate students were expected to be critical thinkers. In addition to absorbing what the literature said, they were expected to go beyond and think about issues analytically with a critical eye from a variety of angles. Being critical, however, did not mean criticizing whatever was presented to the student. Rather, it involved analyzing materials and issues appeared in the material, relating them to one's own interests, and
making contributions based on the literature and one’s knowledge. When asked what

skills and attributes she expected from graduate students, Dr. Frost said:

I guess first and foremost that they can think for themselves, really think
analytically . . . but think for themselves based on knowledge of the literature in
the field and research methods. But given that they would get those two aspects
of knowledge, then, you know, how do we conduct research and what literature is
there in the field, that’s just baseline. Then the thing is, okay now how do I take
that and make something of it for myself that will fit with who I am and how I
view the world, and what I value as an important thing to do and make a
contribution. (Interview)

Dr. Cory also mentioned the importance of being critical:

Then to be able to be self-critical but also critical of the field, critical of trends, and
therefore able to make contributions based on what they know and the gaps they
see, and be able to say, okay this is what I can do that goes beyond what’s already
been done. (Interview)

Students were also aware that to think critically was one of the main intellectual

skills they were expected to have at a graduate level:

It’s really important to be able to think critically. I mean I kind of assume that
graduate students are going to have that skill. So it’s like stating the obvious. But
I think it’s especially important in the field of education where we deal with
people and society. (Interview)

The next comment was made by a third-year part-time student in which he analyzed what

was involved in critical thinking:

Well, I think my concept is that critical thinking involves a number of variables.
Firstly I think it involves freedom of analysis. And the pondering of pros and
cons or assets and benefits or deficits of a certain philosophy or methodology.
Secondly I think critical thinking also has to do with not just the dissemination of
knowledge but it has to do with the construction of knowledge as well. Being able
to have a vision and combine that with knowledge and wisdom. . . . critical
thinking isn’t just sort of tearing something apart. It’s being able to construct
something in addition to. I mean anyone can criticize anything, and say they don’t
like it. But to be able to provide and offer suggestions that might make it improve
it or direct it are fundamentally important. (Interview)
While most participants seemed to agree on the importance of critical thinking at the graduate level, there were other academic values on which individual participants put different degrees of emphasis. One such example was individual versus collaborative learning. Although there were aspects of both types of learning with graduate work, some students strongly felt that they would benefit from more collaborative work among peers, while others preferred individual learning or learning directly from professors. The learning which occurred in the classroom was mostly collaborative since the courses were generally seminar-based and included many discussions. However, as I mentioned earlier, some students felt that they would like more opportunities to work collaboratively with other students outside the classroom. They believed that they could benefit from a stronger academic network of graduate students. One student said:

I think it's fine to work in isolation, but I don't think that's something you want to do all the time. We don't get together in study groups. People just don't do that. . . . people are sort of involved in their own thing, their own research project, their own lives. I mean I understand that aspect of it, that people are busy, but I really think that for those of us who do have a little bit of time, in a long run it would be really helpful. I just think there would be far more in group work. And I think it's kind of ironic, because here we are in this education program and we are always talking about the communicative approach in the classroom and how interaction helps learning, well, maybe we don't need the language practice, but anyway, I still think that it would be really helpful if we had more chances to work collaboratively. I think that's like a missing component. (Interview)

Within the graduate courses, collaborative work in fact was always an option. In TESL570, for example, students had a transcription assignment which in part was done in student pairs. Written assignments such as term papers could be co-authored by more than one student. However, in many cases students had to make extra efforts to manage
time to meet with others if they were to co-author something. In addition to the purely logistical problems, some students perceived competition as being another issue of graduate studies which could work against collaborative learning. Two students mentioned in the interview that they had experienced an “idea theft” and therefore became very cautious about sharing ideas with other students. One of them said:

I perceive the ironies of having a supposedly non-competitive cooperative environment in which we are all indirectly or directly competing for grades. I have experienced an idea theft before and ever since I’ve become careful about who I’m sharing my ideas with. (Interview)

Another student reported her experience when she co-authored a term paper with another student. Whenever she and her partner had different opinions on something, she had to give in because of her perceived power relationship between them. She said it was a very frustrating experience because her opinions were not reflected very much in their paper.

Thus, the issue of collaborative learning was not a simple matter, although it was certainly one of the academic values which were promoted at the graduate level. One professor mentioned the importance of collaboration:

And also being nice people because it’s very easy to be critical like super critical. But in a grad seminar, part of it is you’ve been socialized into a community of academic people, and you have to be collaborative. I think there’s lots of learning that takes place between students and I think it’s really important that people see one another as allies rather than as competition or less good, I mean even if there are differences I would like to see a kind of mentoring so that everyone gets better along the way.

Some students, on the other hand, felt that they learned the most from the professor’s lecture or individual work rather than peer interactions. Being asked to describe his overall learning experience in graduate school, one student said:
I tend to, maybe fortunately and unfortunately, there’s a tendency that I learn most from profs when they speak or when they lecture. Actually in a different context I learn just as much when I’m off researching papers. Like the literature review I did. I think it’s because I have a very particular focus area in language learning that I’m interested in. (Interview)

Another student mentioned that his ideal learning style would be to come to the university, take a token, and then consult professors in various departments. He felt that he would benefit less from sitting in the class and listening to other students with whom he didn’t share the same research interest. Thus, while some students wanted to see the graduate school as a community of learners and learn more from interactions with peer students, others wanted to see it as being something like an academic resource center where they could learn from professors and gain knowledge, information, and insights on their areas of interest.

There was another set of two opposing values which was in fact often discussed as an inherent issue in the students’ field of study and profession, education: theory and practice. Although both theory and practice were discussed in the graduate seminars that I observed, I often heard students mention that the graduate program at WCU was relatively “theory-oriented” or “research-oriented.” Comparing the graduate school he had attended before and that of WCU, one student said:

I think WCU is more research-oriented than the graduate school that I went in the States before I came here. And I’m not used to it yet. In the States, we discussed much more the practical applications of theory and research. Much more than here. We would always go back and discuss the classroom teaching and curriculum after we talked about research. Also we had a lot of group assignments, like we would create an actual syllabus which reflected a certain theory and then evaluate it in groups. But here, the focus is more on research and theory. (Interview)
While some students valued the theoretical and even philosophical knowledge they could acquire in their graduate courses, others valued more the practical applications of such knowledge. One part-time student perceived this difference as a possible tension between part-time and full-time students:

One thing that I do notice is that there seems to be a division between the people who are teachers primarily and students part-time and the people who are students primarily and teachers part-time. And there seems to be a little bit of tension between them. I have a feeling that’s typical of many classes in education. And I think it’s relatively unavoidable, unfortunately. The people who are full time students are good students and they approach the class academically whereas I think the teachers approach it more on a practical level and how it affects them and what they do and what they see in their classes and that sort of thing. So there’s that difference at work I think. (Interview)

In fact, individual students, whether part-time or full-time, seemed to put a different degree of emphasis on theory and practice. Some emphasized the importance of not forgetting the practical side of issues:

I think you really do have to find the balance between theory and practice. I know myself I always come to a course wanting hands-on something to take back to the classroom. And you know, test it. But you don’t always get that. I think you’ve got to make a measurement. I’m now at a graduate level where there’s more theory and academic reasoning and functions behind what’s going on. So you lower the practical side. But at the same time it doesn’t mean that you forget it. It just helps you to find more answers or reasons for why you’re wanting to do something. (Class discussion)

I personally feel that there’s a real sense of unreality about the stuff we do in the course if it’s about synthesizing what you read in literature into more words. And you don’t really have a real connection with the classroom. (Interview)

Others, on the other hand, felt that the primary focus at a graduate level should be on theoretical as well as philosophical issues:

I have some people I know who are interested in doing a graduate program but they are looking for applied skills for teaching ESL, and I kind of think that you
don't really need a graduate program to do that, and I think it's a waste of . . . well, not a waste, that's a bit harsh. But I guess for me, I don't know how realistic this is, but having an interest outside of the practical value is important. (Interview)

I think we are here to learn the real background, the theoretical base or philosophical foundation of teaching and learning. If I wanted the practical hands-on stuff I would be looking for workshops. Like that's not why I'm here at all. (Class discussion)

In spite of the differences in the relative emphasis that individual students put on theory and practice, both theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and learning were discussed in relation to each other in the actual class discussions. What was valued or perceived as a challenge was not to exclusively focus on either theory or practice, but to analyze both theoretical and practical issues, make connections between them based on the theoretical and practical knowledge, and assess both theory and practice in relation to each other. One student said:

I think what we should be doing and we are doing to some extent at the grad level is to relate theory to practice and practice to theory. I mean there's no point in discussing theory without any relevance to practice, and vice versa. We may like to put the relative emphasis on theoretical stuff over hands-on practical stuff because we do mainly learn theory and research at the graduate level. But really, the challenge for me is to be able to see issues from both angles and be able to understand what's really happening. (Interview)

Beside the intellectual values that I have described so far, there were a number of academic skills that graduate students were expected to have in order to be competent members of the academic community. One important skill or ability was to articulate and communicate one's thoughts to others both orally and in writing. The ability to write high quality academic papers was especially important since normally more than eighty percent of the student grade was allotted to papers and also students had to write a
masters thesis or a major paper to complete the graduate program. One of the professors emphasized the importance of good writing skills at the graduate level:

And finally, ability to write. In grad school, you have to write. You have to write term paper, thesis, and one of the big things you see across individuals’ assignments is some people can really write well because they think well, they are critical, and they are clear minded, but also they can write well. And some people have those other good things but they can’t write well for whatever reason. And if it’s well written it can be just a real pleasure to read. If it’s not well written it’s very annoying even if they have good ideas. So that’s one of the things I really like to see, good writing, good communication about what they are thinking about. (Interview)

Another skill which the professors mentioned as important was to have “intellectual flexibility” so that they could understand new concepts without having spent a great deal of time. The courses covered a lot of material in a limited amount of time, and therefore the students who were relatively new to the field needed to absorb many new concepts and terminology efficiently. Associated with this, the ability to extract main ideas and synthesize materials were also important skills to gain background knowledge in a short period of time. Written assignments in both of the courses under observation included literature reviews, where students needed to read a lot of materials related to their area of interest, extract main ideas from each reading, and finally synthesize them in a logical and convincing manner.

In this section, I have described what kind of intellectual abilities and academic skills were valued at the graduate level. The main intellectual values included ability to think critically, learn collaboratively and independently, and make connections between theory and practice based on the literature and students’ own interests and teaching experiences. Intellectual flexibility was another important element, given a large amount
of materials dealt in the courses and the relatively short period of time students had to learn them. Graduate students were also expected to be a good synthesizer of information. They needed to be able to extract main ideas efficiently from the literature and synthesize them so that they could make sense of it in relation to their own interests. To be able to articulate one’s thinking in spoken and written communication was one of the main academic skills graduate students needed to have. Without this skill, students wouldn’t be successful or able to contribute to the academic community to the extent they wanted, even if they had great ideas and opinions. Thus, in order to become a competent member of the academic community and make contributions, graduate students not only need to learn the content but also have or develop a number of important intellectual abilities and academic skills.

So far in Chapter 4, I have outlined the larger context of the graduate school at WCU in terms of the participants’ life as a student or a professor and the academic culture of the graduate school. In the next section, I will describe the context of the actual courses that were observed for the present study.

4.2 Classroom Culture

The two courses that I observed for the present study were both required, core courses offered in the Department of TESL. In this section, I will describe the culture of these two courses, TESL 520 and TESL 570, highlighting similarities and differences between them. The classroom culture will be described under the following headings: (1) course objectives and content, (2) course assignments, (3) course format, (4) instructors,
and (5) student groups. Data from fieldnotes of my class observations, interviews, questionnaires, and the course outlines were mainly used for the analysis.

4.2.1 Course Objectives and Content

Although both courses dealt with issues in second language learning and teaching, the focus of each course was slightly different. TESL 520 mainly dealt with research and theory in teaching English as a second/foreign language, while TESL 570 dealt with research and theory in second language acquisition. Below are the course objectives of each course described in the course outlines:

TESL 520 aims to foster:

(1) a comprehensive appreciation of fundamental concepts informing second language teaching, their theoretical foundations, and their relative values in instructional practice;
(2) a well-articulated, personal viewpoint on issues of knowledge and policy central to second language teaching;
(3) a critical understanding of research on second language instruction, including recent trends in methodology, conceptualization of research problems, and approaches to data collection and analyses;
(4) professional capacities to design or replicate research on particular aspects of ESL/EFL instruction. (Excerpt from Course outline)

TESL 570:

(1) To provide a comprehensive overview of the major theories currently informing and guiding research in second language acquisition (SLA), by children and adults, learning naturalistically and with the aid of formal instruction, as individuals or in groups, in foreign and second language settings.
(2) To evaluate the relative merits of these theories on the basis of research and to consider their applications to curriculum and instruction.
(3) To examine various research methods appropriate for studying second language learning/teaching.
(4) To provide an opportunity to investigate in detail a particular area of the applications of theories of second language acquisition to curriculum and instruction. (Excerpt from Course outline)
Similarly, both courses aimed at providing an overview of the major theories, evaluating their relative values in practice, examining various research methods, and providing students an opportunity to investigate their own area of interest. The main difference was, to simplify, that TESL 520 had its relative emphasis on pedagogical issues while TESL 570 had on acquisition issues. Further, while TESL 520 often dealt with larger sociopolitical issues of teaching in particular, TESL 570 addressed more issues on the individual learners' second language development and research methods. It was mostly the nature of the course that created such difference. TESL 520 was essentially an “issue course in second language teaching” as Dr. Frost characterized it, and they often discussed complex social, cultural, political, and historical issues in second language teaching, such as language as a social construct, social policies and ESL instruction, and multiculturalism and language instruction. The most important part of this course was to critically analyze and discuss these issues from a variety of angles by considering the literature (i.e., course readings) as the starting point of the discussion. Critical thinking, analysis, and reflection were very much promoted in this course. The students seemed to appreciate this aspect of the course as they said in the interviews and questionnaires:

What I liked about 520 was that Karen ((the instructor)) had a different perspective. She was always going into the socio-political angle and it was very interesting. And I also liked the fact that she was always trying to bring up issues that are sort of making us question conventional wisdom. (Interview)

[The best part of the course was] going beyond the articles, situating self in literature/politics, being given the license to critique from the onset (Pennycook article as intro). (Questionnaire 2)
TESL 570 not only examined various theories and issues in SLA, but also provided extensive discussions in research methods and even some training for SLA research. The main weekly themes of the course included an overview of various theories and research approaches in SLA, issues in interlanguage, sociocultural perspectives in SLA, personal factors, and finally, curricular implications. Although the course certainly covered a lot of material, students managed to gain the general background knowledge of the field, as they said in the interviews and questionnaires:

[In 570] we covered a lot of material. So far, in just a few short months it has answered a lot of questions and has created other questions in relation to what I do. I just find it fascinating. (Interview)

[In 570] we covered a huge amount of material and I never really left scratching my head, and there was always follow up on the readings. (Interview)

I have really enjoyed the challenge of the course. In addition, I have learned very much about SLA and have discovered what an interesting field it is. Dr. Cory’s class made me look at myself as a teacher and re-evaluate and criticize constructively what I do in class. (Questionnaire 2)

Dr. Frost had taught TESL 520 for four years while Dr. Cory had taught TESL 570 for two years. In the interview both said they had enjoyed teaching the course, but also experienced a challenge in structuring the course content and materials. The followings are the excerpts from their answers when asked if there were any difficulties in teaching the course:

The only difficulty in teaching [TESL 520] is one year I changed the readings completely and that was a huge amount of work, like I learned a lot. It must have been nearly two months’ work in searching out new readings, reading this, choosing that, and the minute I would choose this one would make a difference to whether or not this reading was appropriate now. . . . I think the hardest thing is not just choosing the readings but deciding which order to put them in and how. . . . in that sense organizing a course is a bit like doing a huge review of the literature.
As I say this article could belong here, here, and here, and then in the end, really what you realize is that no one of the groupings is absolutely perfect. (Interview: Dr. Frost)

Well, the general problem with 570 is that that kind of course grew out of a linguistics department . . . and yet we are here in the Faculty of Education. So I think there’s an inherent challenge in that course in that it grows out of psycholinguistics and yet people don’t have background in that nor do they plan to pursue very hard-core psycholinguistics . . . . The second problem with this course . . . is that there’s so much to cover, if you really want to cover SLA . . . . But people don’t have much time to actually work on it because they are not full time grad students mostly. So then you are trying to cover the field and say at least now they’ve got a background in SLA, but I’m constantly aware of the fact that we can’t do justice to the complexities of the issues or really understand any of those areas because it’s like a survey course. (Interview: Dr. Cory)

The above comments illustrated in part the difficulty of organizing a survey course in which they had to cover a lot of materials effectively. Given that the students who took these courses did not necessarily have much background knowledge in the field and yet the issues they dealt with were often complex, structuring the course content and materials were not always straightforward.

4.2.2 Course Assignments

Both courses had four academic papers and oral presentations as the main course assignments. In this section I will briefly describe the written assignments (the oral presentation assignment will be described in detail in Chapter 5). The four written assignments of TESL 520 were: (1) a reflective self-analysis of one’s personal knowledge about ESL/EFL teaching, (2) an analytic review of published research findings, (3) a short reflective self-analysis of one’s personal knowledge about ESL/EFL teaching, and (4) a small-scale replication study. In the first class in September, Dr. Frost outlined these assignments and one of the main points she made about them was that these assignments
were designed for the students to be "self-reflective." Reflection and awareness were the main theme of the course which Dr. Frost repeatedly emphasized in various occasions throughout the semesters. The first and third assignments in particular were directly related to this theme where students reflect critically on their experiences and beliefs in second language teaching. In the second and third assignments, students explored their own area of interest through reviewing literature and replicating a published study.

The written assignments in TESL 570 included: (1) a data transcription and analysis, (2) a methodological review, (3) a take-home midterm examination (a synthesis of course topics and their applications to curriculum and instruction in a particular context of students' interest), and (4) a term paper (a comprehensive literature review or a data-based study of students' interest area). The first assignment provided students with an opportunity to collect, transcribe, and analyze data and relate their observations to theoretical issues addressed in the course. The second assignment was designed to familiarize students with two approaches to research in SLA, case studies and ethnography. Dr. Cory mentioned that these two were chosen since they were commonly used in applied linguistics, education, and also students' graduate theses. Thus, these assignments provided some training in research as well as a critical awareness in certain methodologies. The third assignment was designed to provide students a chance to link the main topics covered in the course and their personal perspectives and interests.

In the fourth assignment, students were expected to pursue their own area of interest in

---

1 In the first self-reflection assignment the students identified and analyzed the major influences on their personal conception of second language teaching, while in the third, they summarized their position by noting changes in their thinking after the seven-month course.
depth by either reviewing the relevant literature or conducting a small-scale study on their own.

Although these assignments were never easy to do for the students, they had opportunities to ask questions about them in class, consult the instructors outside the class, and also get input from peer students. Both instructors spent quite a lot of time explaining these assignments and taking questions from the students in class. For example, there was an occasion when Dr. Frost spent an hour in class explaining how to conduct a literature review, providing examples and showing some strategies. Dr. Cory asked the students to submit a brief proposal before they actually started to work on their last term paper. She then returned the proposals with comments and suggestions. This not only helped the students to know if they were on the right track but also provided them an opportunity to receive useful bibliographical information on the chosen topic as well as constructive input from the instructor. Also, students often consulted the instructors outside the class and received their input on their topics, ideas, and materials of their papers. Thus, the instructors provided guidance and support inside and outside the classroom so that the students could complete these assignments successfully.

4.2.3 Course Format

The format of the courses reflected the course objectives and content to a certain extent. Since the main goal of TESL 520 was to examine various issues in L2 teaching from different perspectives, the course was organized essentially as a seminar with a lot of class discussions. In the first two weeks, the instructor presented the materials and organized class discussions. From the third week when the student oral presentation
started, students were primarily responsible for presenting the assigned readings.

Occasionally, the instructor presented the readings which no student signed up for a
presentation, but normally almost the entire class time was devoted to student
presentations and ensuing class discussions led by the presenting students. Dr. Frost
explained why the course was set up this way:

Because underlying this work at a graduate level is a desire, really. There are other
options. One option I don’t want is for me to be standing lecturing. That’s not
the nature of it. It’s an issue course. . . . 520 has always been a survey course.
It’s a survey of literature. There should be a lot of reading and a lot of discussion
about reading particularly in the first term. But how do you take a reading course,
essentially a survey of the literature course and try to make that more interesting.
Well, hand it over to the students and help them with the presentations, but try to
get different perspectives. You know, to be critical . . . . not just reading it so it’s
perfect or the “truth.” So everything I try to do there is to get people to read the
literature as though it was written by imperfect human beings. (Interview)

During class discussion, however, Dr. Frost did provide a lot of background information
and share her knowledge, experiences, critical perspectives, and insights with the class.

Thus, even though there weren’t many times when Dr. Frost stood up in front and gave
lectures, she often provided an extensive talk on a variety of issues that emerged from the
student presentations and discussions.

Some students, however, mentioned that they would have liked more lectures by
“experts” such as the instructor or other guest speakers. They occasionally felt frustrated
when new materials were presented by their peer students who did not have a good grasp
of them. Some also mentioned that they would have liked to see fewer student
presentations. The following are excerpts from the students’ answers to the question in
Questionnaire 2: What do you feel could have been improved in this course?
At the risk of being reactionary, more lecture. I find the seminar format in the area of new knowledge frustrating. Perhaps guest lectures on various topics. I would have been willing to hear more about the present research in content-base teaching for example.

Instead of presentations in BOTH terms, I'd like to have seen less. Either Term 1 or the other. Alternately, instead of oral presentations on the readings, maybe "topics" would have been better.

Some standard teacher input, reflection, comment, etc. besides just article presentation and discussion. Even 15-20 minutes teacher-led OK. Sometimes just intra-peer work is not satisfying.

TESL 570 did not really have a fixed format and each week took a different format. Typically, however, the instructor provided a lecture on the week's theme and led the class discussion, which was followed by student presentations. Dr. Cory presented a great deal of information in a very efficient way during her lectures. She did not just talk to the class but showed a lot of materials visually on the OHP, provided handouts, and asked questions along the way. Thus, it was not the case that the instructor gave one-sided lectures to the students, but quite the contrary, a lot of interactions took place even when the instructor was in charge. Students also engaged in a variety of exercises and activities which were prepared by the instructor. These activities were done both individually and in small groups of students. For example, students engaged in a picture description task, audio taped each other, transcribed the talk, compared each other's transcription, and finally discussed issues that emerged from the process in small groups. At another time, students were asked to take fieldnotes while watching a video taped classroom situation as though they were ethnographers, and then in small groups they compared each other's notes and discussed what they saw.
These exercises, explicitly and implicitly, provided students with practice in data collection and analysis or opportunities to discuss issues in various research methods.

Dr. Cory once told me that she considered it important to have a balance between the students' discussion and the more structured instructor's lecture in a graduate course like TESL 570. Students also appreciated this balance and the variety of activities they engaged in the class:

I find in Dr. Cory's class each evening is different. Sometimes it can be very teacher-fronted, this is not a criticism, but she is showing us a charting of a certain system, or lecturing on us about something that sprang from the article, that we need her to tell us about. Other times it's all student interaction. We are just inquiring things. So it varies a lot. (Interview)

I like the variety in things we do in class. We sometimes listen to Diane, discuss in groups, and also we do a lot of different kinds of exercises. I mean Diane really keeps us going. I'm never bored in that class I don't think. (Interview)

Finally, some students mentioned that they had an impression of TESL 570 being relatively "formal" and big compared with 520 or some other courses they were taking.

Several students actually believed that there were more students in 570 than in 520, whereas in fact there were 13 students in 570 and 12 in 520:

I feel more comfortable in 520 just because it's a much smaller class. 570 is quite big and there are people I've never really spoken to yet. People always sit in the same spot and I don't get to know people who sit far from me. But in 520, it is a smaller group to begin with, and also we discuss in small groups every week, right? So I have a chance to talk to everybody. (Interview)

(S=student, N=researcher)
S: In 570 class, I think there's more people in it and so I think when you have more people the participants don't want to speak up as much because when you have a bigger group, it's harder to speak up in front of a crowd. Whereas for 520 it's a smaller sort of...
N: Actually there are almost the same number of people in those classes. 570 has 13 and 520 has 12.

S: Oh. Maybe the way people are seated. Yeah, I don't know why. That's interesting. 'Cause it seems like there's a big difference in the number. I would say... I thought there was maybe 8 and 14 or something like that. That's what I would've guessed. So what causes that difference? Part of it is that Karen sits down in class. She sits down and she sits closer to us. Whereas Diane's standing up and she has her platform and she has her overhead. So maybe that's what gives that feeling to it. (Interview)

4.2.4 Instructors

Both instructors of the courses, Dr. Frost and Dr. Cory, seemed to be highly respected by the students as extremely knowledgeable and resourceful professors. Dr. Frost had been teaching graduate courses for over eight years, while Dr. Cory for two years when I started this project. I had known them for a year already when the project began and in my observations both of them seemed not only extremely respectable as academics but also very warm, sensitive, and trustworthy. In what follows, I briefly illustrate how these professors were perceived by the students as the instructors of the courses as well as people with personalities.

One common perception of Dr. Frost by the students was that she was not only knowledgeable but also “intellectually stimulating.” She made the students “think” and “question.” Although it might have been in part the nature of TESL 520 that Dr. Frost was always providing critical perspectives on various issues, many students felt that she was a great critical thinker and analyzer herself:

I find Karen very intellectually stimulating. She always tries to get us to question conventional wisdom. (Interview)
I think Dr. Frost is incredibly knowledgeable and flexible. I mean intellectually flexible. She is able to analyze issues from a lot of different perspectives. So naturally she makes me think, you know, really think critically. (Interview)

I really like listening to the instructor. She is very insightful. Sometimes she gets excited in class and talks on and on, but I really learn a lot from her. (Interview)

As described above, Dr. Frost was perceived to be very insightful and also often talked with an enthusiasm, which seemed to attract many students.

Students also felt that there was a lot of credibility in what Dr. Frost had to say because she had been "there," on the front lines of teaching:

Karen is incredibly brilliant and very well versed and knowledgeable in her field and the field that I’m interested in. Plus in particular Karen has a lot of credibility, I feel, because she has been in the trenches and she knows what it’s like to work in an inner city school and she’s been involved politically and from a pedagogical view as well and she sat on many committees both district wide and at a provincial level, too. So she certainly has my respect. (Interview)

Karen has a good background in education and has actually taught for a number of years. It’s different when you have somebody that’s an instructor that has actually been on the front lines than somebody who’s never been on the front lines or somebody that hasn’t been on the front lines for years. Doesn’t mean they’re not a good instructor, but obviously having that kind of background gives you an advantage. (Interview)

Dr. Frost was also perceived as a very approachable, understanding, and open-minded person by many students in TESL 520. She had a very relaxed manner in class. Most often she sat down among the students and participated in class discussions as if she were just one of the students, which to some degree made the students feel comfortable with her:

Dr. Frost is very approachable. Very flexible. She doesn’t go on the defense at all. She’s open to other people’s views. (Interview)
Dr. Frost breaks down the distance between her and students and makes you feel more like a peer. We’re both attacking this intellectual question together. (Interview)

I felt that the professors of the TESL department were very human and they have a humanistic point of view. They’re real people and they understand we’re working people, we have families. We have all kinds of variables and pressures around us. And I found that very appealing because we are all people and you can tell from hearing Karen speak she’s been through a lot lately from a personal point of view and she said a number of times to the class that life is very short. I know what she’s referring to when she says that. (Interview)

Dr. Cory was perceived to be very knowledgeable and competent, but in particular, students found her teaching very “clear,” “well organized,” and “informative.” Again, this might have been in part as a result of the nature of TESL 570 where Dr. Cory had to cover a lot of material in a limited amount of time. However, her teaching style had also been perceived as being clear, organized, and very informative in other courses that she taught in this department. Many students in TESL 570 also appreciated that she was very “undogmatic” and made them feel comfortable in class:

I think Diane is wonderful. She’s probably one of the best professors I’ve had in my entire university career actually. She’s very easygoing. I think that she tries her very best to be very informative but in a way that makes the students feel comfortable. I think she gets her message across very well. (Interview)

I believe her to be extremely knowledgeable in the area. And very very undogmatic. I mean, she’s constantly clarifying and directing. (Interview)

Well, I find Dr. Cory’s manner wonderful. I feel really comfortable with her. She has a relaxed manner but at the same time we accomplish, we go through material. So it’s not so relaxed that we don’t get anything done. But it’s relaxed enough that I feel really comfortable. I enjoy her sense of humor. It’s hilarious. And generally in the class I think most people feel reasonably comfortable relative to other courses. (Interview)

I had opportunities to take two of her courses as a student, and also observed a teaching preparation course that she taught at this department. In these courses many students, including myself, found her extremely well-organized and resourceful.
For some of the first year students, Dr. Cory’s explicitness in her teaching was something they really appreciated:

What I really liked about Diane was that she was not operating on the assumption that we all had a background in the field. And so she sort of worked us through things. Everything was organized. For example, if we were introduced to discourse analysis, she would show us examples, you know, certain conventions, get us to work on a small assignment, so we really had a sense of what it was we were doing. The explicitness of her teaching, I always really appreciate that. (Interview)

Dr. Cory was also known to be very “up-to-date” and resourceful. She always brought a lot of materials, books, and journals to show to the class which often occupied the whole surface of the front desk. By introducing current books and important journals in the field, she was not only being resourceful but also socializing the students into the academic field of TESL. Students said:

Dr. Cory is very competent. I can tell she’s obviously fairly new, not that she’s new that she’s inexperienced, but she seems to be very up-to-date... current on theories and what’s going on. She seems very knowledgeable in the field. And her teaching methods seem fairly sort of current as well in the sense that she doesn’t do a lot of full frontal sort of lecture style teaching. (Interview)

I find Diane extremely resourceful. She’d always bring in associated readings, bring in books and the stuff like that. She keeps us up-to-date. That was really, really helpful. (Interview)

The three non-native speaking students who were taking TESL 570 mentioned that Dr. Cory’s explicit teaching style was helpful and that she was sensitive to the needs of non-native speaking students:

Dr. Cory talks very clearly and her instructions are also clear. That was very helpful for me. I think she’s also used to deal with international students. Actually, most teachers I’ve met in this department understand international students’ needs and difficulties. I’ve heard from my friends in other departments
that their professors don’t really understand their needs as international students. They complain all the time. (Interview)

I think Dr. Cory has a lot of patience to listen to non-native speakers. She waits for non-native speakers to respond to her question. I think that is one of her great qualities. The other day she called on me in class and I tried to communicate my thoughts although very slowly, and she listened to me very carefully and patiently and tried to understand what I wanted to say. (Interview)

I think I really learn a lot in the course. I still have some problems in my listening but Dr. Cory speaks clear and that’s helpful. She’s also very kind. (Interview)

4.2.5 Student Groups

The class size and the configuration of the students were similar between the two courses. There were 12 students in TESL 520 and 13 in TESL 570, which was reasonable for a graduate course like these. Four students were taking both courses at the same time. The two classes had a very similar configuration of students in terms of demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), experiences in graduate school, and the status (i.e., part-time versus full-time). Students often characterized themselves as a “mixed group” and they seemed to appreciated that. Being asked to characterize their peer student group in the class, they said:

TESL 520:
So in terms of peer groups I find it’s the same. In fact it’s quite nice. I actually run into very familiar faces over the last four courses that I’ve taken... of course the classroom culture itself is we all come from different backgrounds, different countries and I feel we have a lot to share. And it’s always interesting to hear different people’s perspectives as well as, you know, some people are adult learning teachers versus high school versus elementary. (Interview)

I like the fact that we are a very mixed group. I find it quite nice. There’s a good balance between male-female, full-time and part-time, a variety of backgrounds and so on. (Interview)
TESL 570:
I would characterize it as quite mixed. So I think there’s a wide variety of experience in the room. And people coming at what they’re doing from very different perspectives from the full time student who may want to go on to do a Ph.D. in a very academic focus, to someone who’s coming in from a teaching situation and very much sort of looking from the teaching side of things. And then it’s nice to have the international students who are learning a second language and can bring in information about their native language to the classroom so they could discuss that, which is very useful . . . I think it’s always good to have more of a heterogeneous mix and to see differences rather than to have everyone coming from the same perspective. (Interview)

Another aspect of the groups appreciated by some students was that people had a variety of teaching and learning experiences overseas. In both classes, there were quite a few people who had lived or taught overseas. Many North American students had experiences in teaching English in Asian countries such as Japan and Korea, while some people were from those countries. One student grew up in India and another in Europe. Thus, students often shared in class discussions their experiences of living, learning, and teaching in different counties.

Actually, I like 570 because . . . this is my personal opinion, but I feel more comfortable and I find the people a little more friendly. Maybe because they have an appreciation of other cultures. People who are from different cultures over here will have that appreciation because they have made the adjustment also. (Interview)

Fortunately, one of the positive things about [TESL 520] is that there are a number of people who have been overseas or from overseas and have actually been in the position of an ethnolinguistic minority. I lived in Japan and I was a very visible one. So that influences how you feel. (Interview)

Several students in TESL 570 mentioned that they liked the fact that people were quite outspoken in the class:

I really like [the student group in TESL 570]. There are a lot of outspoken people and they contribute a lot in class. I really like that. (Interview)
I think people in 570 are quite vocal. Not all of them but quite a few people. And it’s good for the class discussion. You get a lot more out of it. (Interview)

In the interviews I also asked the instructors what impressions they had of their students in the course as a group, compared with other groups that they had had previously. After mentioning that student groups were different each year, Dr. Frost characterized this year’s group in TESL 520 as being quite homogeneous in some ways:

[This year’s group is] probably, more normal and homogeneous in some ways than other years that I’ve taught... I mean there aren’t many people who are very far ahead in their program, they’re all relatively new in the program. There are two or three people from schools. Most of the people are interested in adult learning. Lots of people are either Asian or have lived in Japan or Korea for a long time. ... Now obviously there are very different personalities and all kinds of things, but in terms of the academic field that they come from and where they are at in their programs. There are no doctoral students, so it’s really quite different from where it’s been in the past.

Dr. Cory mentioned that she liked this year’s group in TESL 570 because they were quite vocal with a lot of ideas, cooperative, and experienced in teaching. She also liked the balance in the number of male and female students:

(S=student)
I like, I think they are a very vocal group in some ways, like S1, lots of ideas and in some ways it doesn’t require as much work to engage them because S2 has ideas or S3, S4, or S5, S6, S7, others as well, S8 when it’s something relevant to her. So I think I really like the group. I think they are a mature experienced group as far as teaching goes, and also people have ideas, they have ways of leading into the articles and the chapters and being critical. People have been very cooperative and I think, yeah, I’m quite impressed, I think it’s a nice group... Then we have that group of fellows, and then women. I think there’s quite a good balance there, too. I mean not only numbers but also in terms of input.

In this section (4.2), I have described the classroom culture of the two courses in terms of course objectives and content, course assignments, course format, instructors, and student groups. I have included as much as possible the instructors’ and students’
perceptions of the different aspects of the courses as well as my observations. In general, both TESL 520 and TESL 570 were relatively comfortable and yet stimulating learning environments for the participating students. The instructors were both perceived to be knowledgeable, insightful, and resourceful. They offered not only content knowledge but also guidance and support to graduate students in becoming competent members of the academic community. Although students did not necessarily have a very close bond with each other within the group, most of them appreciated that they were a mixed group and could share different experiences and perspectives. They were also relatively outspoken and participated actively in class discussions.

In this chapter, I have illustrated the larger contexts of graduate studies and graduate seminars in which OAPs were performed. In the next chapter, I will describe the overall nature of the OAP task assigned in the two courses.
Chapter 5

ORAL ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS (OAPS)

5.1 Context of OAPs

5.1.1 Multiple Objectives of OAPs

As I have mentioned earlier, the OAP task was one of the course assignments for both TESL 520 and TESL 570 (see 4.2.2). The basic task of students was to orally present a research article or a book chapter to the class and lead a class discussion on the material and related issues. The instructors mentioned that doing an OAP of this sort was customary in graduate seminars and served multiple objectives. First of all, the OAP task was designed to promote a certain kind of reading and thinking on the part of presenter: presenting a material to the class forced students to read it analytically and critically. Dr. Frost said:

One of the purposes for the student presenting is, often when you have to explain something to someone else, then you really internalize what's going on. So a large or the main pedagogical purpose would be for the presenter in that it would help them not just to understand that article, but to get into the practice of reading articles in a particular way... It's for putting people inside a practice of reading things critically and carefully. It's not just to read the article and sort of regurgitate what it says, but rather their job would be to pose questions and discuss issues that would then lead the class forward. That takes a certain kind of thinking. You have to go beyond the reading of the article to say, okay, what are the critical issues in this article, what are the research questions, what are the pedagogical implications, how can I move the classes thinking forward? (Interview)

In addition to the practice of in-depth analysis of a research article, OAPs also offered an opportunity for students to start narrowing down their area of interest and
exploring it further since they were encouraged to choose an article to present according to
their own area of interest.

Another important purpose of OAPs was to provide the class with a variety of
different perspectives rather than just the instructor’s. Dr. Frost explained:

[Another purpose of OAP is] that the class gets a variety of different presentations, different perspectives, rather than only mine, which would be the same, you know, much as I might try to view things from different positions, still my subjective spot will remain the same . . . . So it’s good for the class to get a number of different perspectives. (Interview)

In addition, before the actual OAPs, presenters had an opportunity to discuss ideas and share perspectives with a backup person (see 5.3 for a description of this role). OAPs in this sense provided opportunities for the students to share ideas and work collaboratively inside and outside the classroom.

OAPs also had an aspect of academic apprenticeship. It served as practice for the students in giving academic presentations in a variety of contexts such as a thesis oral defence, a professional meeting, or an academic conference. Many students mentioned that they valued this aspect of OAPs. One student said:

Class presentations not only train you to think critically, but also train you to present something effectively. It is a good practice for presenting in a thesis defence or conferences. Also you can watch others and say, “Okay, I like that. Maybe I’ll use it in my presentation.” Or, “Okay, I didn’t like that. How can I avoid that?” (Interview)

In short, the OAP task served multiple objectives which included providing opportunities for students to analyze a research article critically and in depth, to share different ideas and perspectives with each other, and to practice communicating effectively in academic presentations. These objectives seemed to reflect some of the
intellectual values and academic skills promoted in graduate school (i.e., critical thinking, collaborative learning, effective communication) that I have illustrated earlier in Chapter 4.

5.1.2 Status of OAPs in Class

The OAP task was given a slightly different status in TESL 520 and TESL 570.

In TESL 520, it was normally the main activity of the class. The class usually started with an OAP and ended with another. Individual students were expected to perform at least one OAP per semester, and there were one or two (occasionally three) OAPs in each class. On the other hand, in TESL 570, the OAP was only one of the main activities of the class and was not performed every week. It was performed at a variety of times in class (e.g., before or after the break, at the end of the class) depending on the day’s schedule. Students were expected to perform only one OAP for the two semesters.

Thus, although the OAP task was an important part of the class in both courses, TESL 520 had more OAPs and spent more class time doing OAPs than TESL 570.

5.1.3 Instructor’s Modeling

In the first few weeks of the first semester, the instructors described the OAP task assigned in the course quite extensively. They explained the overall nature of the task, how students could approach the task, what kind of things they expected from their performance, and examples of OAPs that students had performed in previous years. One interesting thing that I observed in the instructors’ explanations of the task was that they were providing concrete examples of actual language that students could use as a presenter. For example, Dr. Frost said in her explanation of OAPs in class:
So it’s not going over [the article] and explaining it to everybody else . . . . You can say, “There was a part of this I didn’t get. I didn’t get this middle section where they are saying x, y, and z. I couldn’t figure it out. I read it, read it, either it makes no sense or where I’m at right now it’s too hard for me. Can we talk about that?” Or you could say, “I understood it perfectly. I thought it was a brilliant example of the way an article should be written. The things that really struck me and the things I learned from it are x, y, and z. The things I was surprised to find out were such and such.” So you are not coming with a presentation that’s giving the paper as though you are the author and you are in a workshop. It’s not that. Rather, “Here are my questions, here are my comments, here are my insights, this article was pretty theoretical and I had to work hard to see what value it’ll have in practice. But I could see that maybe in the future, I’ll do this and that in my teaching.”

Dr. Cory also provided a lot of similar examples of concrete language which could be used in OAPs. By doing this, the instructors seemed to be not only providing students with a general idea of OAPs, but also an idea of the appropriate register of OAPs.

In addition to a detailed description and explanation of the OAP task, the instructors also modeled it either explicitly or implicitly. Dr. Frost in TESL 520 implicitly modeled the task by presenting book chapters and articles herself in the first few classes. She first provided handouts, briefly explained the main points and her critique of the article, engaged the students in small group discussions (three or four students in each group), and finally led the whole class discussion on the article. This clearly served as a model for OAPs in TESL 520 and students followed a similar format throughout the semesters. Dr. Cory, on the other hand, provided an explicit modeling in the fourth week in TESL 570. She provided handouts, told the class why she decided to present the particular article, explained the main points and her critique of the article by showing relevant examples on the OHP, and finally led a class discussion. The student
who performed the first student OAP in the following week applied exactly the same format. She said:

Dr. Cory’s presentation last week helped me a lot. It gave me an idea how to present. I paid a lot of attention to what kind of things she said first and what steps she took. First, the introduction of the author, and then second, she talked about the data, how data was collected, and then she went through the article, the theories in it. So I just took notes on the sequence that she took and I just followed it in my own presentation. (Interview)

Although it was not the case that all the students followed exactly the same format and strategies that were modeled by the instructors, the modeling did set the basic format of OAPs for each course. For example, a small group discussion was used in most of the OAPs performed in TESL 520 as Dr. Frost modeled it, while it was not normally used in TESL 570. Students used the OHP much more in 570 as Dr. Cory used it a lot in her model OAP as well as in her lectures.

5.2 OAP Procedures

5.2.1 Premises of OAPs

OAPs in TESL 520 and TESL 570 were performed based on different premises: in the former, it was assumed that every student in class had read the article to be presented, while in the latter it was optional for the students other than presenters and their backup person to read the article (with a few exceptional cases). This difference in premise came from different rationales, purposes, and histories of OAPs and also influenced the way students organized their OAPs. In her description of OAPs Dr. Frost (TESL 520) repeated that the main job of the presenter was to “prime the pump” for discussions rather than to provide a “blow by blow account” of what the article said. Thus, the main
purpose of OAPs in this course was to provide a starting point for an in-depth class discussion on issues surrounding the presented article, based on the assumption that everybody had already read it.

Dr. Cory, on the other hand, set up the OAP task differently in TESL 570. In her explanations of the task to the class, she said:

In the past, normally everyone would have read all the articles and you would be presenting the one that you signed up to present. What I found was that that ran into a couple of dangers. One thing is that either the presenter ends up telling everyone everything they’ve already read, or going into too much detail and not getting to the main thing. The other thing is that it’s not the kind of real world activity that you end up having to do in a presentation at a conference, or in teaching, or for a thesis defence which is 20 minutes also. Normally what you do in a thesis defence or a conference presentation is, in 20 minutes you tell them about something you know about, a study, and why that was an interesting study, or what was the nature of the study, and then what that tells us as teachers or as researchers or as human-beings in relation to learning or teaching second languages. So I thought that was a more legitimate, real world kind of task, if you have to present to us something we don’t really know but could learn from. So you have to really stick to the main points, get away from jargon, really get to the core of the article. (Interview)

Thus, in TESL 570, one of the challenges that presenters faced in OAPs was to provide the main points of the article in a succinct and effective way to the audience who had not read it. As Dr. Cory described above, OAPs in this course also had an explicit aspect of academic apprenticeship in that it served as practice for “real world” academic presentations.

In short, the main difference in premises was that in TESL 520 presenters assumed that everybody had already read the article to be presented, while in TESL 570 they assumed otherwise.
5.2.2 Sub-tasks of OAPs

The first task of OAPs on the part of students was to choose the article that they wanted to present. The article was normally chosen from the course readings (either required or optional) listed in the course outline week by week. Basically, students were encouraged to choose one related to their own interest, and those who had a particular area of interest tried to choose one according to that. Those who did not yet have any particular interest areas chose an article for a variety of reasons. Some chose an article because it looked relatively straightforward, some chose one because they had read a different article by the same author, and others chose one because its title sounded interesting. Some chose the day to present rather than the article, according to their schedule of other assignments so that they could avoid dealing with too many things simultaneously. In addition to the choice of articles, students also had to find their backup person who would assist in their OAPs in a variety of ways.

The second task for students was to prepare for their OAPs. The main goal of presenters was to critically analyze an article and present it so that the rest of the class could learn and benefit from their OAPs. How could a student achieve this goal? An explicit guideline outlining what should be identified by the presenter was provided by Dr. Cory in TESL 570:

Presentations should identify: (1) key theoretical issues, (2) research approaches, (3) findings, and (4) educational implications (if any). You should also provide a brief critique of the study and a few discussion questions. A 1-2 page handout (max.), per paper, is recommended and an overhead transparency may also be useful. You must not give a long, detailed summary of the article—a concise 10 minute summary is all that required. Then report the study’s strengths
and weaknesses and its relevance to this course or to the field of TESL/SLA more generally. (Excerpt from the course outline)

The elements listed above were not just categories that students should have in their OAPs and handouts, but sub-tasks or steps that they could complete in their preparation of OAPs. In other words, the OAP task was broken down into more manageable sub-tasks such as summarizing and critiquing the article in terms of the four elements listed above, and in this sense the guideline served as a kind of scaffolding for students to perform OAPs. Furthermore, it implicitly instructed students how to read and analyze a study critically. The majority of students prepared for their OAPs following a similar guideline described above, and therefore OAPs normally consisted of three distinct parts, summary, critique, and discussions.

In addition to analyzing an article, some students went beyond the article and did further research on the main topic, author, or related studies to gain more background knowledge. One student said:

After analyzing the article extensively, I went to the library to do more research to find out a little bit more about the author of the article. I found out that before this article the author had published a book examining Spanish speaking minority children. So I thought that was maybe why she wanted to include Spanish children in the comparison sample of this study. Another research I did was on the topic to see who else was writing on this topic. So I also read some other articles related to the topic. (Interview)

Many students also consulted their backup person or instructor before the actual OAP. Some met with their backup person at school or even at a coffee shop on a holiday to talk about the article and ideas for their OAP. Others talked on the phone or communicated via e-mail.
Preparing handouts, OHP transparencies, or other additional materials to present in class was another sub-task of presenters. Some students mentioned that preparing a handout itself was a good learning process for them:

Also when you make the handouts for the students, I find that that’s in itself a helpful process because you’re picking up the most important information, what you feel is the most important and you’re condensing it. And even by doing that it kind of narrows down the things that you’re going to talk about. So I tend to do that. I tend to go back to it a number of times and sort of mull over the ideas and I find that as I’m doing that and each time I go back I can maybe come up with a different comparison or analogy. (Interview)

Rehearsing one’s OAP was an optional sub-task which was mainly done by NNSs. One NNS said:

I practiced my presentation in my room and I timed the rehearsal. I was very motivated. I talked about why I chose the article and explained some of the technical terms in the article. But it took me more than 100 minutes to explain these two points. (laughs) So I said to myself, “Oh, no. This is no good. I will never finish.” (laughs) For this rehearsal, I didn’t have a script of what I should say and I was kind of mumbling. I was talking about my background and everything, going on and on and on. So I made some simple notes of what verbs and sentence structures I would use. By the way, I would never do this kind of things if I were to give a talk in my first language. And then I rehearsed my presentation again using the notes I made and I was finally able to finish it within 20 minutes. (Interview)

In summary, the OAP task involved a variety of sub-tasks that students engaged in even before the actual OAP. Some of these sub-tasks were set up by the instructor as conventional steps in the preparation for this kind of academic presentation, which in fact served as a guideline for the analysis of a research paper. Students also engaged in extra preparation such as conducting further research, consulting others, preparing support items, and rehearsing.
5.2.3 Standard Format and Variations of OAPs

Although formats of OAPs varied depending on the presenter, presented article, or other factors (e.g., instructors’ intervention, time limitation), there was a standard format of OAPs performed in each course. In TESL 520, the most commonly used format was as follows: (1) an introduction (2) a summary of the article, (3) a critique of the article, (4) a presentation of discussion questions, (5) a small group discussion, and (6) a whole class discussion. Out of the eleven OAPs videotaped in TESL 520, six followed the standard format precisely. Others used variations of the standard format such as: (1) no or a very brief summary, (2) integration of a summary, critique, and whole group discussion, and (3) a long small group discussion and no whole class discussion.

While some of these variations were intentionally organized by the presenters, others were due to some external factors. In some cases the presenter had to skip the summary part due to the limitation of the class time, and in other cases the summary, critique, and discussion parts were all integrated since the audience started to discuss things from the beginning of an OAP. While most of the students used either the standard format or its variation, one student in particular in TESL 520 took a very different approach. Instead of giving a summary and critique of the article, he put the class into small groups from the beginning of his OAP and engaged them in a number of small tasks. He said in the interview:

So the more I read [the article] the more I realized, hmm, this was just kind of an overview or a summary. . . . And so I thought, “What am I going to do when I present this article to make it interesting for the class?” Because I have a personal opinion that I get discouraged when I see too many presentations of students standing up in front of the class saying, “This is what the article was about. This
is what I thought. Here's the pros. Here's the cons. Now let's discuss some questions.” And I thought, “Gee, there's gotta be a better way.” And of course there is a better way. . . . So I thought why not use some hands-on language learning task activities/strategies and put the class through it. And to my surprise they liked it. And so that's sort of the approach I took. (Interview)

As for the 11 OAPs recorded in TESL 520, time spent on OAPs ranged from 32 minutes to 85 minutes. The average time was 56.5 minutes and the median was 51 minutes.

The standard format of OAPs in TESL 570 was similar to that in TESL 520 except that it normally lacked a small group discussion. Another difference was that in 570 students mentioned their reasons for having chosen the presented article in the very beginning of their OAP as a standard part of the introduction. This was modeled and explicitly encouraged by Dr. Cory since she thought that it would help the audience see how presenters related themselves to the presented article. Also, in 570 a backup person was normally offered an opportunity (by the instructor) to provide additional comments during the class discussion. Thus, the standard format of OAPs in TESL 570 was: (1) an introduction (2) a summary of the article, (3) a critique of the article, (4) implications of the study, (5) a presentation of discussion questions, and (6) a whole class discussion.

Twelve out of 14 OAPs recorded in TESL 570 followed the standard format. Two students took a different approach by adding a small group discussion at the beginning of an OAP or making an entire OAP interactive by eliciting a lot of input from the audience. On average, OAPs in this course were about 19 minutes shorter than OAPs in TESL 520. As for the 14 OAPs, time spent on OAPs ranged from 27 minutes to 51 minutes. The average time was 37.6 minutes and the median was 36.5 minutes. Figure 5.1 summarizes the premise, standard format, and time of OAPs performed in the two courses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TESL 520</th>
<th>TESL 570</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premise</td>
<td>The audience has read the presented article</td>
<td>The audience has not read the presented article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Format</td>
<td>(1) Introduction</td>
<td>(1) Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Summary</td>
<td>(2) Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3) Critique</td>
<td>(3) Critique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) Discussion questions</td>
<td>(4) Implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5) Small group discussion</td>
<td>(5) Discussion questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6) Whole group discussion</td>
<td>(6) Whole class discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (Average)</td>
<td>32 min. ~ 85 min.</td>
<td>27 min. ~ 51 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Median)</td>
<td>(56.5 min.)</td>
<td>(37.6 min.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(51 min.)</td>
<td>(36.5 min.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.1 OAP Procedures**

### 5.3 Participation Roles in OAPs

The OAP task normally involved a number of participation roles such as student presenter, audience, instructor, and backup person. In this section I will briefly describe these roles in terms of their expected responsibilities.

The student presenter had the primary role in conducting an OAP. Basically, presenters were expected to provide a brief summary and critique of an article and a few discussion questions. As I described earlier, they were not expected to provide a long detailed summary of an article especially in TESL 520 where everybody had already read the article. More importantly, the main role of a presenter in TESL 520 was to stimulate discussions in class by posing critical questions about the article and issues surrounding
it. In TESL 570 presenters did have to provide some information from the article since the article was normally new to the audience. In the first questionnaire, some students wrote that they considered the presenter role as a "facilitator" or somebody who just organized a class discussion. Others considered that presenter should be a "tentative instructor" or an "expert of the day" who was supposed to "know better" about the article and provide new information to the audience.

The main task of the audience was to listen to the presenter attentively and also interact with the presenter or with each other in discussions. In the questionnaire, students also wrote a number of other things that they considered as part of the audience role: to contribute personal knowledge and experiences, to introduce disagreements or criticisms, to introduce or think about new perspectives, to offer different interpretations of the article, and to be helpful and cooperative. Thus, the audience was expected to be not just passive listeners but active collaborators who contributed to and co-constructed OAPs by providing different perspectives and opinions.

Instructors took a number of different roles in OAPs where they were not given the primary control. In the interviews I asked the instructors to describe their role as an instructor in student OAPs. Both instructors mentioned that their main responsibility was to provide important background knowledge or additional information which would help contextualize the presented article or provide interesting insights to the discussion. In addition, Dr. Cory reported that she occasionally took a role of a "naive listener":

... at the same time I can take the perspective of the naive listener who doesn't understand who or where or some of the background knowledge which sometimes the presenter takes for granted, because you can't say everything so you just are
selective and also they may not know some things. So I try to combine the two kinds of roles, that is one of having more knowledge maybe of the context of the article and then the other trying to make it a rewarding experience for the audience, and therefore if I think they aren’t telling information that would help the audience understand it better, then I ask, “So can you give us an example of that?” or “Do you really think it’s an ethnography?” or “How is it different from such and such?” (Interview)

Dr. Frost mentioned that she was also ready to provide necessary support for the affective side of OAPs:

On the affective side, there are some people who are very very nervous, and I see a part of my role is trying to help them, to set them at ease or to contribute more, and sort of scaffolding or partner in dialogue rather than leaving them to do it on their own. . . . sometimes arguments can build up. You have to be careful that people are talking about an issue, and don’t start attacking someone personally on a point. Because I do feel that I am in there, much as I try to downplay the role, but you are in there with more power and authority than others, so if I were to see that someone is making a personal attack either on a presenter or to classmates, and the presenter doesn’t feel like they can say, “Let’s stick with the issues and leave the personalities out of it,” it’s like I see my role again sort of running hard over that, and watching out that kind of personal dynamics so you can be ready to say, “Let’s just settle this one down.” (Interview)

Thus, by taking a variety of roles, the instructors were facilitating OAPs and students’ learning in OAPs.

A backup person was another important role involved in OAPs especially in TESL 570.¹ There seemed to be two main tasks that a backup person played at different stages of OAPs. One was to help presenters in the preparation stage. In the interviews many students mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity to consult their backup person before the actual OAP. One student said:

I met my backup at a coffee shop on Sunday afternoon. It was a holiday but that was the only time we could meet. The meeting was very productive. I told her...

---

¹ Although Dr. Frost also introduced the backup system in TESL 520, the backup role was never really established in this course.
my ideas and plans for my presentation and she also had a lot of good suggestions. Sometimes you come up with great ideas only when you talk about it with somebody else. It was that kind of experience. It was very helpful. (Interview)

The other main task of a backup person was to support the presenter during the actual OAP. A backup person sometimes interjected during the presenter’s talk and added some information, clarified something, or offered a critical opinion or question from a different perspective. Also, in TESL 570 Dr. Cory made sure that the backup person had an opportunity to provide additional comments toward the end of an OAP. Thus, the backup system created opportunities for students to work collaboratively both before and during an OAP.

In this chapter, I have characterized the OAP task in terms of its context, procedures, and participation roles. The task was one of the main assignments as well as class activities in both courses, and served multiple purposes in graduate students’ academic socialization. OAPs involved a number of sub-tasks such as choosing an article, analyzing it, doing further research on its topic, preparing support items, and consulting with the instructor or a backup person. The participation roles in OAPs were presenter, audience, backup, and instructor, and they all contributed to the speech event in different ways.
Chapter 6

PERFORMANCE OF OAPS

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyze the actual performance of OAPs in light of language socialization and other sociocultural approaches to learning outlined in Chapter 2. The transcripts of 25 videotaped OAPs (11 in TESL 520 and 14 in TESL 570) were analyzed in terms of such themes as epistemic stance, strategies to engage the audience, multiple voices, the constitution of expert-novice, and cognitive bridges. These categories were in part derived from the data itself but were also developed from the sociocultural literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Information provided by students in review and interview sessions (see 3.5.3 for the description of RISs) as well as the instructors’ perceptions added other levels to the analysis.

6.1 OAPs as Performance

As I mentioned earlier, an OAP was one of the course assignments that students had to fulfill to complete the graduate courses (see 4.2.2 for the description of course assignments). However, an important difference between an OAP and the other course assignments was that an OAP was performed in front of an audience, involving face-to-face interactions. Student presenters in some way or another had to articulate their thoughts to the audience, engage them, and get cooperation from them during their OAPs. Also, their performance, demonstrated knowledge, and abilities were to some extent judged by the audience, their peers and instructor. Furthermore, since an OAP was an evaluated performance, presenters were under pressure to perform well in order to receive
a good grade. How did student presenters manage to perform an OAP under these pressures? How did they communicate what they knew or didn’t know to the audience? What strategies did they use to gain credibility in their talk, to engage the audience or facilitate class discussion, or to simply accomplish the task? I attempt to answer these questions in the following analysis.

6.1.1 Epistemic Stance

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the main task of presenters in an actual OAP was to provide the class with a brief summary and critique of the presented article and to lead a class discussion on the issues related to the article. Further, presenters were expected not to just “regurgitate” what the article said by presenting a long detailed summary, but to provide their own analysis and critique of the article as well as to stimulate or facilitate class discussion (see 5.1). Given such conditions, presenters in some way or another needed to communicate their attitudes, judgments, or beliefs in relation to what they knew about the presented article and other related issues. In other words, presenters expressed their state of knowledge or epistemic stance while performing an OAP. Ohta (1991) explains the importance of this concept in human communication:

... epistemic stance relates ... to the speaker’s relationship with what s/he knows or believes to be true. Epistemic stance, revealed through epistemic markers (or evidentials) therefore gives interlocutors information about the speaker’s commitment to the truth of his or her message, the speaker’s source of knowledge, and the speaker’s certainty about his or her utterance (Givón, 1982; Chafe, 1986). Epistemic markers are crucial tools in human communication—without them we would not be able to discern fact from conjecture, the speaker’s own ideas from the ideas of another, or even have any idea of how a speaker felt about the information he or she was presenting. (p. 212)
In the case of OAPs where students presented somebody else's work and analyzed it, it was important for listeners to be able to know if the information given by presenters was a fact written in the article or the presenters' opinions, or how presenters felt about the article as a result of their analysis of the article. Thus, to investigate what kinds of epistemic stance student presenters took in their OAPs and how the stance was communicated and manifested would help us understand the nature of the OAP performance.

In light of language socialization, epistemic stance and epistemic markers are also important since novices must learn how to display their knowledge (or lack of it) in an appropriate way to become competent members of a group. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, learning how to use language to communicate what they know or don't know in a socially and culturally appropriate way is an important part of language socialization. In addition, it is through epistemic markers or manifestations of epistemic stance that participants in social interactions constitute themselves as relative experts or novices, and such expert-novice interaction is an important locus for language socialization.

How, then, did the participating students express their epistemic stance given the role of a presenter in OAPs? What linguistic markers or manifestations of epistemic stance were evident in the discourse of OAPs? Did they keep the same stance throughout their OAPs or did they change their stance at different points in their performance? I explored these issues by analyzing primarily the presenter's utterances in the OAP discourse. Since the purpose of my analysis here was to examine the OAP performance qualitatively, I did not attempt to quantify the appearance of certain epistemic markers.
in the OAP discourse in order to draw conclusions by numbers in the form of causal relationships. Rather, the appearance of certain linguistic features in the discourse (e.g., "I + verb" constructions used by the presenter, repeated use of certain adverbs) was interpreted only qualitatively for the purpose of characterizing an OAP in terms of the epistemic stance taken by the presenter.

Although a presenter in an OAP was in a sense “licensed” to be the expert of the day, students seemed to take a variety of stances and communicated their stance in different ways at different points in their OAPs. One common stance taken by presenters was indeed that of a relative expert and they therefore attempted to establish their credibility or demonstrate their expertise. Although presenters rarely said explicitly that they knew a lot about the topic or had a great deal of background knowledge, they seemed to display their knowledge and expertise rather implicitly in a number of ways. The following examples show how in some OAPs presenters took the role of a relative expert and implicitly demonstrated their credibility as the presenter of the topic.

Example 1 is an excerpt from the beginning of Nancy’s OAP in TESL 570 where she attempted to establish her credibility by telling the class about her commitment to and investment in the topic that she was presenting. This presented article was not listed in the course readings but chosen by Nancy herself with permission of Dr. Cory. Prior to the following excerpt, Nancy asked the class what they thought the term, learning disability, meant and a few students offered their opinions. Then in the excerpt she provided her general understanding of the term and the reason why she had chosen this topic to present:
(Note that italics in all the excerpts indicate my own emphasis.)

**Example 1 (TESL 570)**

(N=Nancy)

N: ... generally when we are talking about - learning disabilities - uh: we are generally talking about a person with uh: (0.5) if this is a learning profile of an average intelligent student - uh: students with learning disabilities (0.8) will have a dif- but their average intelligence they're processing difficulty in one area - or one more areas - uhm - so: - they are not slower or (1.0) I 1 hate that term but - uhm - so that's what we - are talking about - specific processing difficulties. *Uhm - I don't have a lot of- obviously have a lot of background in the area uh: I'm just very interested in it.* And *I work with students with learning disabilities and I wanna do my research on ESL and learning disabilities,* which is why I chose this article. And *it also pertains to - individual differences in language learning - we were talking about - difficulties with* learning in class and is there a possibility of the student having a learning disability.

Although Nancy explicitly stated that she didn’t have a lot of background in the area, she still seemed to establish her credibility as a presenter of this topic: first she defined learning disabilities for the audience, and then revealed her personal commitment to or investment in this topic by stating that she had a lot of interest in this area, actually worked with students with learning disabilities, and also planned to do research on this topic. Furthermore, at the end of the excerpt she acknowledged the connection between the topic and the larger theme that the class had recently been working on, which also seemed to help establish her credibility. Since the presented topic, ESL and learning disabilities, was a relatively new area of study in the field of second language learning, as Nancy repeatedly mentioned throughout her OAP, no others in the class appeared to be knowledgeable about this topic. Thus, Nancy who had chosen and presented the article on the topic, was perceived to be a good source of knowledge and was asked a number of questions by the audience throughout the OAP.
Example 2 is an excerpt from the discussion part of Nancy’s OAP where the instructor asked Nancy and her backup Susan about something that she had been wondering:

Example 2 (TESL 570)

(N=Nancy, I=Instructor, S=Susan, Nancy’s backup)

I: Bu- but are those tests - I’d like to ask a bit about this uhm - Nancy or Susan because I’m - sometimes phoned by people at high schools, like counselors, saying - are there any tests available to check with my student from Hong Kong - or Vietnam who has uh: learning disability or whether it’s just some other kind of problem. And I don’t know any - and so I’m wondering if those tests are for learning disabilities generally, or they =

S: = Those may be applicable to second language according to this right?

N: I- I- that’s the difficulty. I mean they are geared to first language speakers in English.

I: And they are written in English. That’s a problem. Sometimes these counselors say well - maybe we’ll translate it into Vietnamese but it’s a whole - cultural testing and knowing and you know the- the- whole thing we were getting into earlier so I’m just wondering about that. I think it’s a very important area. It’s something that is surprisingly understudied.

The above excerpt seems to demonstrate how Nancy and her backup were treated as a competent knowledge source even by the instructor who, according to her institutional role and status, was supposedly the expert in the class. In addition, the instructor’s comment that it was a very important but surprisingly understudied area seemed to add credibility to Nancy’s having chosen the topic for her OAP.

In the next example, May, the presenter, seemed to implicitly display her epistemic stance by providing a unique introduction in the beginning of her OAP. She
read a passage from a novel which she found related nicely to the topic of her article, first
language loss:

Example 3 (TESL 520)

(M=May)
M: Okay. I'm going to talk about Wong-Fillmore's - uh: 1991 article entitled - when
learning a second language means losing the first. And uhm (0.6) because of the
time let me talk - I think uhm I'd like to change my strategy. And then - I won't
go through all the materials I presented to you. Instead - I will focus on (0.6) the-
problem of this article? I found there are a lot of problems particularly with the
methodology (0.6) and uhm - her theory. And then - we will see whether we have
time for group discussion (xx) major questions. And before that - I'd like to read
to you a very short passage from Amy Tan's novel The Joy Luck Club - which is
my favorite. So. To give you an idea of the: breakdown (0.7) of the family
relationship because of barriers of language. (4.8)

((May reads a passage from the novel))

M: ((After she finished reading)) Okay. So that - will give you a very good
introduction to what this article's talking about.

If we look closely at the above excerpt, we can see how May established her credibility as
a presenter in a number of different ways. First of all, May stated that because of the
time limitation she would like to change her strategy and focus on the problem of the
article. This statement itself seemed to convey a number of messages: (1) she had
planned a strategy for her OAP, (2) she was flexible enough to change it because of the
time limitation, (3) she was focusing on the most important part, her critique of the
article, and (4) she was quite sure that the article had problems. All of these messages to
some extent seemed to help establish her credibility as a presenter and also reflect her
epistemic stance. Then, she read a passage from a novel which she thought would give the
class a good introduction to the topic of the article. Here again, she seemed to implicitly
constitute herself as a legitimate presenter who knew about the topic fairly well and could relate the article to other resources. In fact, the passage she read was highly relevant to the topic of the article since it vividly described an example of Chinese family’s experience with first language loss. It also had personal relevance to May in that she herself came from a Chinese background and that it was her favorite novel.

The following example is another excerpt from May’s OAP where she quite confidently provided her critique of the article. After mentioning her critique of the methodology used in the study, she said:

Example 4 (TESL 520)

(M=May)

M: ... And then with her theory too. She (=the author of the article)) started - like at the beginning of the article she did mention the - Lambert’s subtractive uhm - bilingualism. But to me - she just that - like just mentioned the term for the purpose of mentioning. She didn’t uh fully address this kind of issue, and the - I suggest that uh: she could have addressed the bilingualism in a broader theoretical context. And then - this is my suggestion so you have your own opinions too. So I would suggest - she would include like uh - talk a little bit about it in a broader sense of theory of bilingualism? Why there’s the necessity of bilingualism. And there’s uh: like recent research (0.5) uh: focused on uh: the desirably - uhm desirability and - efficacy of bilingualism and there are two - totally different views. One is uh represented by Porter - who suggests - uh: exclusive use of English which we are already familiar with - English only movement. Another extreme is uhm - uh represented by Cummins and Swain and other theorists who - suggest the full use of uh - while - making use of English and at the same time - try to maintain the mother tongue or native language.

Thus, by suggesting that the author of the article address bigger theoretical issues and explaining such theories, May displayed her background knowledge and seemed to establish credibility in her critique.

1 In addition, the instructor thought that May’s introduction was very effective since by reading the passage
Another common way to establish credibility was to refer to one’s own experience or provide an anecdote. In Example 5, Daniel, the presenter, supported his points by referring to his own experiences as a teacher of ESL:

**Example 5 (TESL 570)**

(D=Daniel)

D: And finally the: uh - implications for research and maybe this encompasses some of the strengths of this paper. Uh: - the paper *does* take a good look at pidginization and its cognitive social and psychological causes in English as uh: second or foreign language learners. I know that after - reading the: article - I learned - a lot about - what happens with my students uh: - we often as teachers talk about the fossilization of our students’ language - and uh: - I don’t think as teachers - we often - consider - the social and psychological business. We tend to look at uh: learners or students more - as - uh: - vessels waiting to be filled up and there’s something (0.5) wrong with the vessel (0.8) that doesn’t allow it to be filled out. In other words we - sometimes feel that it’s the student’s ability - uh: - as opposed to these psychological or social issues - and as I say I think that often teachers don’t consider that sort of thing.

In Example 6, Esther, the presenter, attempted to support her opinion by providing her personal experience and anecdote after the instructor challenged and attempted to clarify her opinion:

**Example 6 (TESL 570)**

(E=Esther, I=Instructor)

E: ... if you want to speak uhm - as well as a native speaker I think it’s better to: give up your first language.

I: It’s better?

E: Yeah better. =

I: = Or it’s inevitable.

---

she was pointing out that first language loss was not just an academic issue but an issue which had an impact on people’s real life.
E: I uh that's my own experience that I - because I grew up in Szechuan province and they have a different accent (0.4) uhm from Mandarin. (0.3) But uhm at that time I was fourteen years old. I moved from Szechuan province to Tianjin in - to the North. And there they speak Mandarin. But I - I didn't want to give up my: my Szechuan accent. So I spoke (0.2) Szechuan accent at home, and spoke Mandarin - with my friends and outside the school. So North people can distinguish my - accent. They can still tell - that I came from Szechuan. But my brother was only two years younger than me and moved to Tianjin and he: - gradually forgot the strong - accent. He spoke Mandarin st - started to learn Mandarin and he spoke Mandarin at home and also outside. So now he: - he cannot speak (0.3) Szechuan (0.3) accent and but he can speak very typical Mandarin. So I - I'm thinking if a - if we can forget the first language and just speak the second language all the time (0.3) maybe we can speak a second language like a native speaker.

Providing a critique of the article in a confident or convincing manner was another manifestation of presenters' epistemic stance. In the following example, Tina provided her critique of the article which discussed the use of drama in ESL youth organizations:

Example 7 (TESL 570)

(T=Tina)

T: Now I'm really ((small laughs)) going to get into the weaknesses. Uh: it's a purely descriptive article. Completely and totally lacking in method. Uh:m I've mentioned that youngsters were performing better - or performing better than okay. ((a sigh)) What does this mean? Absolutely nothing. Uh: there's no data whatsoever. Uh:m (0.8) I have no idea where she's coming from. The irony is that it's out of a five-year study of inner city youths and a specific category and sixty organizations in three metropolitan cities. It seems rather peculiar that she didn't include the data.

As we can see in the above excerpt, Tina was using various adverbs and adjectives such as really, purely, completely, totally, absolutely, and whatsoever, which all seemed to suggest how convinced she was of her critique point. In addition, she was also using different tones of voice and being very expressive as she attempted to emphasize the irony that she perceived in the article. Throughout her OAP Tina seemed to keep her stance as a critical
thinker and made her critique points (both positive and negative) clear and explicit as represented by the above example.\(^2\)

Esther’s presentation of her critique points was also effective since she supported her points by providing possible alternative explanations of the phenomena discussed in the article. In the following excerpt, she first described a point discussed in the article which she felt was a contradiction and then offered her own hypothesis or interpretation based on her background knowledge of her first language, Chinese. She was talking about an article which examined a Taiwanese boy’s acquisition of English:

**Example 8 (TESL 570)**

\((E=\text{Esther})\)

\(E:\) Okay uh the second - question is that even though the author says that there is no Taiwanese interference - there is also a contradiction here I want to share with you. Whether it is a con- contradiction or not. He: also - at the end of the article the author said the boy already had experienced with one natural language system and this helped him in the analysis of the meaning and syntax of the second language. (1.8) But also he says there was no first language interference. So I find there is a contradiction here. And I think maybe because Chinese sentence structure is quite similar to the English sentence structure - so (0.5) he just followed the same sentence structure only - only deleting the copula. But the - the basic structure is there. So I think may - maybe - his native language helped him (0.7) make the same kind of sentence structure. (0.3) Yeah - I think so.

Some presenters approached their OAP by taking the role of an instructor or the teacher of the day. Brian’s OAP was one of the most memorable ones since he used a unique format presenting a literature review on learning strategies: instead of following the standard format, he prepared some hands-on learning tasks for the students to complete.

\(^2\) Although Tina seemed to be quite confident about her analysis and critique of the article, she mentioned in the interview that she had an “underlying fear” that maybe the article was more concrete and solid than she thought it was and that it was perhaps her “deficit.” She also said that although in the end she was
during his OAP. He described the tasks and explained how to use them in the classroom while the students worked on the tasks in small groups using glue and scissors. The following are excerpts from the beginning and middle part of Brian's OAP. Example 9 is a part of his introduction where he explained the planned format of his OAP and in Example 10 he described a task and gave directions to the audience:

**Example 9 (TESL 520)**

(B=Brian)

B: What I'd like to do - with you, - is something a little different. Uh:m instead of just *you know summarizing the article and then giving you my opinion of the pros and cons and what not* ((italics = Brian using a very flat tone))- I thought that maybe - if - I (0.6) put you through some language learning strategies of our own - as we talk about and discuss the article - it might have some contextual meaning and it actively involves you in the class as well.

**Example 10 (TESL 520)**

B: ... I'm playing the shell game with this. This is an enrichment activity in case you've finished your columns. *It's always nice when you're doing lessons you have an activity for early finishers?* ... So again it's mixing and matching, - so it involves reading for meaning - ... And you're really getting students to uh:m - either you could be working on the language of opinion - "I think I feel I believe this is our decision," or you might be grouping or arranging or putting shells into different headings - but whatever type of language that you're focusing on while you're doing this - the activity is still kind of a fun mix and match game to try. So if you want - you can take uh: how about take a few minutes just to cut the three headings out and paste them on to those studies and see if you can get - the right order. Because there is an order to it.

(3.5) ((Students start working on the task))

B: *Almost at the end kids!*

((laughs))

proved to be accurate, she had to feel that fear because she was aware of the fact that her performance was marked (i.e., evaluated).
As we can see in the above two excerpts, Brian was explaining things and giving directions to the audience in a confident and comfortable manner by taking a teacher-like role. It was almost as if he were providing a workshop for teachers on learning strategies. He was in fact one of the most experienced teachers in the classroom (also currently teaching) and a lot of things he talked about in his OAP seemed to come from his own experiences or a solid knowledge base he had as an experienced teacher. Also in the interview after his OAP Brian often answered my questions as an experienced teacher who knew how to perform an effective presentation. Below is an excerpt from the interview where we were talking about how Brian was conscious of the audience’s response during his OAP:

(B=Brian, N=researcher)

N: Are you saying that one of the most important things that you were conscious of while you were presenting was to engage the audience?

B: Constantly. The most important thing, as a teacher, is to have... I mean anyone can stand up in front of a class, but if you, I mean, that’s where it breaks down continually if you’re not organized, if you don’t have communication skills, if you’re not able to engage and pull people in together, then you shouldn’t be in teaching. And so I think it’s really important to engage your audience. To make it fun for them. To make it interesting. To break the ice very quickly with some humor. To give them concrete hands-on things whether it’s a handout or whether it’s a computer disk because people like to walk away from something with something. So they feel they’ve done something. I feel also giving students a chance to turn to one another and share something or to engage, it is important. And so whether that’s a cutting and pasting activity or whether it’s discussing questions at the end or whether it’s a quick 30 second pair and share with your neighbor I think that’s also important for teachers to do as they’re presenting a lesson. (Interview)

In his OAP Brian did seem to be successful in engaging the class constantly by doing all the things he mentioned in the above excerpt. He kept the class moving by engaging the audience in different activities while at the same time providing useful information related
to the presented topic. He also prepared elaborate handouts which contained charts and graphics for the audience to use in the activities. In short, by demonstrating his presentation skills as well as content knowledge in a confident manner, Brian communicated his epistemic stance or identity as a teacher with a lot of teaching experiences and background knowledge.

So far in this chapter I have illustrated some of the examples where presenters seemed quite comfortable with the material and the topic they were presenting and took a role of a relative expert in their OAPs. They seemed to display their knowledge and establish credibility as a presenter in a variety of ways such as by demonstrating their background knowledge, experiences, or personal investment in the topic, drawing on other related resources, providing a critique in a convincing manner by supporting them with examples or hypotheses, or displaying their presentations skills as an experienced teacher. The following examples, on the other hand, show how presenters sometimes expressed their lack of knowledge or uncertainty about things in the article that they were presenting.

Example 11 is the very beginning of Jeff’s OAP where he repeatedly expressed that he didn’t have a full understanding of the presented article. The article was on genre analysis and was in fact highly theoretical:

Example 11 (TESL 520)

(J=Jeff, A=audience)

J: Okay. Uh: - overall uh: the article uh: by - uh Martin was a - it was a *challenge*

A: *((laughs))*((nodding))*
In the above excerpt, Jeff quite explicitly communicated to the audience how the article and its topic were difficult for him to grasp. The laughs and nodding by the audience seemed to suggest that they understood what Jeff meant by challenge or wandered in the middle and sympathized with him since they themselves had had a difficult time understanding the article.

The next excerpt is from Emi’s OAP where she implicitly stated her lack of background knowledge on the presented topic, bilingual education. Prior to her OAP, the class watched a video clip about bilingualism:

**Example 12 (TESL 520)**

(E=Emi, I=instructor, S=students in the audience)

E: Okay uhm - I’m not gonna talk much about this article? The video we watched today, explains better, than my explanation? So I’m not gonna talk about much but this article was very interesting for me because (0.4) uhm (0.3) like (0.3) this country is bilingual - ((speaking very softly)) right? We have two official languages and that - not - all people speak both English and French. So I was wondering what - does - the bilingual education mean here? We have French immersion program, but not everybody is taking that? And (0.8) uhm - French immersion - if Francophone, if they take French immersion, (1.0) they will have
their first language instruction, but for - English speakers (0.4) French is not their first language? So I was wondering - how that works - when (0.6) not- no: Francophones - take French immersion program. I was wondering if they had any difficulties or something - will they take French immersion program.

I: We have a different program for Francophones right? Program [for (x)]?

S1: [Yeah. Yeah. They go to a different school.]

E: So they don't share - classes with - Francophones? (0.8) ((speaking very softly, looking toward the instructor)) (xxx)

S1: Any of the people - that I know - here - that are French - they send their kids to French school because that is their mother tongue. But then I know a lot of English Canadians - have their kids in French immersion. So all the kids will be English speaking?

In the above excerpt, Emi implicitly communicated her relative lack of background knowledge (or cultural knowledge) about the bilingual education in Canada (Emi was an international student). At the same time, she expressed her interest in learning about it by explicitly stating that she was interested and also by asking the audience some indirect questions which were indicated by the repeated phrase, I was wondering. The excerpt also shows how the audience responded to Emi’s questions and provided her with their background knowledge.

In the review and interview session, Emi mentioned that she had to change her plan since the instructor showed the video clip before her OAP. It was an unexpected incident for her and she did not know how to deal with the situation. She said:

It went differently from my plan. I thought I would go over my handout first and outline some of the main points in the article. But since we watched the video right before my presentation, I had to change my plan. It was my first time that I saw the video and I understood the concept [of bilingualism] better by watching it. So I got confused and also didn’t know how I should relate the video to my presentation. (Interview)
Thus, in addition to her perceived lack of background knowledge, Emi was not sure about how she should proceed with her OAP after the unexpected incident.3

Examples 13 is an excerpt from Mark’s OAP where he talked about gender differences and apologies. Throughout his OAP, Mark took a role of a facilitator by asking questions and inviting input from the audience:

Example 13 (TESL 570)

(M=Mark, I=instructor, S=student in the audience)

M: And so women apologize more for - space things such as bumping into people and interrupting people whereas men - would apologize for being late or for damaging possessions? (4.3) So - uhm (5.6) and - and the author says that women apologize more for accidental body contacts - because they are victims of sexual harassment. But - but uh: she didn’t really explain how she came to this conclusion? She just sort of stuck that in there so - I don’t know. What do: other people think. Does it make sense? I mean it makes sense but can she just stick that in there like that? Is that a - a valid point?

I: If she is doing ethnography or she claims to be doing it she wants to support it with some sense from people that that’s why they actually do it - rather than just asserting it - right?

S1: She didn’t - she didn’t ask.

S2: She does refer to a study though right?

S1: [Yeah.

M: [Yeah. But I didn’t really - yeah - how did - or why are women more victims of talk offences. I didn’t really understand that either.

S3: Wasn’t it the: the: uhm the dominance of uh: male, in the: discourse?

3 The instructor’s story about this incident, however, was slightly different. The instructor thought that she and Emi had agreed to show the video clip in her OAP so that Emi would not have to explain the article herself. According to the instructor, she suggested that Emi show the video because Emi was very worried about presenting the article which she did not understand very well. Thus, the instructor’s perception was that the video would assist Emi’s OAP.
As the above excerpt shows, Mark communicated his uncertainty quite explicitly while at the same time he turned to the audience and asked for their input. The audience responded to his questions actively and provided a lot of comments and opinions. Thus, Mark’s entire OAP turned to be a long class discussion which consisted of numerous turns (243 turns, the most turns among the 25 OAPs) without any extensive monologues by the presenter, Mark. This was the opposite of Jeff’s OAP (see Example 11) which consisted of very long monologues by Jeff with only 18 turns in total. 4

In some OAPs even the very first few turns suggested to some extent how presenters were trying to frame their OAP in terms of epistemic stance. Example 14 is the very beginning of Ken’s OAP where he jokingly told the audience how he wished that he didn’t have to perform an OAP on that day:

_example 14 (TESL 570)

(K=Ken, A=audience)

K: I was hoping uhm the class would be canceled today.

A: ((laughs))

K: Last night uh: I got a power failure.

A: Oh. Oh no.

K: A:nd I can’t - I couldn’t study until mo- until morning. So (0.5) that’s my excuse.

A: ((laughs))

Ken’s first utterance was not totally unexpected since people did suspect that the class might be canceled due to the snow they had on that day. However, the utterance

4 For the purpose of comparison, Mark’s OAP was 36 minutes long, while Jeff’s OAP was 90 minutes
implicitly conveyed the message that he was not necessarily looking forward to performing an OAP on that day. This utterance made the audience laugh possibly because they shared the same feeling with Ken that giving an OAP was not an easy thing to do or because the way Ken quite overtly expressed that feeling sounded somewhat unusual and funny. Then he mentioned the unfortunate accident that happened to him the night before which was responded with sympathetic sighs by the audience. In the next utterance, although jokingly, he seemed to ask the audience for forbearance by telling them that the accident was his excuse. Thus, even in the first 30 seconds Ken's utterances seemed to convey some information about his epistemic stance or attitude toward his own OAP.

In summary, in this section (6.1.1) I have illustrated how presenters placed themselves in terms of epistemic stance and how they communicated their stance through their performance. In some cases presenters took the role of a relative expert by displaying their knowledge and academic skills and also trying to establish credibility in various ways. Some of the common ways by which presenters seemed to establish their credibility were demonstrating their background knowledge, relevant experiences, or personal investment in the topic, bringing in other related resources, providing a sound critique supported by evidence and hypotheses, and demonstrating presentation skills as experienced teachers. In other cases they communicated their lack of knowledge, long including 30 minutes of video watching.

5 In the interview he mentioned that he had prepared the joke (his first utterance in Example 14) beforehand because he thought he would be very nervous at the beginning of his OAP and that a joke might help him relax. He said that he was in fact very nervous when he started talking and making that joke relaxed him only a little bit.
understanding, or confidence. Some presenters invited the audience’s input by expressing their lack of knowledge or showing uncertainty, while others asked forbearance or tried to create solidarity. It should be emphasized here that there were various patterns in the way students expressed their epistemic stance. Some did not seem to communicate their stance very much or did so in a very implicit way, while others constantly expressed their stance throughout their OAP. Furthermore, the stance taken by a presenter was not always static but often changed at different points in an OAP. For example, although Emi overall took a role of a relative novice and asked for information from the audience whose expertise she sought (see Example 12), she also attempted to establish credibility at different points in her OAPs by providing her own experiences as a second language learner.

6.1.2 Strategies to Engage the Audience

In this section I will examine some of the strategies which presenters used in order to engage the audience and make their OAPs interesting and intellectually stimulating. It should be noted here that communicating one’s epistemic stance which I have discussed in the previous section often contributed to the engagement of the audience. In Mark’s case, for example, he was generating a lot of involvement from the audience by explicitly and also implicitly expressing his uncertainty about certain issues discussed in the presented article (see Example 13). May’s strategy, reading a passage from a novel, was effective in engaging the audience while at the same time demonstrated her expertise (see Example 3). Thus, these two categories (i.e., communication of epistemic stance and strategies to engage the audience) are by no means mutually exclusive. In this section, however, I will
highlight some of the strategies or salient aspects of OAPs by which presenters were able to generate interests and involvement in the audience as well as to make their OAPs memorable.

In the pilot study that I had conducted prior to this study (see 2.3.3), there was a concern among some students as well as the instructors that too many OAPs merely described what the article said. In the interviews and questionnaires, some students expressed their strong feeling that people were spending too much time on summarizing the article and as a result making their OAPs boring or not intellectually stimulating. An OAP with a long summary with a lot of details tended to be redundant and tiresome since everybody had already read the presented article. In fact, being aware of this problem, Dr. Cory changed the format of the OAP in TESL 570 so that the audience would hear about something new in student OAPs (see 5.2.1). Also in the interviews and questionnaires conducted for the present study, students mentioned that a good OAP was one that did not merely reiterate what the article was about but presented a critical analysis of the article and stimulated thoughts and discussion from the audience.

One way to make a presentation interesting and meaningful is to provide relevant information. According to Grice (1975, 1978, cited in Levinson, 1983), making one's contributions relevant is an important factor for the efficient and effective use of language in conversation.\(^6\) In OAPs presenters often made personal connections to what they

---

\(^6\) In the field of pragmatics Grice (1975, 1978) has specified maxims of conversation underlying the efficient use of language in conversation: the co-operative principle, maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner. In short, these maxims suggest that in order to converse efficiently and effectively participants should speak sincerely with relevance and clarity, while providing an appropriate amount of information.
were presenting or attempted to make their OAPs relevant to the audience’s life. Lynn’s OAP was full of such attempts as being illustrated in the following excerpt. In fact, the discourse of her OAP contained the largest number of “I + verb” construction among the 25 OAPs, which to some extent indicated the great amount of personal links she made in her OAP. The article she presented was on communicative language teaching:

Example 15 (TESL 520)

(L=Lynn)

L: Uhm this article for me was really really interesting and I asked right as soon as I saw it if I could present this. Because where I work this has a lot of relevance - because the school is a language school for international students and basically we have to use the communicative language approach. It's not even uhm a choice it’s something that we have to do. . . . But you know - according to this article (0.3) you know there’s still that - you know - sort of ongoing issue - how much should we be focusing on grammar, and how much we should be focusing on communication. And for me that's an absolute on-going conflict because I really feel - uhm - there’s a place for both? But I’m not sure what the balance is. So depending on the article that I read (0.4) I maybe sway this way and one time I sway another way.

As we can see in the above excerpt, Lynn repeatedly expressed her active and immediate response to the article in relation to her current work situation. Her interest and enthusiasm was well manifested in the very beginning of the excerpt where she repeated the word really with emphasis and also expressed a sense of immediacy by mentioning that she had wanted to choose the article right as soon as she saw it. She then explicitly mentioned that the article had a lot of relevance to her current teaching because the institution required her to use communicative language teaching. Further, she talked about the ongoing issue (i.e., how much grammar and how much communication) discussed in the article which for her was an absolute on-going conflict. Right after this excerpt she
made another connection between the article and her own teaching experience by providing a personal anecdote about her student. Thus, not only by demonstrating that the article had a lot of relevance to her teaching life, but also providing a sense of conflict, Lynn seemed to be able to engage the audience and generate interest among them.

Throughout her OAP she used this strategy of applying her own experiences to the analysis of the article and made her OAP extremely relevant to herself as well as the audience who might have had similar experiences. Some of the discussion questions she had prepared for the class were also derived from her own teaching experiences.7

Examples 16 and 17 show how presenters attempted to engage the audience by asking questions directly related to the audience's life or experiences. This was a common strategy used in the discussion phase of an OAP in particular:

Example 16 (TESL 520)

(M=May)

M: Then my last question is - is related to your teaching. How will this article affect your teaching tomorrow. So like - we already finished more than a half of this term and we have talked about - theories and studies - which related to your teaching. Will they make any difference with your teaching? And as an ESL teacher - how can you help those students who have a family problem. Especially the generation conflict between parents and uh (0.5) children (0.5) without interfering with the privacy.

7 One question she had prepared was about how to group ESL students in a classroom with different cultural backgrounds and expectations. Instead of asking in an abstract way how to group such students, she presented the configuration of the students whom she actually had taught before and had a trouble with, and asked the class to discuss effective ways of grouping them. Dr. Frost mentioned that she thought Lynn’s OAP was very effective in terms of involving the audience since they could also relate to the conflict she was experiencing in her real life and see how important it was for her to find solutions to that problem.
In the above excerpt May, the presenter, not only attempted to directly relate the article to the audience’s teaching life, but also added the sense of immediacy and reality by asking them if the article would affect their teaching tomorrow.

Example 17 is an excerpt from Tina’s OAP where she asked the class to discuss their own experiences of using drama in their classroom:

Example 17 (TESL 570)

(T=Tina, I=instructor, A=audience, S=student in the audience)

T: I’m gonna take a slightly different approach - to this presentation than other people have. I’d like you to get into groups in the beginning. Uh:m I’d like you to pose yourself a couple of questions before we get into the article. Uh:m [if you can just

I: [We don’t allow innovations.

A: ((laughs))

S1: Highly irregular.

I: [Highly irregular

T: Uh:m - I guess into the three groups or something like that. And there are three questions I want you to ask yourselves. And one is - do you use drama in - your ESL classrooms, (0.5) how do you use it and why do you use it. Okay? And if you don’t - would you. And under what situations. Okay. Now if someone can scribble down - the: the answers to that and then I’ll get into my presentation and then I’ll kind of ground out why I asked you that at the end.

((small group discussion))

T: Okay let’s stop here. Now the reason I asked you to write this down is that I’d like you to remember what you used it for because I think (0.6) this is going to be kind of a different model here. So I’d like to contrast the two. Okay, great.

Thus, by letting the audience first discuss their own experiences in small groups, Tina attempted to allow them relate better to the article which she was going to present.
Example 17 also illustrates another element which helped engage the audience, novelty. Tina did not follow the standard format of OAPs but took a *slightly different approach* by adding a small group discussion at the very beginning, which had never been done before.\(^8\) Furthermore, she did not change the standard format just for the sake of changing it, but had a legitimate purpose (i.e., relating the audience to the article). It was interesting how Mark, two weeks later, used a similar strategy, acknowledging that he was following what Tina had done. The following is an excerpt from Mark’s OAP where he explained the discourse completion task which he had prepared for the audience to do in the beginning of his OAP:

**Example 18 (TESL 570)**

(M=Mark, A=audience)

M: Okay. So uhm - what I did uhm - I made a little quiz.

A: Oh. Ooo.

M: And I’m gonna do what Tina did the other day. I’m - it uhm - we do uhm - before the: uh - the - the data, (0.6) so you won’t be - it’s on the third page uhm - it’s kind of quick. So maybe it might not be - as accurate as it should be but - uhm - I just want to take - two minutes now and go down quickly and see if there is any difference between your (0.5) in which of these situations you’d apologize and and see uhm - see if there’s any difference between - uh: males and females and - and your attitude toward males and females so - just go down that quickly and see if - if you apologize or - say nothing.

Providing a small task in the beginning of an OAP was also something new and the task Mark gave to the audience generated a lot of input from them in the discussion. As the above excerpt (especially in italics) suggest, however, Mark did not appear as confident

---

\(^8\) Another example of this kind of innovation was Brian’s OAP (see Examples 9 and 10 in 6.1.1) where he used scissors and glue.
as Tina in Example 17 in explaining the extra task he was adding to his OAP. According to Mark, although he did not prepare the task as much as he would have wanted to, it was still his strategy of engaging the audience. The following is an excerpt from the interview:

(M=Mark, N=researcher)
N: Okay. So why did you use the discourse completion task in the beginning?

M: Yes, because I knew I didn’t have much to say on the topic. There wasn’t that much in the thing and so I thought to kill the time I’d put in some extra activities and stuff. And so it gives people something to do. They’re not just looking at me talking, rambling on. I kind of have enjoyed classes where we do a little activity and then we talk and we do group discussions and stuff. So it makes things a little more... it breaks things up a bit.

In addition to an organizational innovation, novelty seemed to play a role in Nancy’s OAP in terms of content. As I mentioned earlier (see Examples 1 and 2 in 6.1.1) she emphasized that the article she was presenting dealt with a topic which was fairly new to the field. In her OAP, she said:

Example 19 (TESL 570)

(N=Nancy)
N: Uh: (0.5) and in general - uh: (1.0) the research - in this areas - just - sort of - starting to - come together - in reading journals and learning disability journals and little bits of things happening all over it doesn’t seem to be really coherent - movement uh: towards looking at language learning disabilities yet. So - uh: - that is - starting to be more and more things popping up. And some of the stuff like this article like Richard Sparks seems to be - one of the guys - to (0.6) get some of the stuff - rolling.

All the expressions in italics in the above excerpts seemed to emphasize the novelty of the presented topic and thus seemed to attract attention among the audience.

Another important factor which seemed to engage or even energize the audience was a sense of conflict or issue brought up in an OAP. In Example 15 above, Lynn
communicated with enthusiasm and the sense of immediacy that what she was talking
about was a real issue or a conflict that she was experiencing in her teaching life.

Similarly, in Example 20 Susan mentioned an issue which everyone in the class could
relate to:

Example 20 (TESL 520)

(S=Susan)

S: Uhm [an English-only policy] is part of conventional wisdom - something that we
don't question - which is very relevant to me. I compared it to my teaching
experience in Korea and how at the school we had an English-only policy that we
didn't question - where teachers would often fine students for speaking in Korean
this kind of thing. And I'm sure a lot of you have - you know they probably do
that at a number of the - the institutes. And you know - this is - she's - referring -
mostly to the immigrant issue in ESL classes - not EFL - but I thought that we
could all sort of relate it to our own teaching experiences. So it's part of a:
conventional wisdom and practice but it starts to reinforce inequalities in society
and to restrict access to better paying jobs, and the author argues against the
policy - and argues for the use of native language and bilingual instructors in the
ESL classroom.

By repeating that English-only policy was a part of conventional wisdom, something that
people didn't question, Susan in fact seemed to emphasize that it was an issue which
needed to be questioned. In addition, she made a personal link to this issue by referring to
her own experience and also attempted to relate it to the audience's experiences.

Tina's second OAP performed in TESL 570 was a memorable one since it
involved a strong sense of conflict as well as tension between Tina and the audience. It
was probably one of the most engaging and emotionally charged OAPs that I had
observed in both courses. The following excerpt is from the critique phase of her OAP
where she questioned the validity of diary studies:
The above excerpt shows how strongly she felt against the subjectivities or bias that she found in diary studies and how overtly she was expressing such feeling. The repetition of the words such as *subjectivity* and *distortion* as well as the use of adjectives such as *high* and *full* communicated a strong sense of conflict or issues and inevitably engaged the audience. In fact, after the above excerpt, her viewpoint or critique of diary studies was challenged by the audience and they had a heated discussion as illustrated in the following example. They were discussing the validity of a diary study where the author of a diary (then a good student) blamed her teacher for her lack of success in learning a second language. Basically, Tina was questioning the validity of the diary as data for research since she thought that it might include a distortion of "facts" due to the author's subjectivity, while the audience argued that the author's viewpoints would be just valid as data and that whether they were "true" or not did not matter:

Example 22 (TESL 570)

(T=Tina, I=instructor, S=student in the audience, Ss=more than one students)

T: (xxx) in direct response to what you were saying (0.8) and on one level - it doesn’t matter at all. *But* if we are being asked as educators to help reduce anxiety to
increase uhm achievement. But I think we really kind of have to have an idea (0.7) of what is actually going on. And I remember in my high school days - I think every year it gets less and less but - we would just concoct these images of our teachers that were totally false.

Ss: [((a lot of students talking at the same time))]

S1: [But - but - they were real to you =

I: = Right.

S1: But that’s what you are [x] coming into the classroom.

T: [Would that - would that behavior of that teacher - if that - teacher had changed - would that have changed (0.5) how - I or other people learned.

S2: But does that matter?

Ss: ((some students talking at the same time))

T: But would it not help to be able to calculate what is true and - what is invented in order to help you analyze what is actually going on?

I: ((smiling)) That’s the question. What is not invented. Everything is an invention well in a way.

T: It’s obviously - open to debate and I’ve lost.

Ss: [((laughs)) ((a lot of students talking at the same time))]

I: [No no no. It’s [just (xxx)

S2: [No it’s interesting.

T: I think - I don’t quite agree. I’m still having trouble swallowing that. I think there are (0.6) being able - like (0.6) if people - distort something to help themselves - we should know that it’s distortion.

As is shown in the above excerpt, tension was built up between Tina and her audience since both sides quite persistently attempted to convince each other. This was clearly
manifested linguistically by the repetition of *but* in the interaction as well as the great number of overlaps and simultaneous speech found in the transcription. It was also an emotionally charged OAP as represented by Tīna’s utterance, *I’ve lost*, as well as by a lot of hand gestures and eye-contact made by the speakers. The end of the above excerpt shows that Tīna was still not convinced by the audience after the interaction and the discussion continued for a while.

In the interview, Tīna reflected on her OAP and explained what she thought had happened:

(T=Tina, N=researcher)

N: First of all, could you tell me how your presentation went? Your impressions.

T: Okay. My impression was that this presentation did not go well at all. I didn’t perceive people were following me and I think I kind of know why. . . . It’s that very few people had read the article. I made the decision based on, last time when a student did his presentation on an article we had all read, and he just repeated it, and my attitude was, well, okay, I know he is doing what we are supposed to be doing, but God, you know, this is boring. So I thought I’m doing an article that everybody was supposed to have read, so just start with that premise and move on. But unfortunately, nobody had read it. . . . So I think that’s what happened. That put me in a awkward position. . . . And the second reason why is I took a stance which, I’m a believer in stating your biases, I don’t think you should cover things up and there are some issues that I was having trouble fighting with within the article. I brought them up and I felt that a few people who had read the article I believed were very much on the opposite stance. So it was a kind of a difficult situation to maneuver around perhaps because I’m head-strong I wanted to make sure that people understood, at least understood my opinion, doesn’t mean they have to agree with me, and I wanted to make sure that my stance was clear. I don’t think it was resolvable.

Thus, Tīna intentionally took the approach (i.e., stating her stance explicitly) not to make her OAP *boring*. She said that she had *dared to go beyond* in order to learn more. Her
strategy did seem to work since it evoked a stimulating discussion as described in the above examples.9

Another way to engage the audience was to generate or invite a lot of input from the audience by taking a role of a facilitator or by showing one’s lack of knowledge (I have already provided some examples of this strategy, Examples 12 and 13 in 6.1.1). Eric generated a lot of input from the audience by asking them for opinions, often directly calling on some of the students (the audience’s responses are not included in the excerpt):

**Example 23 (TESL 520)**

(E=Eric, A=audience)

E: A couple of questions I’ve got are - uh: *your impressions* of the research methodology. . . . Uh: I’m just wondering what your impressions were about first of all abandoning a research methodology (xx) the study - a:nd *what you felt about it*. What they did I guess was - it looks as though they followed people around and interviewed them - got to know about - they didn’t really approach it from any kind of a - you know quantitative - uh: analytical point of view. *I’m wondering if you felt* that was a - an appropriate way of of - doing this kind of research. (1.6) *Uh maybe Brian - if you can start.*

A: ((laughs))

Presenters’ use of resources other than the article and mandatory handout was another strategy to engage the audience. For example, Jeff, Mark, and Eric showed a video clip which they thought would provide a useful background information to the article. Tomo showed on the OHP some examples of English sentences that he had chosen from the day’s newspaper headings. As I described earlier, May read a passage

---

9 Dr. Cory mentioned at the end of her OAP that Tina had raised some interesting and important points which the class should discuss further later in the course. According to Tina, some students also told her at the end of her OAP that they had enjoyed her OAP and their discussion very much. In spite of these compliments, Tina’s initial perception was that her OAP did not go well as she said in the above excerpt. However, after watching the video of her OAP later at home, she told me that it did not look as bad as she thought it would be and that she had a better understanding of why the discussion went in the way it did.
from a novel and Brian brought some scissors and stick glues. Kim, Daniel, and Esther used an OHP effectively by showing examples and explaining charts and tables provided in the presented article.\(^\text{10}\)

In summary, I have illustrated some of the strategies which presenters used in order to engage the audience and make their OAPs interesting, stimulating, or memorable. Examples of these strategies were: (1) making personal connections to the article or relating it to the audience, (2) communicating a sense of novelty, immediacy, and conflicts, (3) taking a facilitator role and generating input from the audience, and (4) using support items or other resources. It should be noted that these strategies were not mutually exclusive but often overlapped. For example, May’s use of a support item, a passage from a book, was her way of linking the article to one’s life, while at the same time speaking about an issue or a conflict. It also conveyed a sense of novelty since nobody had done it before.\(^\text{11}\)

6.2 OAPs as Social Construction

So far in this chapter, I have discussed the performance of OAPs mainly from a presenters’ point of view in terms of their epistemic stance and strategies to engage the audience. The audience in OAPs, however, were by no means passive listeners but active participants who co-constructed an OAP. For example, the epistemic stance expressed by presenters had to be endorsed by the audience for presenters to maintain it. Also, the

\(^{10}\) The use of these other resources also contributed to the establishment of credibility on the part of the presenter.

\(^{11}\) According to May, it was also her strategy of calming herself down at the beginning of her OAP. She mentioned in the interview that her husband had suggested her to begin an OAP with something she liked or felt comfortable with in order to relieve nervousness.
need for the audience’s active involvement in OAPs was evident in presenters’ efforts in using various strategies to engage them. In this section, I will highlight the social aspects of OAPs by examining how different participants contributed to the social construction of OAPs.

6.2.1 Multiple Voices in OAPs

As I have described earlier, there were a number of participation roles in OAPs which were a part of the task format: presenter, backup, instructor, and audience (see 5.3 for the description of these roles). Individual participants in an OAP therefore had a voice derived from these assigned roles. In addition, they represented multiple voices as a teacher, an administrator, a second language learner, a researcher, a graduate student, a professor, an international student, or even a working parent. Further, within each of these categories, there were sub-categories such as a teacher at a public elementary school, high school, or college, a private English language school, a French immersion school, or a school overseas. Depending on the topic of discussion, an individual might offer an opinion as an experienced high school teacher at one point and as a novice graduate student at another. An instructor might represent a voice as an experienced researcher at one point and as a second language learner herself at another point. In addition, the basis for discussion was a research article which represented a voice of an author as well as multiple voices of learners, teachers, and researchers. Thus, an OAP, seemingly performed by a single presenter in fact involved multiple roles, voices and perspectives.
Example 24 illustrates how participants represented different voices and offered different perspectives in a discussion part of an OAP. It is an excerpt from Lynn’s OAP where they were discussing error correction in second language teaching:

**Example 24 (TESL 520)**
(Turns are numbered for the purpose of explanation.)

(R=Robert, I=instructor, M=Mark, L=Lynn, J=Jeff)

1-R: I’m sure most of us who teach high school you do a lot of work on making speeches and making presentations because that’s what students have to do to be successful...

2-I: [Yeah. Yes.

3-M: But even if the student is corrected - does that mean that he can use that in a natural conversation afterwards? Because I remember being corrected on phonetics and the teacher said oh - you know - in class you are doing all right and that’s great - but as soon as you get into a natural (0.3) [conversation - it just goes out of the window.

((laughs))

4-L: ((Looking at Mark)) [I know. I know. Yeah.

5-I: [But once they (xx) if you can choose yourself - what - you notice - to be wrong - then that’s like the prime thing to focus on the correction...

6-L: I mean - I know uhm Rebecca Oxford does a lot of writing on learning strategies. She would say - uhm - every student should have a little notebook that’s completely separate from anything else - and so when there is something that they are working on - they write it down. So every time they discuss something - they’re always focusing on that?

7-I: Keepin- keeping their own journal.

8-L: Yeah. But I- I mean that’s a huge problem. Because I’ve seen that. I mean I stood here ((= in the front)) - corrected students and they go yeah yeah yeah and then in the next sentence - it’s like oh no. Yeah.

((laughs))
9-M: It makes sense if they are at that stage - but how do they get to that stage where they recognize that kind of things.

10-I: Well - you know - when you hear (0.5) I- I think that’s why it’s good to do afterwards? Because I know - when I’m trying to struggle in a foreign language - at the time I am so busy trying to focus on what it is I’m saying I haven’t got the monitor going. But I know that if I get to listen to a tape of that afterwards or see the video - . . . I can stop the tape and say - okay - I know there’s something wrong there - help me - you know, that’s why - the reflective - issue.

11-J: It’s presuming a certain level of motivation. [Not always the (xxx)

12-I: [Yes. Yeah. But maybe these people who are paying a lot of money to go to a private school and who are older (0.4) I think maybe in high school - the circumstances are not the same =

13-L: = That’s what you are saying ((looking at Robert) =

14-R: = Yeah. I’m saying a lot of research in ESL seems to be geared toward adult ESL - which is an entirely different package from teaching secondary - or even teaching elementary.

15-L: Yeah. That’s right.

In the above excerpt, Robert first offered a comment which seemed to derive from his own experience as a secondary school teacher. Then in the third turn Mark questioned the effectiveness of error correction based on his experience as a L2 learner, which was provided positive feedback by Lynn, the presenter. Further in turn 6, making a link between the instructor’s comment in turn 5 and the issue of learning strategies, Lynn represented a voice of a researcher, Rebecca Oxford, who she knew had written a lot on this issue. This comment of Lynn also demonstrated her background knowledge and expertise which seemed to be sustained to some extent by the following turn by the instructor. In turn 8, Lynn went back to Mark’s question and offered her experience as a teacher, and Mark in the next turn asked another question. Then, the instructor in turn 10
provided a perspective of a L2 learner based on her own experience of learning a foreign language, and supported her point that learners would benefit from listening to their utterances later. In the following turn (turn 11), Jeff pointed out that the strategy presupposed a certain level of motivation. Even though Jeff didn’t have a chance to elaborate on his point, the following turns by the instructor and Brian suggested that they understood that Jeff was offering a perspective of a high school teacher whose students might not necessarily have high motivation in learning a language.\(^{12}\)

Thus, even within the short segment of OAP interaction illustrated above, different participants offered comments and opinions from a variety of perspectives, representing multiple voices. In addition, comments and opinions were responded to, evaluated, or expanded, and constructed a dynamic interaction among the participants.

### 6.2.2 Constitution of Expert-Novice

The dichotomy between expert and novice is a key metaphorical concept applied in many sociocultural theories of learning that I have reviewed in Chapter 2. Language socialization theory (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986a, 1986b) considers that learning (language learning as well as sociocultural learning) occurs through socially and culturally organized interactions between caregivers (or “experts”) and children (or “novices”). Many models of apprenticeship or situated learning (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1989; Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978) are also based on the expert-novice distinction and interaction. These theories view learning and socialization as a bidirectional process.

\(^{12}\) Jeff was currently teaching at a high school and often offered comments from a secondary school teacher’s perspective, which was probably why his comment seemed immediately associated with the situation in high school.
where experts and novices impact each other, instead of a unidirectional one where experts simply transmit knowledge and skills to novices (e.g., Lave & Wenger. 1989; Ochs, 1988; Rogoff, 1990). Jacoby and Gonzales (1991) further argued that the constitution of expert-novice in dynamic interaction was a “complicated, shifting, moment-by-moment reconstruction of Self and Other” (p. 149).

This perspective as well as findings offered by Jacoby and Gonzales (1991) is of particular relevance to the present study since they studied a similar context of adult teamwork, group meetings of a university physics team, in which “individual members [brought] their particular knowledge, perspectives, experiences, and expertises to the collaborative effort of the team as a whole” (p. 174). As I have illustrated above (e.g., Example 24), participants of OAPs also shared multiple perspectives, experiences, and expertise and collaboratively constructed a dynamic discussion. As Jacoby and Gonzales (1991) demonstrated, expert-novice relations in such a context were not static but fluid, and constructed as the interaction unfolded.

The following two examples are excerpts from Emi’s OAP where they discussed bilingual education and immersion programs. As I illustrated earlier, Emi in general took a role of a relative novice since she felt that she had less background knowledge on the local situations of bilingual education than the other students (see Example 12). However, if we take a closer look at the following segments of interaction, Emi was not always

---

13 Jacoby and Gonzales (1991) demonstrated through a conversational analysis of these meetings that the constitution of expert-novice relations was interactionally achieved in the course of unfolding talk. They showed that at times the constitution of expert-novice was consistent with the institutional hierarchical ranking of participants (e.g., principal investigator, professor, post-doctoral fellow, doctoral student), while at other times it was not. Although my analysis of OAP discourse here was not as detailed as their
constituted as a novice, nor the other participants as experts. By the same token, the instructor, who was the “expert” according to her institutional role and status, was not always constituted as the person who “knew the best,” depending on the local topic of the moment’s interaction. Example 25 illustrates how different participants were constituted on a moment-by-moment basis as relative experts or a good knowledge source, or relative novices:

Example 25 (TESL 520)
(Turns are numbered for the purpose of explanation.)

(E=Emi, R=Robert, I=Instructor, M=May, Er=Eric, L=Lynn)

1-E: I don’t have background so I’m just wondering - ((speaking very softly)) (xxx) minority students? Here because they don’t have - I don’t know if they have any - their first language instruction?

2-R: Depends on [nationality.

3-I: [Up to school.

4-I: But you know - in City A\textsuperscript{14} - they’ve just started the first Mandarin immersion program - in elementary school. It started September 1994.

5-M: I phoned the School Board and found out how many, - there’s only one elementary school now, but they can’t release the information because - at the moment - they are not allowed to. And they are working on the guideline which could be implemented from 1997.

6-I: And Town B - I believe - have a plan to try to have uhm - immersion in Punjabi because they have a very large - Punjabi speaking population. ((Looking at Robert)) Is that uhm - do you teach in Town B?

7-R: Yeah.

8-I: Do you know - something about that?

\textsuperscript{14} Names of the actual cities or towns are replaced by symbols for ethical considerations.
9-R:  No. I don't - [no]

10-I:  [So they are - in fact - there are places that are - uhm - thinking of implementing - heritage language immersion programs - but in - not all languages. One classroom in Mandarin and one in Punjabi and two school districts and it's very limited.

11-R:  I think they are (0.6) also looking at the option (xxx) - they are talking about the fact that the students - who have their L1 - the language they wanted to use - do better academically. Also they are looking at the situation we have kindergartens we have - 30% of kindergarten speaks Punjabi. It makes sense to have a kindergarten in Punjabi rather than to have all the Punjabi students working in English.

12-L:  ((Looking at the instructor)) I was gonna ask like the - with the Chinese program - do you find that it's mostly - Canadian-born Chinese?

13-I:  I don't know ((looks at May)) May, do you know how many students are in it, and what =

14-M:  = In - in that immersion school, I don't know. But I know they have uh: seven or eight high schools which offer Mandarin as credit courses. And I know most of the students are students - often new Chinese immigrants.

In the first turn, Emi seemed to constitute herself as a relative novice by mentioning that she did not have background knowledge. At the same time she was nominating a new topic, first language instruction in bilingual education, which seemed to be accepted as a worthwhile theme for discussion, and further discussed and expanded in the following interaction. In turn 5, May joined in the discussion and demonstrated her expertise in the topic by offering some background information. In the following turns (6-11), Robert was constituted as a relative expert or a knowledge source about Town B since he was a teacher in Town B. Lynn in turn 12 asked a question to the instructor who seemed to be considered as the knowledge source by Lynn (because she addressed the question
specifically to the instructor by looking at her). But the instructor referred the question
to May (turn 13) who in an earlier turn (turn 5) had demonstrated her expertise on the
same topic, Chinese immersions.

Example 26 is another excerpt from Emi’s OAP which illustrated how
participants sometimes seemed to fight or struggle for expertise as the interaction
unfolded. In the excerpt they were talking about French immersion programs and French
education in Canada:

Example 26 (TESL 520)
(Turns are numbered for the purpose of explanation.)

(E=Eric, L=Lynn, T=Tina, I=instructor)

1-E: Well - can I sort of start talking about - a lot of these subjects - because I hear this
you know - every Wednesday for two hours about French immersion.15

((laughs))

2-E: It’s kind of interesting because there is a - difference in perspective between the
Quebecois and the Anglophones here. A lot of parents here - uhm - see it’s a good
thing cognitively for the kids - good - in terms of opening awareness to other
cultures . . . but the people in Quebec - according to French immersion teachers
are sort of maybe apathetic about the whole concept of bilingualism?

3-L: See I ca- I came from Ontario - and I think the attitudes are quite different than
here because - in Ontario there’s a real need - for French - for a lot of different
jobs . . . And uhm (1.6) so I - I think in Ontario anyway - a lot of parents put
their kids in French immersion because they felt that they were really
disadvantaged. And I felt that too . . . I felt really really disadvantaged.

4-E: Kind of a special case though - Ottawa - really isn’t =

5-L: = Well Ottawa - but even in Toronto - anywhere. I mean my sister works for the
government in Toronto - and she works for the airport - and she had to get a
certain level of French in order to maintain her job. . . .

15 Prior to this utterance Eric mentioned that he was taking another course with five or six French
immersion teachers and was able to hear their perspectives every week in class.
6-T: I think there are a couple of things that we really have to keep in mind here. One is the environment. For example Ottawa model too - I agree completely versus here it's a different environment. Now people start putting - English-French situation and parallel it with English-Mandarin or English-Cantonese - I think we are really really missing a boat - I think they are entirely different issues.

7-E: [Well a- a- I really agree with you - totally. But what I'm saying is that it's kind of ironic that - I mean - everybody - every French teacher in my other class - there's about ten of them - agree one hundred percent - that their experience going to Quebec and taking classes to Quebec and that - that everybody was apathetic to the fact that Anglophones are learning French... [this is not - this is not- my opinion.

8-T: [I disagree. I disagree. There might be something between east and west here =

9-E: = I'm not - [this is not my opinion. I'm just saying (xxx)

10-T: [There might be something (x) ((talking loudly))... there might be a lot of different factors going on here. I think we have to look - underneath before we come out with these blank statements like Quebec doesn't care.

11-E: Well - you know - I'm not- I'm not [saying I'm not saying that.

12-T: [I'm not sure where they're coming from.

13-E: Every- every one of these French immersion teachers there's ten of them the- they said the same thing... they are saying that- that Quebecois in general - this is a blanket statement - but in general - there's- there's quite a bit of apathy towards the whole concept of bilingualism. It's it's not my opinion [though I mean just (xxx)

14-I: [What about similarities between (0.5) languages... French immersion is popular - because it's French but also it's a language that that people can think young children could handle. But - what about five - six - seven year old schooling in - to - Mandarin. Or in - to - Japanese where you've got a completely different uhm language system. So - on a non-political level - just on a straight sort of linguistic level, (1.4) will other language programs ever be as popular as French immersion has been.

In the above excerpt, Eric represented the voice of French immersion teachers and explained how people in Quebec seemed to be apathetic about the concept of
bilingualism. Responding to this perspective, Lynn in turn 3 argued, based on her own experience, that in Ontario there was a real need for bilingual education. Then in turn 4 Eric considered the example offered by Lynn as an exceptional case, but was interrupted by Lynn who supported her argument with another personal experience. After Tina joined in the discussion in turn 6, she and Eric engaged in a charged discussion. The speakers' use of repetitions and certain modifiers (e.g., absolutely, entirely, really, totally, every, one hundred percent) seemed to suggest that they were to some extent struggling for their credibility on a moment-by-moment basis.

In summary, as was illustrated in the above two examples, the expert-novice distinction in OAPs was not always apparent and static, but complicated and fluid. Unlike the child-caregiver or apprentice-master interaction where the distinction was obvious and usually static (a lot of sociocultural literature is based on such interactions, see Chapter 2), an OAP was constructed by many relative experts and relative novices with various knowledge, experiences, expertise, and perspectives. Furthermore, these relative experts and novices were constituted on a moment-by-moment basis in an unfolding interaction as participants exchanged opinions, raised questions, and agreed or disagreed with each other on different topics. Thus, in the case of OAPs, it may be more appropriate to consider the expert-novice distinction as the opposite ends of a continuum than as a simple dichotomy.

6.2.3 Cognitive Bridges: Making New Connections

So far in this section I have discussed how participants with various knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and expertise, collaboratively constructed an OAP, while
constituting and reconstituting expert-novice relations on a moment-by-moment basis in an unfolding interaction. Now, what did they learn from doing this? Every OAP started from a single academic paper, either a journal article or a book chapter, but where did they get to from there?

Rogoff (1990) has discussed how guided participation provides bridges between familiar skills or information and those needed to solve new problems. It has been argued that "[i]n the context of communication, caregivers and children make connections between what the children already know and what they must learn to handle a new situation” (p. 66). Although the child-caregiver communication studied by Rogoff cannot simply be paralleled with the highly academic communication occurred in graduate courses, the discourse of OAPs nonetheless seemed to provide many examples where participants made collaborative efforts to go deeply into or beyond the article, make new connections, and stretch their understandings.

The following excerpt is one of the examples when participants went deeply into the presented article and deconstructed it by discussing possibilities of alternative interpretations or explanations of the phenomena described in the article. It is an excerpt from Steve's OAP where he presented a case study of an adult ESL speaker, Wes, whose grammar did not improve over the course of his stay in Hawaii:

---

16 Rogoff (1990) has illustrated how caregivers help children make new connections by specifying how the new situation resembles the old. Caregivers also build bridges that aid children in understanding how to act in new situations by providing emotional cues about the nature of the situations, nonverbal models of how to behave, verbal and nonverbal interpretations of behavior and events, and verbal labels that classify objects and events (p. 65-85).
Example 27 (TESL 570)

(S=Steve, T=Tina, I=instructor)

S: Being a well-to-do minor celebrity I assume by descriptions what Wes is like uh: from what Schmidt says - improving his language would probably not improve his - his life his income his prestige and in fact it might be opposite. So therefore Wes' motivation might be overstated. Maybe Wes likes being quirky or eccentric. Uhm - There is no evidence of any real unhappiness which is a direct result of Wes' poor grammar. . . . Schmidt says he needs more grammar. He needs more English. (1.2) Not really. Maybe. Uh: also - speaking funny English might add to the mystique of his professional image of an artist - as Tina was talking about. Do you want to say something?

T: Yeah. Uh: actually if you are in environments - if you are in the art or the entertainment industry - uh: you have this exclusive image. (xxx). But this fellow is a successful artist within that community. Good English actually may take away from his success. He can't have this exclusive image anymore. So: I think (1.2) Schmidt may have missed a major major element here. This is probably - a strategy for his artistic success =

I: = It's his signature.

T: Exactly.

In the above excerpt Steve was providing his critique of the article by suggesting a possible alternative explanation about why Wes did not improve his grammar. He came up with the point by making a connection between Wes's carrier and motivation to improve his English. Tina further elaborated on Steve's hypothesis, which was then responded to with positive feedback from the instructor.

The next example shows how in other cases participants went beyond the article and made new connections between the situation or issues discussed in the presented article and other relevant situations or issues. Examples 28 is an excerpt from Susan's OAP where she presented an ethnographic study which compared ESL and mainstream classrooms as contrasting learning environments for ESL students:
Example 28 (TESL 570)

(S=Susan, I=instructor, St=Steve)

S: And also uhm she (= the author of the article)) was putting a lot of emphasis on
the the mainstream teacher - but uhm how might non-ESL students help
accommodate L2 learners in mainstream classes . . . . What about the idea of peer
tutoring. Because there was sort of a problem of communication between the the
uhm ESL students and non-ESL students . . . . so perhaps peer tutoring or
integrating uh ethnic cultural content into the class could help . . . . And would
content-based ESL programs allow L2 learners to be on a equal footing with
native speakers . . . . And and finally I was thinking of what was happening in
England uh: and the trend toward mainstreaming . . . in England all ESL has been
phased out. What are the larger implications regarding mainstreaming. So I was
just trying to think of some other options.

I: I think Alberta has too.

S: Have they, have they mainstreamed? =

I: = Yes they’ve phased out ESL.

S: Oh I didn’t know that. Anyone has any comments or questions or

St: This would seem to lend support for the US model. This article would. Yeah - in
comparison with the - we were talking about the last night’s reading =

S: = Right. Right. Yeah =

St: = readings for Dr. Frost. We’re talking about the trends as you mentioned in
England towards mainstreaming ESL students versus the - American model which
is more of uh =

S: = Segre[gation

St: [Segregation.

S: Yeah. Although she doesn’t use that term in this article cause it sounds kind of
sounds like a negative - term and I think that she’s quite positive about ESL.

In the first turn Susan suggested some of the alternative ways to deal with the problem
described in the article: peer tutoring, the integration of ethnic cultural content into the
mainstream class, and content-based ESL programs. These ideas were not mentioned in
the article but the connections made by Susan. She also compared the situation described
in the article (i.e., a case in the United States) with that of England, which then brought up
another case of Alberta, Canada. Responding to Susan’s comment about the British case,
Steve mentioned the readings they had had in another course (TESL 520) the day before.
Thus, in this particular example students were making a bridge between the two courses
they were taking at the same time.

Although students attempted to make new connections through participating in an
OAP, the instructors also guided them in this process. There were a lot of examples in
the discourse of OAPs where the instructors introduced new angles or different
perspectives to examine or evaluate an issue. They also attempted to make connections
between the issues described in the article and the students’ own experiences or
background knowledge. Example 29 is an excerpt from Tina’s OAP where they were
discussing the validity of diary studies. As I have described earlier, Tina and the audience
were experiencing a conflict on this issue (see Example 22). In the following excerpt, the
instructor attempted to make a cognitive bridge between the debate that they were having
about the validity of diary studies and the larger issue of two competing paradigms in
social science. She was also connecting this course (i.e., TESL 570) and another TESL
course which dealt with the qualitative/quantitative research distinction:

Example 29 (TESL 570)

(T=Tina, D=Daniel, I=instructor)

T: That’s a whole other can of worms [though.
D: [But it is related.

T: Oh they all are.

D: We’re we are talking about viewpoint and - directionality I think.

I: But th- the other thing - is uhm - it’s not to say y- you lost Tina uhm

T: I think I think it should (0.7) [I think we should think about it a little bit.

I: [It’s not a win loss thing. But it’s it’s sort of the paradigms in science and social science which have come to a point with this sort of - great chasm between qualitative and quantitative approaches and even widening in some spheres where you have the more phenomenological accounts where - it’s - you know very post-modern - everything is a story. My story is no better or worse it’s just different from yours. And in - I was in a Ph.D. defence uh:m a few month ago - and it was a sort of post-modern account of literacy in multicultural setting - uh: community school. And one of the committee members said (0.5) but is it right. This is your account and your story of what - in fact he was coming out of a very - uhm - sort of traditional positivist perspectives saying - well it’s a story is it true. Is it real is it all these things.

In Example 30 students were discussing the notion that it might be better to do an error correction in writing rather than in speaking. The instructor then provided a different perspective that in some cases it would be important to correct oral errors depending on the ESL student’s purpose:

Example 30 (TESL 520)

(R=Robert, L=Lynn, S=Susan, St=Steve, I=instructor)

R: The other point I guess we were talking about is that - is it really useful to do correction in speaking - because so many of our errors are allowed in speaking. Like I’ve heard professors sit here and say - I gonna do this - and you gonna do that - so all kinds of errors are permitted and =

L: = That’s more informal versus [formal.

S: [Yeah =
R: Yeah. But you see that quite often - uhm - it's the writing which is still traditionally where - where - all those errors count.

L: Yeah.

R: Especially in terms of (0.8)

St: Genre.

R: Yeah. Academic discourse and so forth. When somebody makes a grammatical error it's not gonna influence their =

I: But maybe this gets back to what we were talking about last week which is English for special purposes. Because if - I - want - English just to communicate and get by (0.4) that's - you know - then you can let all those - oral communication mistakes - go (0.4) unless - they make you unintelligible. So within that kind of special purposes it's going to be a range - too. But what if my purpose is to be a translator or what if my purpose was to become a high school teacher in City A - then - it would matter a lot what kind of feedback I brought about in oral language ability in English.

In Example 31 the instructor attempted to make connections between an issue described in the presented article and the students' own experiences. It is another excerpt from Susan's OAP where they discussed ESL versus mainstream classes:

Example 31 (TESL 570)

(I=instructor, K=Kim, J=Jim)

I: So - I have a question for teachers in this city. Is it the case that uhm you find in your schools that there's this stigmatizing of - ESL students feel that their program's stigmatized - uhm and that it's sort of like a second class equivalent of a mainstream and that they're trying to get out of there and into the mainstream as a result. Is that very common?

K: Yeah =

J: It is common - those schools that don't give letter grades for the ESL classes frequently the students perceive that there's no value in class cause it has no letter grade. And uh so: it's not easy to give a letter grade ((laughs)) to an ESL student.
I: And how much of that perception of being stigmatized results from the attitudes of the mainstream teachers - toward even ESL teachers - that they're second class - teachers within the school system.

K: We've actually in our school uhm - just uhm to sort of work with that - we don't call it ESL. We call it EAP ((English for Academic Purposes)) - for that specific reason - that - ESL is is stigmatized. So the EAP courses are supposed to - uhm support the academic content.

The final example comes from Mark's OAP where the instructor, in this case quite explicitly, guided the students' learning. By asking a display question, whether the presented study was an ethnography or not, she attempted to help students understand the concept of ethnography which many of them did not seem to fully grasp yet. In fact, she asked this question quite often and it seemed to be one of the points that she wanted to make sure that students understood:

Example 32 (TESL 570)
(Turns are numbered for the purpose of explanation)

(M=Mark, I=instructor, J=Jim, N=Nancy)
1-M: Any other comments? Anyone?
2-I: Yes? My question is - is it ethnography and if not why not.
3-M: ((Smiling)) Is it ethnography. I knew this was gonna come up.
((laughs))
4-I: Would you include this study in one of your five ethnographic studies, if you
5-M: I wouldn't.
6-I: You wouldn’t? Why not.
(2.0)
7-I: How is it different from Harklau - Canagarajah - uhm - some of those other ones.
8-J: It seems to lack detail. The the the (3.8) There's a general sense - of (2.0) Maybe an ethnographic approach but I don't think it's an ethnography - specifically.

9-I: What else. Other comment? Nancy?

10-N: It's just recording an interaction but we are not - getting a sense of context and - what are the details of an average [(xxx)

11-I: [It's not a thick description [in any - stretch of imagination =

12-J: = No. No.

13-I: And it's not uh: uhm - it's not contextualized in any way we are not given the examples we are not given the people's perspectives - it's quantified - not to say ethnography can't include quantification - but that's not the strength of ethnography. The strength is rather the - the narrative descriptions and interpretations and triangulation and so on. So it falls short on many counts. And I can't imagine how they could publish it as ethnography. Could be the old days. Before the ethnography police were asked to review this.

((laughs))

As we can see in the above excerpt, students were not providing answers to the instructor's question with much confidence (notice the pauses between turns 6 and 7 and within Jim's utterance in turn 8) and she was guiding them by contextualizing the original question. She first related the question to the course assignment that students were then working on (turn 4), and then in turn 7 provided concrete examples of ethnographic studies that they had discussed before in class.

In summary, although an OAP started from a single academic article which was normally presented by a single student, participants either went deeply into the article or beyond it and collaboratively made new connections or reached deeper understandings.

In this section (6.2) I have discussed the social and collaborative nature of an OAP by highlighting the following aspects, multiple voices, the constitution of expert-novice,
and cognitive bridges. Given that the individual participants of OAPs brought in unique combination of knowledge, experiences, and expertise, the interaction which occurred in OAPs was dynamic and often complicated, involving multiple voices and perspectives. The constitution of expert-novice was therefore a fluid process and individual participants’ status or identities as relative experts or novices were shifting as the interaction was unfolded. An OAP essentially was a collaborative effort of individual participants and provided opportunities for different perspectives and experiences to be shared and new connections and understandings to be achieved.

6.3 Summary

In Chapter 6, I have analyzed the actual performance of OAPs by using the transcripts of 25 videotaped OAPs as well as data from review and interview sessions. The OAP discourse was first analyzed in terms of the epistemic stance expressed by the presenter. Student presenters seemed to take a variety of epistemic stances and the stance taken by individual presenters often changed from an OAP to another or even within an OAP. In some cases presenters took a role of a relative expert by displaying their knowledge and academic skills and as a result establishing credibility as a presenter. In other cases presenters took a role of a relative novice and communicated their lack of knowledge or understanding. In addition to communicating their epistemic stance, presenters also used various strategies to engage their audience. Making personal connections, communicating a sense of novelty, immediacy, and conflicts, and using support items were some of the strategies which seemed to contribute to the audience’s engagement. Taking a facilitator role and inviting input from the audience was another
common strategy. The discourse of OAPs was also analyzed in terms of social construction. The social and collaborative nature of OAPs was highlighted by the aspects of OAPs such as the involvement of multiple voices, shifting constitution of expert-novice, and social construction of cognitive bridges.

Although I have included in this chapter some of the students' perceptions of their own OAP performance, in the next chapter, I will further summarize their perceptions of the OAP task in general.
Chapter 7

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF OAPS

7.1 Value of OAPs

In general students seemed to perceive that the OAP task was valuable in graduate seminars such as TESL 520 and TESL 570 for three main reasons. First of all, a lot of students mentioned that OAPs provided them with an important opportunity to analyze an academic article in depth. Second, the task was good practice for future academic presentations which students might have to perform. Third, it provided opportunities for them to share each other’s opinions and perspectives. They said in the interviews:

I think the presentation task is valuable because you’re forced to review an article and really analyzed it in depth. I read all the material for each class and I do what I’m supposed to do and I make notes, but I would never look at it with the same intensity I do as when I’m presenting. So I think that in that sense it’s beneficial for sure.

Well, given that ultimately we will have to present our own research I think it’s good practice. In fact this is only the second presentation I’ve done at this level, but I’m glad we’re doing another one in the class because I think that the experiences is really valuable. For me anyway the practice is valuable. It’s not the same as a teaching situation.

I think presentation is valuable because it gives us opportunities to share our ideas and opinions. I also learn a lot by seeing others present. If we only listened to the instructor’s lectures, we wouldn’t be able to get various perspectives. Personally, presentations give me a lot of pressure but I think they are valuable in this sense.

Some students, however, also acknowledged some negative aspects of OAPs. Some felt that there were simply too many OAPs performed in TESL 520. One student mentioned in the interview that he felt that an OAP was “a good strategy but overused in graduate courses tremendously.” One wrote in the questionnaire that she or he
“occasionally got tired of peer interaction in presentations” and wanted more lectures by
the instructor. Some expressed their concerns about the content of OAPs. One
commented in the questionnaire that OAPs were sometimes “frustrating” especially when
new material was presented by a student who lacked enough understanding of the
material. Another student said in the interview that an OAP “could be of little value in
terms of the actual content if the presenter did not plan it with care.” Six students
mentioned in the questionnaire that the quality of OAPs varied immensely: one wrote
that “some OAPs [were] concise and interesting but others just regurgitate[d] what the
article [was] about without critical thinking.” Similarly, another wrote, “I learned a lot
from some presentations but did not learn anything from others.” Interestingly, all these
negative aspects represented the audience’s point of view, not the presenter’s. In fact,
the majority of students in TESL 570 agreed in a debriefing session of this study that the
OAP task was more valuable to the presenter than to the audience.

7.2 Performance of OAPs

In this section, I will summarize students’ perceptions of OAPs as performance in
terms of the following three themes: (1) their affective state, (2) a peer group as the
audience, and (3) communicating in academic language.

7.2.1 Affective State of Presenter

Although most graduate students had been or were currently teachers in their
professional life and thus had presented in front of a class, many of them mentioned that
they had been nervous when they performed an OAP. In my observations, most
students did not appear overly nervous during their OAPs, but students said in interviews:

I think I’m more nervous for this than teaching my students just because you’re with peers and you’re teaching something that’s maybe something you’re not quite sure of. And you have an instructor there evaluating you and everyone else is looking at you. So I was more nervous for this than for teaching a class where you’re the professor and you have control over everything and your word is law. But in presentations there’s sort of feedback and people can question what you’re saying. They might say, “Well I disagree with you on this.” And then you kind of have to come back and refute that. So it’s different.

Oh I think I was nervous, yes. Also I was challenged by the article. So in terms of content knowledge I did not have enough. And the data, that is something I don’t deal with. So that may have made it that more challenging and consequently I was quite nervous.

I was a little nervous this time because the audience was kind of quiet. I didn’t get the feeling that they were really following me. And when you get positive response from your audience and I think ironically that’s mainly from the professor, then you just go and go and become more confident and your presentation gets stronger.

Thus, there seemed to be a number of factors which influenced presenters’ affective state in OAPs. One of such factors that was commonly mentioned was the fact that they were being evaluated by their instructor and peers. They were nervous not just because they received a mark out of their OAPs, but because their knowledge, abilities, and presentation skills were judged by other competent members in the academic community of graduate seminars. Another common factor was their perceived lack of content knowledge or background knowledge about the article or the subject matter of their OAPs. As teachers, they were used to having expertise in what they presented. But in OAPs, they might have to present something that they were not so sure of, or face others in the audience who were more knowledgeable about the topic than themselves. A
student wrote in the questionnaire that presenters might get nervous because they studied somebody else's work only superficially and were not "the knower in the classical sense." Another important factor was the audience's response. Students in general seemed to be very sensitive about the audience's response and to some extent judged their own performance by the on-going feedback that they received from the audience.

While many students mentioned that they had been nervous, some said that they had been comfortable or even confident, since giving a presentation was something that they did on a daily basis as a teacher. One of them said in the interview:

"Given my experience and what I do for a living I give presentations all the time. So for me it's nothing, it's not unique. As a matter of fact, that part of it I felt comfortable with. And as teachers, I think teachers are generally an insecure group of people. We are insecure. The only way that we can go up and teach in front of people is that we have the belief that we know more than the student. And in this case because no one else had read the article with the exception of my backup, nobody else had read it. So I'm automatically the authority and that gives me the confidence to go up there and do it."

Similarly, another student mentioned that he had been completely comfortable in his OAPs since he was an experienced teacher. He further said, "If you can't present well in front of a group of people you should not be this far in the program to begin with."

Presenters' affective state, however, was not always static but could change within a single OAP and also from one OAP to another. Some students mentioned that they had been more nervous in the critique phase than in the summary phase of their OAP since the former involved more risk of being wrong or being challenged by the audience. Some also reported that their affective state had been completely different in the two OAPs that they had performed, depending on the amount of background
knowledge they had had on the presented topic. Some students simply became less nervous as they performed more OAPs. One said that she had felt much more comfortable in her second OAP because she knew her classmates better than in her first OAP and “could anticipate their response to some extent.”

In summary, students’ affective state seemed to be influenced by many different factors, which at the same time influenced their OAP performance. The fact that students’ performance or affective state could be influenced by so many different factors seemed to reveal to some extent the complexity and richness of the OAP task.

7.2.2 Peer Group as Audience

A common way in which students described the challenge of performing an OAP was to compare the OAP situation with their teaching situation. In their teaching, the audience was normally their students, while in OAPs it was their peers. One student said in the interview:

If I have this class of ESL students, whether they’re four or they’re fifteen or they’re my age, they’re gonna judge me of course on how well I speak English, which is assumed because I’m a native speaker, and how interesting I make the class. The same skills are not going to be the same skills that are judged in this kind of presentation (i.e., OAPs)). Whether the class is fun or not I don’t think is very important. But what is more important is, “Do I understand what you are presenting? Do you excite questions in me or do you bring viewpoints or ideas to me that I didn’t know before? Am I interested in what you’re saying because of the way you present it?” I guess it helps if you make it fun but it doesn’t have to be fun. Even if you’re very serious I may go, “Wow, that’s very interesting. I’m glad I listened to this person present it.” So judgment is very different. In fact some peers are above me in terms of their experience or training, academic training. In some ways people might appear above me and there’s much more room to be judged and I think there’s more stress.
As he vividly described in the above excerpt, peers as the audience seemed to give certain kind of pressure to the presenter. Presenters had to demonstrate their knowledge and skills to their peers and stimulate or satisfy them intellectually. Also, peers could challenge presenters by offering different opinions and perspectives. Furthermore, although peers were technically equal in status, students often seemed to perceive different levels of knowledge and skills among themselves and judge their status and level of expertise in relation to their peers. Thus, as he mentioned above, presenters might get stressed or uncomfortable when they perceived their audience of peers as relative experts compared to themselves. Another student found the OAP environment extremely intimidating because she felt that she was surrounded by teachers and a professor who were themselves professional presenters and were more competent and knowledgeable than herself.

Other students felt that it was important for them to have the kind of pressure that they might receive from the audience of peers. One student said:

... I think also in terms of the actual content we all need to practice criticizing, reviewing and analyzing and supporting academic literature. And what better way to do that than to have some pressure put on you, to know that you have to present to some peers who are critical thinkers and know what you’re saying? You can’t sort of run them around the goal post, meaning you can’t sort of fib your way through it. They know what’s going on and they’ll tell you if you’re on or off. So from those points of view I think presenting articles are important.

Another student said that she appreciated the opportunity to present in front of her peers:

For me, it is a lot of pressure to present in front of my peers because they are critical thinkers and experienced presenters themselves, but at the same time, I’m glad that I have that opportunity because I really try my best and gain something
out of it in the end. I mean the instructor could have said, “Okay, analyze a paper and hand in something,” but that’s not the same.

Some students mentioned that they sometimes felt uncomfortable about giving directions to their peers or taking control over the class discussion. One student said in the interview:

I tried to take control and lead a class discussion but I was not really comfortable about telling people what to do because they were my peers, not my students. Also, my perception was that my peers knew about my topic better than I did, so I couldn’t take control. Actually, the instructor led the discussion in place of me. Maybe she could tell that I was being a little uncomfortable.

In this case, she seemed to have experienced a gap between her role as a presenter and her identity as a relative novice.

In summary, peers as the audience seemed to influence the students’ performance of OAPs in various ways. For many students, it was a challenge to present in front of their peers who they felt were critical thinkers and experienced presenters themselves.

7.2.3 Playing an Academic Game?

Some students mentioned that performing a good OAP required them to know “how to communicate in academic speech” or “how to play an academic game.” One student said in the interview:

I think it’s important to know how to communicate in academic speech especially when you give a presentation. It’s one thing to know the content or to have background knowledge, but it’s another to be able to communicate that knowledge in the way that you impress your peers and professors. Some people are really good at expressing themselves and they can convince you and impress you. Others can also be as knowledgeable but just don’t communicate very well.

Similarly, another student said:
You're feeling very much like being in another country where you don't speak the language. . . . We have to learn, looking at the example of language, when you're writing a paper what's the citation? Or how academic do you need to be when you're giving your presentations? Do you have to be very formal with an overhead projector or can you pass out scissors and glue? Or do you have the freedom to do that? Or if you do that, are you ridiculed or is that, "Wow, he's very innovative." Do your peers respect that or disrespect that? So knowing the demands and the rules, what are your limitations? (Class discussion)

Thus, learning to perform a good OAP seemed to involve learning to use the “academic language” and also learning what was appropriate, inappropriate, innovative, or boring in the context of graduate seminars. One student called this process “learning to know an academic game”:

I didn’t want my presentation to be boring. . . . I think when you give a presentation you want to know the material very well and be prepared and be organized. But you may also want to go beyond and be creative especially when everybody has read the article that you are presenting, because I believe that you don’t learn if you stay at the same level all the time. But there’s also a risk in doing that because you are getting a mark out of this. You don’t want to give an impression that you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing or you are not being professional. But you kind of learn by watching others present what works and what doesn’t, what’s appropriate and what’s not, or how creative you can be or how formal you have to be. It’s almost like learning to know an academic game. (Interview)

As the above three excerpts suggest, some students seemed to perceive an OAP as an opportunity or a challenge to learn to use “the academic language” in an appropriate way. By observing other students perform an OAP and also by performing one themselves, students gradually developed an idea of what was expected of them in the academic context of graduate seminars. They also learned what they could or could not do to go beyond such expectations and still be respectable as a member of the academic group. Further, one student mentioned in the questionnaire that knowing such
expectations as well as limitations was important because one would want to “give or maintain one’s image of being intelligent, capable, polished, insightful, and knowledgeable” by performing an OAP in front of the class.

7.3 Non-Native Speakers’ Perceptions

So far in this chapter, I have summarized some of the common perceptions of the students (both NSs and NNSs) on the OAP task in general. In this section, I will highlight NNSs’ perceptions on the task and also on studying at a Canadian graduate school in general.

There were three NNSs in each of the two courses and all six of them came from East Asian countries. Four of them were females, two were males, and their age raged from mid-20s to mid-30s. They had just started their masters program at WCU except for one student who was in the second year of her program. Five of them were in their masters program in TESL while one was in her masters program in Teaching Japanese as a Second Language. They were all full-time students and taking two or three courses a semester. Four of them had already had a masters degree from another university before they joined their program at WCU. Two of the four had completed their first masters degree at North American universities, while the other two had completed their degrees at universities in their home countries. Only one student was new to North America while the rest had studied in Canada or in the United States for at least a year before they joined the program. Thus, these students had already had some experience either in graduate studies or studying in North America, or a combination of the two.
7.3.1 OAPs as a Challenge

NNSs who had to perform an OAP in their second language often perceived OAPs as a particularly challenging task. Some mentioned that it was as difficult and stressful as writing a term paper. The six NNSs who participated in this study and the NNSs in the pilot study all expressed in various ways the difficulties that they experienced in performing an OAP. Some common difficulties mentioned by NNSs were linguistic problems, a lack of content knowledge, differences in classroom cultures, and a lack of confidence or an inferiority complex. This is not to say, however, that NSs did not have any of these problems. In fact, NSs also experienced similar problems, although NNSs did not always realize that they did.

7.3.1.1 Linguistic Problems

All NNSs mentioned that they had some linguistic problems in performing an OAP in spite of their relatively high English proficiency and study experiences in English speaking countries. While some NNSs mentioned specific areas of linguistic difficulties such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and listening, others expressed their linguistic difficulties in less specific ways. They said in interviews:

(While watching the video) My grammar is awful. I knew I was making a lot of grammar mistakes, but I didn’t have time to correct each one of them while I was presenting. I also have problems in my listening ability and that was the main reason why I couldn’t really lead the discussion. I was up in front and I was nervous and I sometimes didn’t understand what people were saying. So I think I still have a lot of language problems.

I didn’t want to make any grammar mistakes but I think my English was pretty bad. I was also worried about my choice of words. I always have a fear of using wrong words and not making sense to people.
My English isn’t perfect. I mean, I can’t express myself fully in English. So I still depend on my notes and memos when I give a presentation. I also need to rehearse my presentation all the time. I can’t just go ahead and do it. I guess the biggest problem for me is that I can’t elaborate on my points. I make a point and I want to elaborate on it, or somebody offers an opinion and I want to respond to it, but by the time I come up with words in my head somebody else is already talking. ((laughs))

I sometimes get frustrated because I feel that I can only speak simple English compared to native speakers. So even if I had a great idea, it might not sound great because of my English. ((laughs)) Or I’m sometimes afraid of sounding too casual or not very academic because I think I tend to use simple short sentences in my presentations. I sometimes try to use big words and long sentences but I often get stuck in the middle of the sentence and can’t finish. So I think language is definitely a disadvantage for me.

Thus, NNSs felt that their linguistic knowledge or abilities were still limited and that they could not express their thoughts and ideas fully. Some were afraid of making grammar mistakes or choosing inappropriate words, while others were frustrated with their limited ability in elaborating on their points or speaking spontaneously. Some also had a concern about their English being too simple and their OAPs being “not very academic” as a result.

An interesting point brought up by NNSs in interviews was that they felt that their English fluency seemed to change from one OAP to another or even within one OAP. Although they could not always specify what factors made them speak better or worse, some suggested that their fluency seemed to change depending on their epistemic stance or the amount of background knowledge that they had on the topic of the talk. Two students noticed while reviewing their OAP performance on the video that they had made more grammar mistakes whenever they had attempted to explain something that they didn’t fully understand. By the same token, another student felt that he was able to
articulate himself more fluently when he perceived himself as a relative expert than when he perceived himself as a relative novice, compared to his audience:

I think I was able to speak more fluently when I talked about the Japanese language system. I probably had more background knowledge on the particular topic than most of the audience and maybe that was why I could explain it with confidence. But when I had to talk about something that they knew better than I did, I felt really tongue-tied. I didn’t have confidence in what I was saying and of course my English started to break down.

Other factors which NNSs thought influenced their fluency were nervousness and their audience. Two students mentioned after watching the video that their English seemed to get better toward the end of their OAP when they were more relaxed than the beginning. Another student felt that his fluency to some extent depended on his perceptions of his audience:

The audience’s response was very different between the two classes that I’m taking right now. When I did my presentation in TESL 570 I felt the audience was very supportive and patient with my English. Dr. Cory was helping me and my backup also supported me whenever I started to mumble. . . . But when I did my presentation in the other course I felt that the audience was quite impatient and aggressive and I couldn’t express myself very well in that kind of environment. I wanted to argue against some of my audience but I didn’t know how to argue in English without being too direct. ((laughs)) . . . I’m not a native speaker and so if the audience are not willing to listen to me or are impatient with my English I lose motivation to try hard and make myself understood. So I think how I feel about my audience has a lot to do with my English abilities.

It was often the case that NNSs perceived their language problems as being unique to them and not applicable to NSs. Some of them also believed that they wouldn’t have the kind of language problems that they experienced with their OAPs if they were to perform in their first language. However, some NSs participated in this study reported similar problems. In the following excerpt from an interview, a NS described how she had
felt tongue-tied in her second OAP where she had not been very confident with her understanding of the presented article:

The first article I did was so pertinent to me and my job and everything. But this one, I don't know. It was totally different from what I expected. But I read the article, I mean I knew the article. But then you know, I was using my own analogies to try and make sense out of it. You know, I wasn't even sure if I was on the right track or not. So then I didn't really feel very confident about it. I think the more I started to leave my confidence the more I just felt like I'm getting kind of tongue-tied. I mean I don't know if I came across being that way but I sure felt it. I just felt like I was trying to express these ideas but I wasn't sure if I was doing a very good job of them. And sometimes when you are trying and concentrating on the material, your language starts to break down, like you start sentences and stop sentences, and you kind of twist it with your own language and I hate that.

Thus, in some cases even NSs felt that they were not articulating themselves very well or that their language broke down.

In short, all six NNSs experienced linguistic difficulties when they performed their OAPs. Some seemed to recognize specific areas of problems such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, while others were more conscious about their overall abilities to articulate themselves or elaborate in English. Some NNSs felt that their fluency depended on their affective state, epistemic stance, or perceptions of their audience. Although it was a common perception of NNSs that NSs had no language problems, some NSs also experienced similar problematic situations where they could not articulate themselves very well.

7.3.1.2 Sociocultural Problems

Presumably, all graduate students, whether NNSs or NSs, had to learn the new academic culture of WCU graduate school and of each graduate seminar when they began
their programs. As I have illustrated earlier in this chapter, students suggested that they needed to learn the expectations and the academic demands of graduate students as well as how to achieve them in order to become a competent member of the academic community. In addition, NNSs who came from different cultural backgrounds often had to learn about Canadian classroom cultures and appropriate classroom behaviors. In this section I will illustrate some of the sociocultural difficulties which NNSs experienced in graduate seminars.

There were three main areas of sociocultural differences that the six NNSs perceived between the Canadian classroom and the classroom of their home countries, the class participation and interaction pattern, the type of class activities, and the kind of academic values. Differences in students’ participation patterns in class were one of the main themes which came up both in this study and the pilot study. One common observation of NNSs about the participation pattern of Canadian graduate seminars was that students responded “quickly” or “freely” to the instructor as well as to each other. One NNS said:

Canadian students seem to respond very quickly to the instructor’s comments or questions or to each other’s opinions. I sometimes wonder if they really think before they speak. Many students respond really quickly to others’ opinions and they also speak very smoothly. I feel that way maybe because my English is not perfect. If my English was perfect, I might notice that some of the opinions are not that great. (laughs) But I have never experienced that kind of classroom interaction in Japan. In Japan, students usually take some time to think after the instructor asks a question. Otherwise, they may be perceived as being superficial.

1 Since all six NNSs who participated in this study were from East Asian countries, they seemed to share similar cultural backgrounds in terms of school education. It should be noted, however, that only three out of the six NNSs had attended a graduate school in their home countries and could compare their experiences in graduate schools in the two countries. The other three mentioned the differences that they perceived more generally between the school culture of Canada and that of their home country.
or not really thinking. So there are certain pauses between turns in our interactions back home. But in Canada there are no pauses in classroom interactions. One of my Canadian friends told me that Canadians think while they talk. It's only after they started talking that they really know what they are thinking. I don't know if this is true, but to me that's the biggest difference.

She further emphasized the difficulty that she often had in leading a discussion in her OAPs. She felt that although she was supposed to take primary control in the discussion she could not even join the discussion because she felt that there were no pauses in the audience's interaction.

Students also expressed similar feelings in questionnaires:

The main difficulty for me is to join the class discussion especially the discussion involving the whole class. (I feel more comfortable in small group discussions.) Discussion is sometimes very fast paced and it is difficult to “jump in.” In addition, native speakers' comments are very elaborate which makes me hesitate about contributing to the discussion. (emphasis mine)

It is still very difficult for me to speak up in class because I don't know when to get in the discussion! Students here are allowed to speak up freely and it is okay to interrupt others' speech, but I'm not used to doing that because we don't do that very much in my home country. So I don't know how to interrupt and join the discussion. But if you don't interrupt, you sometimes don't get any chance to speak up. (emphasis mine)

Thus, many NNSs seemed to experience difficulty in joining a discussion in an appropriate manner. As mentioned in the above excerpts (see Italics), some NNSs seemed to be having a difficulty in interjecting since they felt that they were not used to the pace or the timing of turn taking in the Canadian graduate classroom. One student mentioned

---

2 Hall’s (1993a, 1995) concepts of oral practices and structuring resources of oral practices may shed light on this problem of NNSs. Hall specifies seven resources that organize socioculturally structured oral practices, one of which is rhythm. Hall explains that “rhythm is that which allows the participants of the performance to know when the right time is to say the next thing in the performance or to indicate a listening-to-what-was-said cue and to signal that the speaker continue” (p. 153). Rhythm can also be “instantiated in a practice linguistically, paralinguistically (for example, hand clapping), prosodically (for
in the interview that she didn’t know how to signal to others (verbally and non-verbally) that she wanted to say something without interrupting or “being rude.” Many NNSs also commented that they felt more comfortable in small group discussions and could contribute more than in whole class discussions.

Another difference in participation patterns pointed out by some of the NNSs was that in the Canadian classroom, students asked questions whenever they wanted.

They mentioned that asking questions was something that students did not do very much in the classroom of their home countries:

Sometimes when I have questions I don’t feel it’s very polite to ask them in class. Not like other students. When they have questions they just speak directly to the instructors. (laughs) So at first I used to think, “Oh, why are they doing it in that way?” I heard something about that in China. We know that the Western teaching method is different from China and students are more active than Chinese students. I heard a lot about it but here I’m really experiencing it. (laughs)

I think North Americans don’t hesitate expressing their own opinions and having arguments. Also, quite often, they ask questions which may not directly related to the topic of the discussion. They don’t hesitate. Strict teachers sometimes shut people down when they ask irrelevant questions and I appreciate that. Sometimes students talk about irrelevant things even with confidence and seem to waste the class time. But I understand it’s part of the North American culture and people are encouraged to ask questions whenever they don’t understand something. They are taught to behave in that way since elementary school. So it’s natural for them to ask questions. But in Japan students don’t ask questions unless they are told to do so. We don’t want to waste others’ time by asking questions that only you may have. If we do have questions we ask the instructor after the class or something. So here, when I don’t understand something in class I think that it may be because of my poor listening ability. So I think if I asked about it on the spot I would waste other students’ time. But occasionally, native speakers ask the same question that I wanted to ask and I feel better when that happens. (laughs) Sometimes the instructor’s explanation isn’t clear. But

example, via pitch and stress), and nonverbally (for example, head nods, body movements, and hand gestures)” (p. 153). It is possible that the NNSs who were having difficulties in joining the discussion or interjecting were not used to the rhythm of the interaction which took place in the Canadian graduate classroom. I will discuss more about the concept of oral practices in Chapter 8.
because of my lack of confidence I hesitate to ask questions. I don’t want to waste others’ time. I can’t change this thinking. I was educated in Japan and have been taught not to bother others.

Similarly, another NNS reported his experience with his OAP where he felt at a loss because the audience started to ask questions which he thought were not necessarily related to the topic of his OAP. While the audience kept discussing the issues, he could not stop them and felt that he totally lost his control over the discussion.

Another area of difference was the type of class activities. It was a common perception of the NNSs that there were more discussions and less lectures in Canadian universities than in their home country universities. One NNS mentioned that he did not have any student-led discussions in the graduate seminars that he had attended in his home country. Being asked if she had had a presentation task similar to OAPs in the graduate school she had attended in her home country, another NNS said:

In China I never had this kind of presentation in class. In China the formal class is that teachers stand in front of the classroom and teach, and students just sit there and listen and take notes. We almost don’t have any student presentations especially with Chinese teachers. Usually teachers teach everything and students try to memorize. For my graduate study (in China) I had a foreign teacher and he taught us American literature. He arranged each of us to have one author to do some research on and try to figure out the significance in his writing or something. So each of us did a presentation on one author. So that was the only presentation I did in China.

She further mentioned that although it had taken some time for her to get used to “the Canadian style of teaching,” she had gradually learned how to “relax in class” and “talk freely” when she had an opinion or a question to contribute.

Another NNS expressed his dissatisfaction with the emphasis on “free discussions” in the North American graduate seminars:
I think North American students are used to giving presentations. They have done presentations so many times since they were children, right? For example, show and tell. But Japanese students are not used to this kind of learning style. We are used to listening to teacher lectures. We may feel unsatisfied if teachers don’t give enough lectures, especially in universities. Instructors are great resources. And I sometimes feel that I want to hear more about what the instructor has to say because I think there are too many free student discussions in some of the courses.

Although NNSs often seemed to assume that NSs (i.e., North American students) had a lot of experience with oral presentations, more than half of the NSs in this study reported that they had only performed a few presentations before they entered the graduate school.

Some of the academic skills or intellectual values promoted in the Canadian graduate school were different from those that were promoted in NNSs’ home country universities. In particular, many NNSs felt that they lacked training in critical thinking in their home country which they thought was one of the most important academic skills promoted in the Canadian graduate school. One NNS said:

When I first came here I used to think I was lost. I did all the course readings and presentations and wrote terms papers. But I felt I was lost because it was really difficult for me to think critically. The instructors often said, it is very important at a graduate level to be critical and to think for yourself. But I just couldn’t analyze things critically. Then I realized that I was not educated to be a critical thinker in my home country. So basically I was just accepting everything I read. Now I have been studying here for three semesters and I think I have gradually learned how to analyze things and how to be critical. But at first it was very difficult. So for example, the summary part of the presentation was pretty easy for me but the challenging part was to come up with some critique points. I had never done such activities in my university back home.

Similarly, another NNS suggested in the interview that critical thinking had not necessarily been promoted in graduate seminars that he had attended in his home country:
N: Did you have to do presentations in graduate seminars back home?

S: Yes. But all we had to do was to provide a summary of a textbook chapter. All we did was to give a summary in front of four or five peers and the instructor. The problem was that if you included your original ideas in your presentation you would be criticized. You know, "Deru kui wa utareru." ((A Japanese saying which means, "Those who push themselves forward can expect to take a beating."))

N: Is that so even in a graduate school?

S: Yes, very much so.

N: Did you have any discussions afterwards?

S: We did. But if you think critically and express your original ideas, the professor would ask you to prove them. Here in Canada it's quite opposite. You have to think critically and have your own ideas. But in Japan it was wrong to bring in your own theories or ideas in presentations. You always had to support your points with some scholars' theories. That means you could only do a summary of somebody else's ideas. But in Canada you can use your imagination and express your own ideas in presentations. I like that much better than the Japanese way. Anybody can do a summary. It's boring. You learn nothing new by giving summaries. All we did in Japan was to read studies done by North American scholars and just praise them. We never tried to be critical about them.

Some NNSs mentioned that they gradually learned how to think critically by completing course assignments and observing others discuss in class. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a NNS where she discussed that it had initially been a painful process for her learning to be a critical thinker and how she had to fight with her relatively low self-esteem:

I learned how to read critically and how to think critically as I did my presentations or a literature review or some research for my term papers and so on. And also, as I gained more content knowledge it became easier for me to look at the readings with a critical eye. But at first when I started my program I used to get depressed after class because most of the native speakers were already critical thinkers and they expressed their own opinions and ideas with confidence. But I was always very quiet in class and so were the other non-native speakers.
generally. I would wonder, why is it so difficult for me to find critique points in the article, why are the native speakers so good at finding the other sides of the issues? I used to be a good student back home and so the fact that I couldn’t contribute to the class really lowered my self-esteem. I would get impressed by other people’s opinions and I would ask myself, “Why didn’t I think of that?” So it was a painful process because I nearly lost all my self-esteem at one point, thinking what a naive thinker I was. But I guess gradually, really slowly, I learned how to see issues from different angles by observing and listening to class discussions.

In short, NNSs seemed to experience a number of difficulties associated with various sociocultural differences. The three main areas of difference perceived by them were class participation and interaction patterns, class activities, and academic values, and these differences often seemed to affect the way NNSs behaved in class or the way they performed their OAPs. Although it was not always easy for NNSs to overcome various difficulties that derived from these sociocultural differences, they gradually learned the academic culture of the Canadian graduate classroom by participating in class discussions and completing course assignments.

7.3.1.3 Psychological Difficulties

Some NNSs reported that they had psychological difficulties such as a lack of confidence and an inferiority complex in combination with linguistic and sociocultural difficulties when they had performed their OAPs or participated in class discussion. One NNS said in the interview:

Before I entered the graduate school I went to a language school. And there I took a public speaking course and we learned the basic skills in presentations and public speaking. I was quite comfortable presenting in front of my peers who were all ESL learners. So I thought I had the basic knowledge of presentations. But this time the context was completely different. I felt inferior to other students in class and I wasn’t even sure if my audience understood my English. I thought whatever I said would be too simple to everybody else. I went to see the
instructor before my presentation and asked if my discussion questions would be
too easy for the class. But she said, “It’s fine. It’s fine. Go ahead and ask them
the questions.” But I thought my questions were still too easy for them.

She also mentioned that she had stayed quiet during the discussion in her OAP because
she had felt that “others’ opinions would be much more valuable than [hers].”

Another NNS commented on similar psychological difficulty that she had
experienced in her OAP:

I was really nervous. One reason was that I didn’t have much background
knowledge about the topic that I presented. And also I didn’t have confidence
with my English. I still have a big inferiority complex about my English abilities.
So it was mentally difficult. I wanted people to discuss my questions actively, but
I would have liked it much better if I had been able to respond to their opinions. I
hesitated to speak up because of my inferiority complex. (Interview)

In addition to their lack of confidence or inferiority complex, some NNSs also felt
frustrated because they thought that they were not able to contribute to their classmates’
learning. One NNS said that in order to overcome such a feeling she had made a point of
speaking at least once in every class:

I spoke in class maybe twice in the last semester but I lost confidence because I
couldn’t express not even fifty percent of what I wanted to say. So, that
experience made me too self-conscious I think. I wanted to contribute to the class
by offering opinions but I just didn’t think my opinions would be good enough to
contribute to other members in class. But sometime in December maybe, I said to
myself, “Well, you should promise yourself to speak at least once every class.”
((laughs)) I tried that to overcome my lack of confidence. But I couldn’t do it. I
spoke maybe every three classes.

NNSs seemed to believe that their lack of confidence mainly came from their
limited English abilities. By the same token, they tended to perceive that NSs always
spoke in an elaborate and confident manner whether they were presenting or contributing
to class discussions. However, interviews with NSs revealed that some of them also had
experienced a lack of confidence and a similar kind of struggle in speaking up in graduate seminars. Just like the NNS in the above excerpt, one NS mentioned that she had made a point of speaking in every class in order to overcome her psychological difficulties:

I think I’ve sort of gotten over some of my initial nervousness. I’m relaxed a little bit more. I decided at some point that I made a point of saying, okay I’m going to speak in every class, and make a point of speaking at least once just so that I sort of get over the issue of speaking in class, just to say something. Actually I told Nancy that I had this real feeling of nervousness in the class and so I said, okay I set this goal that I’m going to speak at least once in each class ((laughs)) so as to break down the psychological barrier of speaking in class. . . . I think part of it was being new in the field, feeling that I had no authority in the subject matter, although of course I don’t think I have any less authority than anyone else, but it was just this idea that I’m new in this field. So I sort of made a point of doing that. . . . And also I guess this idea of saying something “wrong” or fear of appearing foolish, you know, if you give an incorrect answer. I think I really have a low threshold for that. So that’s why I tend not to say things in the chance that it may not be correct. So I’m sort of trying to get over that, okay, well, you made a mistake, big deal. And I sort of had to go through this thing consciously with myself. Maybe I’m a bit of a perfectionist or something.

As the above excerpt vividly described, it was not only NNSs but also NSs who had experienced psychological struggles and had to fight with their nervousness, fear, or lack of confidence. Another NS said, “I didn’t dare to open my mouth in the first few months because I’d been away from school for several years before I started my graduate program and had no confidence whatsoever.” She further mentioned that her first OAP had been a “disaster” because of her “mental attitude” of fear and a lack of confidence.

In short, many NNSs seemed to suffer from psychological difficulties such as a lack of confidence and an inferiority complex, and they most commonly perceived that these difficulties derived from their limited English abilities. Although NNSs tended to believe that NSs were not likely to have these difficulties and spoke with confidence,
some NSs did experience various psychological barriers which sometimes prevented them from speaking up in class or performing an OAP with confidence.

Although I illustrated NNSs' perceived difficulties in three different categories (i.e., linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties) for an analytical purpose, it is important to note that these categories were by no means mutually exclusive. Rather, they were often closely related to one another and suggested the complex nature of NNSs' perceived difficulties in participating in graduate seminars.

7.3.1.4 Strategies Used by NNSs

So far in this section I have illustrated some of the linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties that NNSs seemed to experience in performing an OAP or participating in class discussions. In interviews, the six NNSs in this study talked about the strategies that they used in their OAPs in order to overcome or compensate for some of these difficulties. Although I have already discussed the strategies used by both NSs and NNSs in the previous chapter (see 6.1.2), here I will highlight some of the compensation strategies that NNSs consciously used for their OAP performances.

NNSs seemed to use a variety of strategies in order to make up for their perceived linguistic limitations. One common strategy was to rehearse their OAPs. One NNS said:

I have to rehearse my presentations because I can't come up with appropriate expressions on the spot. This time I rehearsed my presentation twice. First I went through my handout and wrote down the key words and key phrases in the margins of my handout. And then, the second time I went through my

---

3 I asked in the interviews if students (both NSs and NNSs) had rehearsed their OAPs. While there was only one NS who had rehearsed his OAP, five out of six NNSs said that they rehearsed their OAP in one way or another. Some had rehearsed their entire OAP in front of their friend or family members and received feedback, while others practiced by themselves. Some had practiced their OAPs more than once. One NNS had even audiotaped her speech, listened to it, and revised it.
presentation again using that memo in the margins. I think it helped a lot. Because of my limited English abilities, it is difficult for me to make up sentences instantly in presentations. So I normally need to rehearse my presentation and prepare what I’m going to say.

Similarly, two other NNSs said that they had prepared a verbatim script for their presentations separate from their handout and basically had read the whole script in their actual OAPs. Both of them felt that even though they had wanted to perform their OAP without depending on such notes, they had not been confident enough to perform without them. Thus, rehearsing and preparing extra notes were also strategies for some NNSs to reduce psychological pressure.

Some NNSs were conscious about their pronunciation and clarity of speech and applied a number of other strategies. One NNS mentioned that his strategy to compensate for his language problems was to prepare a clear, organized, and concise handout so that the audience could follow him. Similarly, another NNS commented that she had spent a lot of time in preparing her handout so that her OAP would not be too boring even if she had read the entire handout aloud. The use of visuals was another strategy used consciously by some of the NNSs. One said in the interview:

During the presentation I should always use the OHP to show people more clearly what I’m talking about because I realize that English is not my first language and I could use those audio-visual assistance just to present more clearly and effectively than just me talking to them. And I realize I have a different accent from native speakers too, right? It’s good because it’s already passed half a term and most people can understand me. But in the beginning of the term I could assume like some people couldn’t understand me easily.

Another interesting strategy was to get support from the backup person. The three NNSs in TESL 570 all mentioned that their native speaker backup person helped
them a lot in the preparation phase of their OAPs as well as in their actual performance.

One of them mentioned that he had asked his backup to fill in the silence or interject whenever he was having difficulty in explaining his points. The discourse of his OAP actually included a number of incidents where his backup person was taking over his speech or elaborating on his points. The following is an example of such interactions from his OAP:

**Example 33 (TESL 570)**

(N=NNS, B=NNS's backup, S=student in the audience)

S: I have a question. On the research process it says that they were trying to get the English speaking children to want to help the Spanish speaking children learning the language? Are there any sort of (0.6) discussions about that?

N: Uhm - well - the article says uh: the Spanish - uh: English speaking children are very friendly? And uh: (0.7) so (1.2) for example uh: (0.8) English speaking children didn’t try to use the: uh: decontextualized speech or something? (0.8) And (1.0) well - this means that kind of thing.

B: Yeah. They said that the English kids kept their speech very simple, with their friends, like talking very here and now sort of thing. They didn’t use like - oh what are you doing tomorrow sort of thing. They just sort of talked about what was going on at the moment, I think? They kind of simplified their speech when they were speaking to the - to the Spanish speaking children.

S: Right.

The second turn by the NNS in the above excerpt contained a number of long pauses which seemed to suggest that he was having difficulty in articulating himself. In the following turn, his backup person interjected and elaborated on the NNS's point.

Another strategy used by some NNSs was to choose an article related to their own linguistic background so that they could apply their background knowledge. Two NNSs mentioned that they had chosen the presented article specifically for that reason.
The article presented by one of the two NNSs was not even included in the course reading but chosen by himself. They both mentioned that having some background knowledge about the article helped them analyze it in-depth and also made them less nervous. On the contrary, another NNS who had chosen an article on which she had had little background knowledge used a different strategy to compensate for her lack of content knowledge and linguistic limitations: she suggested in the interview that she had basically delegated her role as a presenter to the audience and invited a lot of input from them.

In short, the six NNSs used a variety of strategies to compensate for their linguistic as well as some of their psychological difficulties. In the preparation phase, they used strategies such as choosing an article related to their background, rehearsing their OAPs, making a clear handout and extra notes, or getting help from their backup person. During the actual OAP, they used audio-visual assistance, collaborated with their backup, or invited the audience’s input.

7.3.2 OAPs as Opportunities

While performing an OAP could be a challenge for NNSs for a number of reasons as I have discussed above, it could also be an opportunity for them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills or gain confidence. For some NNSs who had difficulty in speaking in class, OAPs often provided a chance for them to show what they knew and what they were capable of doing, since they were licensed to speak, perform, and take primary control over the class discussion as a presenter. Although the NNSs participated in this study tended to emphasize the challenging side of the OAP task, some also mentioned how they considered performing an OAP as opportunities. NNSs said in interviews:
For me, doing a presentation is stressful but at the same time it’s an opportunity to speak in class and let people know what kind of things I’m thinking about. I don’t speak very much in class as you know and it’s kind of difficult for me to be assertive in class discussion. So people have very few chances to hear me speak in class. But they do get to hear me much more in my presentations.

In the first semester I used to get really really nervous about my presentations and it was like an exam for me. But now I see presentations in a more positive way. I mean, in presentations you are given a chance to express your opinions and share your ideas with your audience. And also your teaching skills. Before I came here I used to teach English for several years and I’m actually used to speaking in front of people. So for me, I can kind of demonstrate my teaching skills in presentations.

In addition to demonstrating their knowledge and skills, some NNSs also seemed to gain confidence from performing an OAP or a sense of contribution to the other members of the group. One NNS said in the interview:

It scared me maybe the first time I did my presentation in English. Even when I read my handout I could hear my heart beating ((laughs)), pomp pomp pomp pomp ((laughs)) like that. I mean the more you practice the more confidence you can have. Then you forget the nervousness. And also another factor is you have to be very familiar with the subject you are talking about and try to think from different perspectives. ... I think it really takes time to practice your presentations but it really helps me. I can gain some confidence and also in the discussion part you can show your own views.

Similarly, another NNS suggested that he had gained some confidence from performing his second OAP since the audience had responded to his discussion questions in a very active manner and provided him with positive feedback. He said, “Although I still have some language problems to work on, I feel that my analysis and opinions were on the right track and I could contribute to the class a little bit.”

One advantage that NNSs enjoyed when they performed OAPs was that they had a lot of time to prepare what they were going to say. As I illustrated earlier, NNSs in
general spent much time for preparing for and rehearsing their OAPs, which to some extent helped reduce their nervousness in speaking in front of the class. One NNS mentioned:

I think I can express my thoughts and my opinions in presentations better than the usual class discussion simply because I have more time to prepare what I say in presentations. In normal class discussions I have to make comments on the spot and I can only express maybe fifty percent of what I really want to say. Or even less.

Another NNS reported that OAPs provided a precious opportunity for him to analyze an article critically and share his own ideas and critique points with his audience. He mentioned that he enjoyed this opportunity in particular because expressing his own ideas and analysis was not something that he had been encouraged to do in the graduate school in his home country.

In this section, I have highlighted the NNSs' perceptions on the OAP task, on their performance of the task, and also on the Canadian graduate school culture. While an OAP was often a challenging task for the six NNSs because of a variety of linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties, it was also perceived as an opportunity for them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities and to reduce some of their psychological barriers. I have also illustrated how NSs sometimes experienced similar linguistic or psychological difficulties despite the general assumption of NNSs that NSs did not experience such difficulties.
Chapter 8

DISCUSSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Language Socialization Surrounding the OAP Task

8.1.1 Sociocultural Context of Task

This study attempted to yield a better understanding of the language socialization of university graduate students through their exposure to and engagement in oral presentation tasks. Instead of taking a psycholinguistic approach which is prevalent in task-based research in L2 literature, this study employed a sociocultural approach and examined the role of task or activity and students’ task performance as embedded in its sociocultural context. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the language socialization approach as well as other sociocultural approaches to learning and development recognizes the importance of investigating human development (including language development) in relation to the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which and about which people learn. Accordingly, the findings of this study suggested that the contextual information provided by observations, interviews, and questionnaires was a key to understanding the important sociocultural meanings of OAP tasks, participants’ performance of the task, and learning which occurred surrounding the task. Different layers of such information as well as different perspectives and voices all contributed to the explication of the rich context of language socialization provided in graduate seminars.

What were, then, the sociocultural contexts of OAP tasks? This question relates to the participants’ life as a graduate student or an instructor, the social, cultural, and intellectual values that were promoted in graduate school, and the local classroom culture
of TESL 520 and TESL 570 (see Chapter 4). In general, graduate students as well as instructors were dealing with multiple demands and roles in their academic, professional, and personal life, juggling such demands and trying to achieve a balance in their lives. On the one hand, students joined the graduate school with a strong sense of what they wanted, where they had been, and where they were going. As adults with professional experiences and life experiences, individual students had their own values and beliefs as well as clear goals and expectations. On the other hand, they were trying to fit in or come to terms with the new culture of graduate school as new members from another world of activity or even from another country. Thus, there was occasionally a tension between what they wanted and what the graduate school had to offer or between their own values and what was valued in the academic culture of graduate school. One salient example of such conflicts was the extent to which individuals placed value on theory and practice of teaching. While one end of extreme believed that graduate school was and should be about theory and philosophy behind theory, the other end believed that the practice of teaching and its improvement should be the center of concern and discussion. Another example was that while some students preferred to work individually based on their own interest and objectives, others valued more collaborative work and the benefits of sharing different experiences and perspectives.

There were also other intellectual values and academic skills that most participants seemed to agree on. To think critically and analytically was one such skill. To be able to work in a collaborative fashion was another attribute that graduate students were expected to have, despite a different degree of emphasis placed on this skill by individual students.
Another important skill was to be able to communicate effectively and appropriately one’s knowledge, ideas, and opinions. Articulating one’s thoughts clearly in both written and oral communication was extremely important not only because one was evaluated on the product of such communication in the end, but also because it was through such communication that one contributed to the class as well as the academic community in general. Even though graduate students were supposed to be good communicators and experienced teachers, they still felt that they had to learn the academic language used at a graduate level and how to communicate effectively in that language. One student characterized his experience of studying at a graduate school as being in another culture where he didn’t speak the language (see 7.2.3).

The two graduate seminars under study in general offered supportive and yet intellectually stimulating learning environments. Students in general respected their instructors highly in both courses regarding their knowledge of the field, intellectual abilities, teaching skills, credibility as an instructor, and also their personal characters. Although students in both courses did not necessarily develop a very close bond with each other as a group, most of them perceived themselves as a mixed group in terms of their backgrounds and experiences and appreciated the opportunity of sharing different perspectives in class discussions. The student groups were relatively outspoken and actively exchanged their opinions in class.

Given the sociocultural contexts of OAP tasks summarized above, including all the tensions and multiple demands that graduate students experienced, how did they manage to perform OAP tasks and become socialized into the academic culture of graduate
school? What aspects of OAP tasks contributed to their socialization in becoming more critical thinkers, collaborative learners, and effective communicators? I will discuss these issues further in the following sections.

8.1.2 OAPs as Socioculturally Organized Activity

The OAP task employed in graduate seminars had specific sociocultural goals and was organized in relation to these goals. This goal-directed aspect of task or activity is recognized in the sociocultural literature reviewed in Chapter 2. For example, Rogoff (1990) notes:

A broader view of cognition and context requires that task characteristics and cognitive performance be considered in the light of the goal of the activity and its interpersonal and sociocultural context. The purpose of thinking is to act effectively: activities are goal directed (tacitly or explicitly), with social and cultural definition of goals and means of handling problems. The structure of problems that humans attempt to solve, the knowledge base that provides resources, and the strategies for solution that are considered more or less effective or sophisticated are situated in a social matrix of purposes and values. The problems that are posed, the tools that are available to solve them, and the tactics that are favored build on the sociocultural definitions and available technologies with which an individual functions. (p. 6)

In light of this view, we need to understand the task (or activity) and members’ performance of the task in relation to the sociocultural goals and values that are attached to the task. As I have described in Chapter 5, OAP tasks were set up with multiple objectives in mind by the instructors of the courses. These objectives derived from the larger course objectives which were embedded in even larger goals of academic socialization in graduate school. In essence, in addition to providing content knowledge, the OAP task served the purpose of contributing to the member’s development of certain knowledge and academic skills valued in the academic culture of graduate school. Among
such skills were critical thinking, working in collaboration, and effective communication as summarized in the previous section as well as the other intellectual abilities and presentation skills described in Chapter 4 (see 4.1.3).

The detailed analysis of OAP tasks in this study revealed that students in fact were provided opportunities to practice these skills through their preparation and performance of as well as exposure to OAPs. First of all, the task offered an important training for critical thinking since the main job of the presenter was to provide an in-depth, critical analysis of an academic article. Second, also in the preparation phase, students were given a chance to work collaboratively and discuss their presentations with their backup person, instructor, or other peers. Third, perhaps most importantly, OAPs provided valuable opportunities for students to be exposed to and practice oral communication in academic contexts. They gradually developed an idea of appropriate language use and effective presentation skills in an academic context as they performed OAPs and observed others perform the task. OAPs also created opportunities for students to become familiar with other available academic tools and skills such as making a concise handout, using OHPs and other visuals effectively, and searching relevant literature on the CD-Rom.¹

Thus, in short, OAPs were socioculturally organized activities with specific sociocultural goals and constituted a rich context, medium, and resources for the graduate

¹ According to Vygotskian sociocultural approaches (e.g., Wertsch, 1991), human action typically employs mediational means such as tools and language, and these mediational means shape the action in essential ways. In light of this view, it may be possible and useful to make an analogy between these mediational means and certain cognitive skills (e.g., critical thinking) and academic tools (e.g., handouts) used in
students' socialization into the values and skills promoted in the academic culture of graduate school.

8.1.3 Academic Apprenticeship Through Guided Participation

The concept of apprenticeship claims that novices or newcomers of a social group acquire knowledge and skills through participation in socioculturally organized activities with assistance of experts or more competent members of the group (see 2.2.4). OAPs as socioculturally organized activities involved various aspects of academic apprenticeship and constituted an example of guided participation in Rogoff's (1990) terms.

8.1.3.1 Instructors' Guidance

As experienced members of the academic community of graduate school, the two instructors provided students with assistance in a variety of ways regarding the OAP task. As I have described in Chapter 5 (5.1.3), they not only provided explicit explanations of the task in the first few weeks of the course, but also modeled the task, demonstrating the kind of format, language, and tools used in the task. They also invited individual students to consult them before they performed an OAP. During the student's performance, the instructors offered guidance in various domains such as content, language use (e.g., terminology), and presentation skills (e.g., time management, the use of OHP). What was unique with the OAP task, however, was that the instructors usually provided such guidance by taking a more peripheral role in the activity. In OAPs the student presenter took the primary control of the activity, while the instructor was...

---

OAPs. Students learned to use these cultural tools (both cognitive tools and technological tools) as they observed and performed OAPs, and at the same time OAPs were structured or mediated by such tools.
derogated from absolute authority and acted as a member of the audience. There was in fact very little explicit teaching on the part of the instructor as to how to perform the task or instructional feedback on how the task was performed. Instead, the instructors often guided their performance in a more implicit way by asking questions and offering background information or opinions as one of the audience. Nevertheless, as experienced and skilled members of the group with a broader perspective in the field of study, the instructors not only provided students with content knowledge but also tacitly demonstrated the important intellectual skills such as critical thinking by pointing out different aspects of the discussed issues.

### 8.1.3.2 Communication of Knowledge in Guided Participation of OAPs

Being able to communicate one's knowledge and ideas effectively (whether orally or in a written form) is a very important skill and attribute of members in any academic community. Although graduate students had various opportunities to learn and practice academic communication in graduate seminars, the OAP task in particular provided them with

---

2 In her discussion of cognitive apprenticeship and guided participation, Rogoff (1990) notes that caregivers and children jointly transform the structure to support children's learning and participation and transfer responsibility as children gain skill and understanding. In OAPs, although student presenters (who were newcomers relative to the instructors) were given primary responsibility for class discussion in place of the instructor, the degree of support given by the instructor and other members differed depending on individual presenters' epistemic and affective stance.

3 Some explicit instruction was provided very occasionally by the instructors mostly on the mechanical or organizational aspects of presentations such as the use of an OHP or time management.

4 According to Lave and Wenger (1991), the five case studies of adult apprenticeship reviewed by them also documented that there was very little observable teaching by the "master(s)" of the community. In the case of an Alcoholics Anonymous (A. A.) organization, for example, it was reported that old-timers (or more experienced members) who acted as "sponsors" for newcomers withheld advice and explicit instruction as to how to tell an A. A. story (Alibrandi, 1977, cited in Lave & Wenger, 1991).

5 The instructors’ questions seemed to play different roles depending on the interactional context. In many cases they posed a question to the presenter or the class as they brought up a new angle to examine the issue under discussion and thus guided them in critical thinking (e.g., "What about similarities between languages?" in Example 26). In other cases they (Dr. Cory in particular) asked a question to the presenter which novice students might ask and thus implicitly guided the presenter to provide the audience with necessary (or helpful) information (see 5.3 for the discussion of the instructor’s role).
with a valuable opportunity to practice oral communication in academic contexts.

Through exposure to and participation in OAPs, graduate students gradually and collaboratively developed knowledge and skills pertaining to how to communicate orally what they knew and what they didn’t know to their peer audience.

The discourse analysis of OAP performance in this study shed light on the complex nature of academic knowing and communication of knowledge in the context of graduate seminars. The analysis provided considerable evidence that student presenters attempted to communicate not only what they knew but also their epistemic stance as well as affective stance in a variety of ways (see Chapter 6). In other words, presenters in one way or another displayed their state of knowledge or level of certainty or confidence both explicitly and implicitly. Their stance, however, seemed to be constituted in a complex way, involving various elements. On the one hand, presenters’ perceptions on their general knowledge of the field, specific content knowledge about the presented article and its topic, or their presentation skills and experiences had a bearing on their overall epistemic stance as well as affective stance. On the other hand, their stance was co-constituted, maintained, or modified on a moment-by-moment basis through their interaction with other members in the audience. As I have illustrated in Chapter 6, the distribution of expertise (or expert-novice relationship) in OAPs was constructed jointly in unfolding interactions between participants who had different knowledge, perspectives, experiences, and expertise.

Thus, communication of knowledge in OAPs was by no means a simple unidirectional transmission from the presenter to the audience, or from those who knew
to those who didn’t know. Since all the participants in OAPs had different levels of expertise and experience in different domains of knowledge, the interaction which took place in OAPs resulted in a dynamic, complicated, shifting construction of relative experts and relative novices. Furthermore, it was through this dynamic process of expert-novice constitution or the multiple viewpoints incorporated in the practice of OAPs that members made new connections or sparked new ideas and collaboratively contributed to their own learning and development of knowledge. This dynamic aspect of guided participation was consistent with Jacoby and Gonzales’ (1991) findings in the context of a university physics research group. They noted that the interactionally dynamic constitution of expert-novice relations was especially worthy of study in contexts of adult teamwork in which individual members brought their different specializations, perspectives, and experiences. The guided participation of OAPs also parallels what Rogoff (1990) describes in the following excerpt in that it involves collaborative efforts of multiple experts and novices:

... the apprenticeship model has the value of including more people than a single expert and a single novice; the apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) who serve as resources for one another in exploring the new domain and aiding and challenging one another. Among themselves, the novices are likely to differ usefully in expertise as well. The “master,” or expert, is relatively more skilled than the novices, with a broader vision of the important features of the culturally valued activity. However, the expert too is still developing breadth and depth of skill and understanding in the process of carrying out the activity and guiding others in it. Hence, the model provided by apprenticeship is one of active learners in a community of people who support, challenge, and guide novices as they increasingly participate in skilled, valued sociocultural activity. (p. 39)
In spite of the complex distribution of expert-novice roles among the participants in OAPs, student presenters who were primarily responsible for organizing an OAP attempted to engage the audience in one way or another whether they were constituted as relative experts or relative novices. Given the primary control over the members’ learning, they attempted to make their OAP an interesting and stimulating learning experience for the class by using a variety of strategies. Furthermore, they wanted to demonstrate what they knew and what they were capable of doing because their performance was being evaluated by their peers and instructor. Being able to perform an interesting oral presentation was in fact very important for the graduate students’ academic life (both present and future) as well as their professional life as a teacher.

Although it was difficult to measure in a quantitative way the level of the audience’s engagement in an OAP as well as the presenter’s proficiency in presentation, some OAPs were more interesting, stimulating, or charged than others and evoked cognitive or emotional interest among the audience. Some of the salient aspects of the oral text of such engaging OAPs were the presenter’s active and immediate response to the article (as opposed to passive and flat response), connectivity (e.g., personal anecdotes, relevancy to the audience), novelty or unexpectedness, and the sense of conflict or tension. Some presenters generated a lot of input from the audience by taking a facilitator role or showing their affective stance (e.g., vulnerability) and creating

---

6 In interviews and questionnaires students mentioned what they thought constituted an interesting or a good OAP and what constituted a boring or a bad OAP. Further, in addition to evaluating their own OAPs, they also mentioned occasionally their evaluation of others’ OAPs or other students’ proficiency in presentation.
solidarity among the audience. Their use of support items such as an OHP, a passage from a novel, or glue and scissors also contributed to the engagement of the audience.

These efforts made by presenters were also an important part of the students' socialization into academic oral practice. By observing others use some of the strategies and also by employing the strategies themselves, students gradually developed an idea of what constituted an effective presentation and what did not. They learned what made an oral presentation (or oral text) interesting (both cognitively and emotionally), memorable, innovative but risky, or safe but less stimulating. Thus, in addition to the instructor's modeling and explanation of the task, each OAP performed by individual students served as a model, and students deepened their understandings of the task and the nature of oral academic communication as they participated in this repeated, routinized activity.

8.2 Complexity and Fluidity of OAP Task

The qualitative analysis of the OAP task suggested that the task constituted a particularly rich locus, medium, and resource for the graduate students' language socialization. It was in fact a complicated task involving a number of participation roles (e.g., presenter, audience, backup) as well as a variety of sub-tasks which required different modes and tools of thinking and communicating. First of all, it was a content task in which students read and analyzed an academic article. It usually required at least three different types of reading: summarizing an article, analyzing it critically, and generating questions for class discussion (by relating the article to the audience). Then, presenters had to construct an oral text from the article written by scholars, and communicate information from the article and their own thinking to their peers and
instructor. They might also deal with other kinds of tools (or resources) and support items such as a handout, an OHP, or a video clip to make their presentation more professional, interesting, relevant, and engaging. Thus, not only their content knowledge and intellectual abilities but also their presentation skills and communication skills were at stake. The task also involved affective dispositions and dimensions. For many students, the task was somewhat face-threatening because they felt that their abilities were being judged by their peers and instructor, and also because they were under the pressure of being given a grade on their performance. Further, some presenters felt uncomfortable since they were given a teacher-like role in spite of the presence of the instructor or peers who they perceived were more competent than themselves.

In short, the OAP task, a seemingly simple student presentation task, in fact constituted a rich and complex activity for the graduate students’ learning and academic socialization, involving their gradual mastery of the content, linguistic, and sociocultural knowledge as well as the cognitive, communicative, and interpersonal skills valued in the social practice of graduate school.

The OAP task was not only rich and complex in terms of contributing to the students' academic socialization, but also dynamic and fluid in nature. Although the task was a highly routinized part of graduate seminars and performed repeatedly throughout the school year, different levels of changes occurred within a single OAP, between individual OAPs, and also between courses. A single OAP normally consisted of different phases such as a summary phase, critique phase, and discussion phase. Each of these three phases involved different skills (both cognitive and presentation skills),
different levels of risk (taken by the presenter), and different kinds of audience involvement. For example, a summary phase was usually fairly smooth and less risky, and involved less input from the audience. The critique phase was often more risky and cognitively demanding since presenters provided their own critical analysis of the article and might be challenged by members in the audience who held different views and opinions. The discussion phase involved a lot of input from the audience and required a different kind of communication or interpersonal skill. Accordingly, presenters’ epistemic stance and affective stance might change in the different phases of a single OAP. Furthermore, as I have discussed earlier, their stances might change moment-by-moment in relation to other members in the audience as the interaction progressed.

Although every student performed the same task of OAPs, individual OAPs might develop into different entities depending on various factors. One of such factors which could change an OAP in a significant way was the nature of the presented article. Some articles were empirical studies with concrete subjects, methodologies, and findings, and thus relatively easy to analyze and present, while others were literature reviews or more theoretical articles which might be more difficult to present. Some were short and easy to summarize, while others were much longer and hard to provide a concise summary. In some OAPs presenters had a lot of background knowledge of the article (or had much interest in the topic) and felt comfortable with presenting it, while in others they lacked a full understanding of or interest in the article. Lynn, for example, mentioned that she had had totally different experiences with the two OAPs that she had performed in TESL 520: she felt that her first OAP went much better than her second one because
she had much more background knowledge and could find more personal relevance with
the first article than with the second one. Individual presenters' understanding of (or
expectations about) the task, motivation, and the level of investment in and experience
with the task also made a difference in performance as well as in preparation. Although no
students seemed to take the task lightly, some spent more time and energy than others in
doing extra research on the topic or rehearsing and practicing their OAPs. Time (or when
an OAP was performed) was another factor which changed the entity of OAPs in a
number of ways. For example, OAPs performed in different points of a lesson (e.g., the
very beginning, after the break, the very end) might generate different kinds and levels of
involvement on the part of the audience. When more than one OAP were performed in
the same evening, it was often the case that the class spent more time (and occasionally
more energy) on the first OAP than the later ones. Thus, the student who performed at
the end of the lesson might have to deal with more time management (and perhaps a more
tired audience) or in some cases change their plan (e.g., Example 3, May's OAP\textsuperscript{7}). In
addition to when an OAP was performed in a single lesson, what point of time in the
semesters it was performed could also have a bearing on the way it was performed. For
example, students who performed an OAP in the beginning of the first semester might be
disadvantaged in some ways because they were not yet used to the task, the course, their
instructor, and peers, while those who performed later in the semester might have
developed a better understanding of the task and the classroom culture, and feel more

\textsuperscript{7} Three students performed in the same evening when May did her OAP in TESL 520. The class spent
about 50 minutes on each of the first two OAPs and May only had 25 minutes. May had to change her plan
in a significant way because of this time limitation.
comfortable with their audience. At the same time, however, the initial novelty or thrill that the earlier OAPs naturally enjoyed might have been worn out in those performed later in the course. In short, even though all OAPs were performed based on the same requirements and guidelines, each OAP might be a totally different entity depending on all these different factors.

The OAP task, in fact, had a potential to change and evolve as the course progressed. At first, the instructors’ modeling of the task set the expectations of the task and introduced the use of available resources for performing the task. As more OAPs were performed in the course with one OAP serving as a model to another, students gradually developed an understanding of the expectations of and the resources used in the task. In other words, their repeated participation in the task (whether as a presenter, a backup, or a member in the audience) created and helped them understand the conventionalized features of the task. At the same time, however, students’ approach to and performance of the task changed and evolved as the course progressed. There was a desire among some students to be creative, innovative, and stimulating. Thus, students might have to achieve a balance between the two competing desires: one was to be conservative, follow what everyone else did, and conform to the instructor’s (or peers’)

---

8 Some of the NNSs as well as the first year graduate students intentionally chose to present later in the course when they would be much more familiar with the task and their classmates. However, some of them experienced the downside of that as well when they found themselves dealing with multiple assignments (e.g., OAPs, term papers) all toward the end of the semester. Students (especially full-time students who were taking two or three courses at the same time), in fact, could easily have more than a few assignments simultaneously. Thus, in order to avoid such a situation some students simply had to choose when to present instead of what article to present (all the articles for OAPs were pre-scheduled in each week of the course).

9 The OAP task in both courses, however, did not have rigid requirements pertaining to the way the task should be performed except for the time limit (although many OAPs lasted much longer than the limit) and the suggested elements (i.e., summary, critique, and discussion) (see Chapter 5).
expectations, and the other was to be progressive, try what nobody else had, and make one's OAP engaging and memorable.\textsuperscript{10}

It was not just the students who had a desire for a change but the instructors were also seeking improvements in the way the course was run, including the format of the OAP task. Dr. Cory, for example, changed the way the OAP task was set up in TESL 570, based on her experience in the previous year (see 5.2.1). In the beginning of the course, Dr. Frost introduced various examples of OAPs performed in previous years, and encouraged the students to be creative and innovative about the way they performed their OAPs.

In summary, the OAP task, situated not only in social, cultural, and interpersonal space but also in historical space, was not static but dynamic and fluid in nature. On the one hand, the conventionalized features of the task were developed by the instructor's modeling as well as the repeatedly performed student OAPs. On the other hand, the task kept evolving as different students performed the task on different articles and topics using different formats or resources at various points of the course (or the lesson). An important point to be made here is that this kind of change associated with the OAP task

\textsuperscript{10} Brian, for example, was innovative with his OAPs and fully aware of his desire to be creative and innovative. He mentioned in the interview that he got "discouraged" when he saw other students just follow the conventionalized pattern of OAPs and felt that there was a better way of performing an OAP. For him (as an experienced teacher), it was also very important to engage the audience, and being innovative certainly helped maintain their interest level. At the same time, however, he did not want to take too much risk and ignore the instructor's expectations. So, he took time for a group discussion (which was part of the standard format of OAPs in TESL 520), even though he doubted the value of including one in his OAP. He said: "I thought, well since everyone else has [a group discussion] as the last resort maybe I should, too. Because maybe Karen feels it is important for people to sit down and dialogue over something. And you know at times it is. But I think, my goodness, we've done it every week for the past umpteen months, so I thought people might be a little tired, but they liked it and I could see Karen nodding affirmatively when I said, 'Well, you know, we can go to this next section which is the discussion question.' And I looked directly to her for some sort of visual cue and sure enough I think she was nodding, 'Yes, I think we should'."
was achieved collectively in the community of graduate seminars. Students often organized, adjusted, and changed their OAP in relation to their audience’s needs and expectations, or other members’ OAPs. For example, Tina decided on her approach (which could be characterized as innovative in terms of her extremely active or charged response to the presented article) based on some of the previous OAPs that she thought were “boring” (see 6.1.2). Another important source for change seemed to be the tension between the conventional way of performing the task (or the standard practice of the community) and the individual students’ own values and objectives. Brian’s innovation that I have discussed earlier suggested an example of this kind: he incorporated hands-on activities into his OAP because he felt that practice (as opposed to theory) should have a place in discussion even at a graduate level. Robert completely omitted a summary from his OAP since he strongly believed that it was much more important to discuss one’s philosophy about L2 teaching at a graduate level than to discuss a single article. As I have discussed earlier, students often joined their graduate programs with clear and specific objectives in mind, and also had their own values, beliefs, and specializations as professional adults. Thus, the complex distribution of expert-novice in OAPs plus potentially conflicting goals or values (or interests) of multiple experts and novices often led to a change, an innovation, or a new direction of the community’s activity or practice.11

11 Lave & Wenger (1991) consider in a central way the “conflictual nature of social practice” in their discussion on legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (see Chapter 2). They argue that the concept of LPP provides a framework for considering processes of social transformation, emphasizing the importance of “connecting issues of sociocultural transformation with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice” (p. 49). Although Lave & Wenger are talking about the social practice which is beyond the context of pedagogical structuring, their framework of LPP in terms of a
8.3 Implications for L2 Learning and Teaching

8.3.1 Re-examining the NS-NNS Dichotomy

In the context of graduate seminars, both NSs and NNSs were part of the academic community of highly motivated, active learners. They all became socialized into the academic culture of graduate school at WCU through guided participation in various academic tasks such as OAPs. Both NNSs and NSs as co-participants learned the kinds of intellectual values and academic skills that were promoted in the academic community, including how to use language appropriately and effectively. As I have illustrated in Chapter 7, however, NNSs often assumed that NSs had much less difficulty in performing an OAP or were much more used to the oral presentation tasks compared to themselves. Although it was true that NNSs often experienced linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties that NSs might not experience, the interviews with NSs suggested that NSs often felt just as conflicted with OAPs, just as nervous, or just as “tongue-tied” as NNSs. NSs also put a lot of effort in preparing for OAPs and employed various strategies to make their OAP clear and engaging just as NNSs did. Furthermore, NSs had various levels of proficiency in performing an OAP as did the NNSs.

In L2 learning and teaching literature, it is often assumed that NNSs should aim at approaching the “native-like proficiency” or a NS standard in their L2. Hoekje and Williams (1992), for example, point out that various needs analyses and other studies on ITAs (e.g., Gillespie, 1988; Rounds, 1987; Williams, Barnes, & Finger, 1987, cited in changing shared practice seems to be applicable to some extent to the practice of OAPs discussed here in this study.

219
Hoekje & Williams, 1992) include the collection of baseline data from NSs, suggesting the underlying assumption that ITAs should strive to emulate native-speaking TAs. What seems to be ignored here is the variation in proficiency that native-speaking TAs (or NSs in general) display as well as the variations among ITAs. Proficiency in this case does not mean some kind of generic linguistic competence but language proficiency combined with pedagogical skills. In other words, oral skills cannot be separated from the context in which they are used, in this case, a TA role. Thus, despite some linguistic problems, an ITA may be more proficient, displaying better interpersonal and pedagogical skills than some native-speaking TAs. In the present study, some students were more articulate and had better presentation skills than others, whether they were NSs or NNSs. Some NNSs were able to overcome their language problems by using compensatory strategies or because they were used to giving a presentation in a university setting and had already developed good presentation skills. There was also a great variation among NSs: some were experienced teachers and had exceptional presentation skills, while others seemed to struggle to present in front of their peers.

Thus, in the context of graduate seminars or ITA education, it may be appropriate to re-examine the simplified dichotomy between NS and NNS (or hierarchical NS-NNS relationship), or the assumption that NS competence is the target. In light of language socialization or other sociocultural approaches, graduate students as newcomers had to learn how to communicate in the specific sociocultural context of graduate seminars, whether they were NSs or NNSs. It also seems important to re-examine the NNSs’ assumption or preconception that NSs can perform an oral task with little effort simply
because they are native speakers. This kind of perception was very common among the NNSs who participated in this study and the pilot study. It was also common that NNSs focused on their language problems and lost confidence or suffered from an inferiority complex, despite other strengths and skills that they might have.

Findings in the present study seem to suggest that we need to look at a graduate classroom as a community of learners with different specializations, experiences, and perspectives, and different levels of knowledge, proficiency, and skills, instead of a clear-cut dichotomy between NSs and NNSs or between experts and novices. This viewpoint is consistent with the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or guided participation (Rogoff, 1990) which locates learning in the processes of co-participation in the community’s practice or activity (or task), not in independent individuals. This view may shed light on the common assumption which is prevalent in L2 literature as well as among NNSs themselves that NNSs should emulate an NS model or standard. We may be able to benefit from a perspective that NNSs are also co-participants in communities of practice who can bring their own specializations and expertise and guide each other’s learning and development.

8.3.2 NNSs’ Language Socialization

Although in the previous section I have emphasized the re-examination of the NS-NNS dichotomy and suggested that both NSs and NNSs gradually became socialized into the culture of graduate school, there still seemed to exist certain difficulties that many NNSs experienced in common in their language socialization process. In Chapter 7, I have illustrated three main areas of NNSs’ perceived difficulties associated with OAPs.
(linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties) and their strategies to overcome such difficulties. I have also described how the OAP task nevertheless provided various opportunities for NNSs. In this section I will discuss insights and implications that seem to derive from these findings, and explore what seemed to be unique about the language socialization of NNSs compared to that of NSs.

As I have illustrated in Chapter 7, the most common difficulty mentioned by the NNSs was their limited ability to elaborate upon their points or talk spontaneously in English. Especially when they were given a presenter role, they seemed to experience this difficulty more than usual since as a presenter they normally had to maintain the floor longer and respond to the audience's questions on the spot. Many NNSs used compensatory strategies for this difficulty such as rehearsing, depending on a written text (e.g., handouts, notes), or getting help from the backup person. Furthermore, they indicated that they learned what strategies worked and what didn't as they performed a number of OAPs and also observed others' performance. For example, since Ken did not rehearse his first OAP and experienced much difficulty in articulating his thoughts, he rehearsed his second OAP and was able to express himself better. Emi mentioned that she prepared three different sets of notes for her second OAP because she felt that the first OAP she performed without any prepared notes was disorganized. Relying on prepared notes, however, could be costly because the audience tended to tune out if presenters simply read their handouts. In fact, in Emi's case, her first OAP generated

---

12 It should be noted again, however, that findings of this study only came from the six NNSs who all had an Asian background.
much more involvement from the audience than her second one. Tomo mentioned that he learned this from others' OAPs and tried not to rely on handouts or other written notes too much. Instead, he spent a lot of time rehearsing his OAP. Thus, in some way or another, they attempted to achieve a balance between providing a carefully prepared talk (which might be more syntactically correct and complicated) and a more natural or spontaneous talk (which might engage the audience more).  

An important observation of NNSs relating to their ability to articulate their ideas was that the amount of background knowledge or expertise that they had in the topic of their talk seemed to affect their oral production (both in quality and amount). Some NNSs mentioned that they could express themselves in English significantly better (and thus participate in conversation more) when they perceived themselves as relative experts about the topic of the talk. Many studies of L2 oral production have suggested that topic may affect NNSs’ participation in conversation, accuracy and amount of oral production, and comprehensibility of their talk (e.g., Eisenstein & Starbuck, 1989; Gass & Varonis, 1984; Selinker & Douglas, 1985; Woken & Swales, 1989; Zuengler, 1993; Zuengler & Bent, 1991). Zuengler (1993), for example, found that those interlocutors (whether NS or NNS) who had a relatively greater content knowledge participated more actively. Although these studies are fundamentally different from the present study since they stemmed from the psycholinguistic tradition of L2 acquisition research and employed experimental designs (and also because they investigated NS-NNS dyads), their

13 Note that the NNSs in Weissberg’s (1993) study also tended to provide a carefully prepared talk in seminar presentations, which did not meet the professors’ genre expectations (see 2.3.1).
findings seem to be consistent to some extent with some of the NNSs' observations in this study. These findings may provide important insights or implications for L2 learning and teaching. First, L2 learners' oral production as well as their acquisition of oral language may be closely related to the content domain or the topic of the talk and learners' relative expertise in the topic.\(^{15}\) Second, the topic of conversation in which L2 learners have relatively greater expertise or background knowledge may contribute to their active participation in the interaction or to their engagement in an extended conversation.

Another common area of difficulty was cultural differences between the Canadian classroom and the classroom of NNSs' home country. NNSs had to learn about the Canadian classroom setting and acquire tacit knowledge about the appropriate classroom behaviors including the norms or rules of interaction. Since all the six NNSs in this study came from an Asian background, they seemed to observe similar differences: briefly, they felt that students in the Canadian classroom were in general more active participants and had much more personal interaction with the instructor and with each other than students in their home countries. Many NNSs, in fact, had a general knowledge about the norms and assumptions in the Canadian classroom (e.g., students are supposed to interact actively). However, the actual problems seemed to lie in their lack of tacit knowledge and subtle skills as to how to interact in classroom according to such norms. For example, many NNSs reported that they had difficulty in gaining a turn in class discussion without

\(^{14}\) This is purely a subjective observation of NNSs based on their own experiences, and a detailed examination of this point is beyond the scope of the present study.

\(^{15}\) Selinker and Douglas (1985) have proposed the "Discourse Domain Model" which states that L2 learners acquire their L2 through domains of discourse which usually involve specific content areas. In the input and interaction approach of SLA, however, domains of discourse or learners' content knowledge about the topic of conversation have largely been ignored.
rudely interrupting somebody. Some mentioned that they didn’t know how to direct questions to the instructor in class, even though they knew that students were allowed to do that. One NNS said that he didn’t know how to disagree with another student (or bring up different opinions) without being offensive. Some had difficulty as presenters in their OAPs in interrupting and stopping the audience’s discussion and moving on to the next thing. Thus, it was one thing to know the norms and rules of the Canadian classroom; it was another to be able to behave in an appropriate and competent manner according to such norms, since they were often tacit, subtle, and complex.

In many ITA training programs, teaching ITAs the cultural assumptions behind the North American educational system has become a standard component, and it often includes reading about North American universities and the goals of education (Hoekje & Williams, 1992). Although it is important and necessary to understand such cultural norms and assumptions of the classroom as general knowledge, the actual face-to-face interaction in the classroom may require more tacit and subtle knowledge and skills of interaction. In other words, in addition to providing ITAs or international students in general with broad information about classroom norms and assumptions, there seems to be a need for a closer examination of the sociocultural dimension of classroom interaction. Hall (1993a, 1995) provided an analytical framework for the study of the sociocultural aspects of face-to-face interaction or oral practices, and proposed analyzing oral practices in terms of the interactive resources needed for participation and the conventional ways of using the resources. These resources, claimed to be universal features of oral practices, involved setting, purposes, participants, content, participation structures, act-sequence,
and rhythm. Hall (1993a) further suggested an incorporation of the study of oral practices in L2 pedagogy:

... when members of a group interact they are engaged in activities that are bounded, conventionalized, to some extent by the socioculturally defined, structuring resources shared by participants, and ... the development of competence in another language may to some extent be facilitated by the learner's awareness of the ways in which these resources are used by a group to enact and participate in their in-group activities. ... the identification of [these resources] can provide learners of another language with a framework for understanding the meaning of oral practices. (p. 150)

Thus, it may be useful to analyze the oral classroom interaction in terms of the structuring resources and members' use of the resources. Furthermore, as Hall (1993a, 1995) noted, it seems particularly worthwhile to analyze socioculturally important, routinized activities such as OAPs because the "conventionalized nature of such activities provides the novice members with fairly predictable ways of using and interpreting the uses of the available resources" (p. 149). This predictability and the opportunity for repeated participation in such activities may help L2 learners analyze and understand the complexity and subtlety of members' interaction.

One way to increase novice members' (including NNSs) awareness of the interactional resources and the competent members' often tacit and subtle use of the resources may be to provide them with opportunities to review the activity on the video. In the case of OAPs, for example, although students had many opportunities to observe others perform the task, it might be difficult to analyze how members used the resources while they engaged in the task itself. If NNSs (or other novice members) were given an opportunity to review an OAP later with a specific analytical focus (e.g., how the
presenter interacted with the audience, how students responded to the instructor’s questions, what verbal and nonverbal cues people provided in order to gain a turn in discussion), they might be able to uncover the members’ use of interactional resources as well as the communication strategies and skills that competent members used in the activity. An obvious advantage of using a video instead of just an audio recording is that students will be able to analyze members’ nonverbal use of the resources (e.g., eye contact, hand movements) which often convey important (but subtle) interactional messages. In the present study, students did have an opportunity to review their OAP later on the video, but not for the purpose of analyzing the interactional resources (see 3.5.3 for the purposes of review and interview sessions). Nevertheless, they noticed a variety of things about their performance as a presenter as well as the audience’s reactions which they did not necessarily notice while they were performing an OAP.

Reviewing an OAP later on the video seemed to have other benefits. First of all, students could reflect on and analyze their own performance. Many students, in fact, commented on their mannerism, language use, and other presentation skills while reviewing their OAP performance on the video. Some NNSs were able to detect grammar mistakes that they made repeatedly during their presentation. Considering that many NNSs had linguistic difficulties (e.g., difficulty in elaboration), it may be useful for NNSs to review their performance by focusing on their language. Another benefit was that students, including NNSs, watched themselves on the video and often felt better about their performance. Quite often, students, especially NNSs, were initially not enthusiastic about watching themselves on the video because they thought that they had not
performed very well. After reviewing the video, however, some students changed their impressions and commented that their performance was not as bad as they thought.¹⁶ This also provides an implication for the third area of NNSs' difficulty, psychological difficulties. Their lack of confidence and inferiority complex may be reduced in some cases by providing them an opportunity to review their performance.

In summary, although graduate seminars constituted a context for the secondary language socialization of all graduate students, NNSs seemed to experience additional challenges compared to their NS peers since they had to become socialized into the Canadian classroom culture as well. There were three main areas of such challenges, linguistic, sociocultural, and psychological difficulties, and they were closely related to one another. Because of their language barrier and different cultural (or educational) backgrounds, NNSs often found it difficult to express themselves fully in English or to participate in class discussion as actively as NSs. This might seriously reduce their opportunities to use the language in classroom and practice an appropriate use of the language. Some NNSs also suffered from psychological difficulties such as lack of confidence and inferiority complex because of their linguistic and sociocultural difficulties, which also prevented them from participating. NNSs, however, gradually became socialized into the Canadian classroom culture as well as the culture of graduate school through exposure to and participation in academic tasks such as OAPs. The OAP task in particular provided them with a rich context, means, and resources for their language

¹⁶ In fact, four students (including two NNSs) who had not wanted a copy of their video-taped OAP changed their mind after watching the video and asked me for a copy. They mentioned that they appeared better in the video than they thought they would and felt much better about their performance.
socialization. First of all, the predictability of the task and NNSs' repeated participation in the task might help them learn the norms and skills of interaction in the Canadian graduate classroom. Second, the OAP task provided a precious and legitimate opportunity for NNSs to engage in extended conversation and actively interact with other members. It was also a chance for them to demonstrate to the class their knowledge and abilities and as a result gain confidence.

An important implication for L2 pedagogy was that providing L2 learners with opportunities to review the classroom activity (such as an OAP) and analyze the members' use of the interactional resources might help them acquire tacit knowledge of classroom interaction. Reviewing and reflecting on their own classroom performance with a specific focus might also help increase their linguistic as well as sociocultural awareness. Another important implication was that in spite of the NNSs' overall lack of confidence and other linguistic or sociocultural difficulties, their performance of an OAP might be as effective as a NS' performance. Some NNSs might employ compensation strategies to overcome their difficulties and others might simply have excellent presentation skills. I have suggested to re-examine the simplified distinction of NS-NNS as well as the somewhat automatic assumption of NS competence as the target for L2 learners' performance. NNSs in the graduate classroom may also be empowered by considering themselves as active participants of the academic community where different members bring in different specializations, experiences, perspectives, and different levels of knowledge and skills, instead of simply placing themselves at one end of the NS-NNS dichotomy.
8.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This research suggested that it was useful and informative to investigate normally occurring classroom tasks by using qualitative research methodologies. It illustrated how OAPs were sociocultural activities with specific goals, meanings, and histories, and how students gradually became socialized into the classroom culture through exposure to and participation in OAPs. The complex and fluid nature of the OAP task was also discussed, which at the same time suggested the complexity of the graduate students' language socialization. The majority of task-based studies which follow the psycholinguistic tradition of SLA often do not take into account this sociocultural dimension of classroom tasks which can influence students' linguistic and sociocultural learning in a significant way.

Thus, there is a need for more studies which investigate normally occurring classroom tasks by using qualitative methodologies. In order to fully understand the role of classroom tasks in novice members' language socialization, we need to examine different tasks employed in similar contexts of learning, or similar tasks in different contexts. For example, an investigation of similar oral presentation tasks employed in the graduate seminars of different disciplines would be useful (e.g., Weissberg, 1993). It would also be informative to investigate a graduate classroom with NNSs from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds since the NNSs in the present study were all Asians.

It was beyond the scope of this study to explore in greater detail the following relevant issues: (1) how individual students' performance of OAPs changed (or improved); (2) how recent graduates (who were now professors) viewed in retrospect the
OAP task and similar oral presentation tasks in which they had participated in graduate seminars; (3) the analysis of OAPs in terms of Hall's (1993a, 1995) structuring resources of oral practices; (4) the possibility and benefits of teaching these resources and members' use of the resources to NNSs and other novice members in the classroom; (5) the possible benefits of NNSs' (or ITAs') reviewing and analyzing their oral performance on the video as well as other members' performance. These themes are suggested as areas for future consideration and research.
Chapter 9

REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

9.1 Reflections on Data Collection Methods: Tradeoffs

In this chapter, I will provide some of my reflections on the qualitative (or ethnographic) data collection methods used in the present study and also participants’ reflective thoughts about having participated in this study. As I have described in Chapter 3, five different data collection methods were employed in order to enhance the credibility and robustness of the study and reduce various threats to its validity. With each of these methods, however, I found advantages and disadvantages, which often resulted in some tradeoffs or ethical dilemmas.

Participant observation is often an essential element of qualitative studies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Spradley, 1980; Yin, 1994). Researchers (especially ethnographers) attempt to understand emic perspectives by immersing themselves in the setting, and hearing and seeing things as participants do. In the present study, I was a participant observer and therefore not only observed the lessons but also participated in classroom activities as a member of the student group. This helped me understand the classroom events from the participating student’s point of view and also made my presence in the classroom relatively unobtrusive. However, one major tradeoff of taking a participant observer role was that my participant role (i.e., the student role) might occasionally require more of my attention than my observer role (i.e., the researcher role) (see Yin, 1994, for a discussion of this trade-off). It was difficult
especially in the initial stage of the study to achieve a good balance between these two roles.

As I have briefly mentioned in Chapter 3, there were a number of tradeoffs with the video-recording of OAPs. From the researcher's point of view, this recording method proved to be invaluable because: (1) it captured participants' non-verbal communication (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, use of handouts) as well as the physical setting of the classroom (e.g., seating arrangement), (2) it allowed me to review the OAP performance (or parts of an OAP) as many times as I needed for the purpose of data analyses, and (3) it contributed in a significant way to stimulating recall, reflection, and discussion by participants later in review and interview sessions. The presence of a video camera and a tripod in the classroom, however, could be obtrusive, although different individuals seemed to have different tolerance level with (or in response to) the fact that they were being video-taped. Following are excerpts from the questionnaire response (see Question 1 of Questionnaire 2 in Appendix C):

I felt quite comfortable being video-taped. When I really started to talk about my article, I almost forgot its existence.

Uncomfortable at first but I soon got used to it--The presentation in front of my peers for a grade was more nerve-racking. I did, however, totally avoid looking at the camera so as not to increase nervousness, and as a result I avoided the left part of the class.

Video-taping is a challenge to the presenter--there is the need felt to perform better in front of a camera--technically, it makes one conscious of how you are presenting.

It was a good experience for many of us students to give this type of presentation in front of a camera: those of us who are serious about our field can expect to give seminars etc. and can expect to be video-taped at some point in the future.
Thus, some students seemed to be quite comfortable with being video-taped or forget about the camera during their OAPs, while others seemed to be more apprehensive about it. It may be difficult, however, to know how much influence the video camera had on the students' affective state and performance because they might have been apprehensive or uncomfortable about giving a presentation whether they were being video-taped or not. One student mentioned that the fact that his second OAP had not been video-taped might have reduced his nervousness to some extent, but he also felt that he might have been less nervous simply because it was his second OAP. Nevertheless, the video camera did have an impact on some students' affective state or performance. A concrete example given in one of the excerpts above was that a presenter avoided looking at the video camera and therefore avoided some people in the audience. Another student, on the contrary, mentioned that she made a conscious effort of looking at the camera so that I could get a picture of her face. Another student even acted in front of the camera during his OAP and made the audience laugh.

Although it seems that a video camera has increasingly become part of our daily life, it has not yet become an integrated part of classroom life. On the one hand, it may be useful for not only research purposes but also pedagogical purposes (see Chapter 8 for pedagogical implications). On the other hand, the use of a video camera in the classroom can be obtrusive or have negative effects on students such as increasing their nervousness or apprehension. In addition, students (or participants) may wonder how the video recordings will be used, how they will be destroyed or maintained, or who will have
access to watch them. Thus, there are also various ethical issues that we need to consider seriously, especially when we use video-recordings for a research purpose.

A review and interview session (RIS) was a combination of video-reviewing and a formal interview (see 3.5.3), which was conducted after a student’s OAP. This data collection method served a number of purposes. First of all, it provided an opportunity for students to review and reflect on their own OAP performance. They wrote in the questionnaire:

Reviewing my presentation with the researcher helped me to improve my presentation (my second presentation was a little better than my first one). I had a chance to look at myself and also understand why my presentation was going in that way.

By reviewing the video I found some language problems that I had never noticed or paid much attention to before.

Reviewing the video is a learning process approached with apprehension! But helps to look at oneself and realize what could be done better.

The video was very helpful (helps us see the nuance of physical behavior). It’s always interesting to see what one is doing on the video--it’s difficult to have self-awareness that you get by viewing a video.

It was educational to see how my perceptions varied--what I thought occurred after the presentation vs. after viewing the video.

Thus, many students seemed to learn something by reviewing and reflecting on their own performance later on the video.

Second, RISs solicited information about students’ attitudes, perceptions, and understandings of their OAPs in their own words. Since students and I had concrete visual images of their OAPs as shared reference, students were often able to provide detailed information about what they were doing, why they were doing something, or
what they were thinking about at particular moments. Students in fact mentioned a
variety of things while they were watching their own performance on the video: to list
some of them, their physical appearance and mannerism, affective state, use of language,
strategies to engage the audience, observations on the audience, and difficulties that they
experienced. Listening to them commenting on these things helped me realize that they
were in fact dealing with a lot of things, while performing a seemingly simple task of
presenting an article in class. For example, one student mentioned while reviewing the
video that he was explaining his critique point, checking the audience’s response and
wondering if it was making sense to them, especially to the instructor, while also
worrying about time and noticing that a student who was usually vocal had been
unusually quiet.

Third, RISs sometimes revealed a gap between my interpretations and students’
interpretations or experience of the same event. For example, while reviewing the video,
one student commented a number of times that her language was terrible and that she
regretted not having prepared what to say beforehand, while my interpretation of the
same OAP was that she had articulated her points quite well without depending much on
the written text. In another instance, I thought a student had received good help from the
instructor who had elaborated on his point by adding some background information. He
told me, however, that he hadn’t understood the instructor’s point very well at all and
just pretended by nodding occasionally that he had understood her and appreciated her
interjection. I wonder if I would have obtained this kind of information, had it not been
for the video-reviewing. RISs also provided an opportunity for students to explain things
that had not necessarily been observable, for example the changes that they had to make in their OAP. A student wrote in the questionnaire:

I found that reviewing my presentation on the video with the researcher allowed me to express my own interpretations. I could explain where I needed to make a change or how I would do it in a different way.

One difficulty that I had in the video-reviewing part of RISs was that some students did not provide much input while watching and reflecting on the video, while I withheld concrete questions to ask them. This was a dilemma because I only provided students with very general directions in order to let them analyze and reflect on their OAP by using their own framework to structure such an event. However, the fact that I did not ask concrete questions about the video was somewhat puzzling or problematic to some students who expected me to ask such questions. One student wrote in the questionnaire:

Reviewing the video, I was unsure as to what to comment upon. (So I explained why I did, or how I decided my steps, etc.) Interview was easiest to let my ideas flow.

Individual students' response to the video, in fact, varied considerably. While some watched the video quietly, others commented on various things almost constantly throughout the video. Some provided only short responses to my questions in the ensuing interview, while others produced longer narratives. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to deconstruct RISs in detail and identify what causes such difference in students' responses, it is important to note that each RIS, like other interview situations, was a unique speech event that was socially constructed by a student (i.e., an interviewee) and me (i.e., an interviewer) in a particular context (Mishler,
There seemed to be many different variables which could change the nature of an RIS: to name a few, individual students' gender, age, ethnicity and personality in relation to mine, their motivation and interest in this research, their willingness to review the video, and the level of their fatigue. The time of day and the location could also be factors. A unique combination of these variables constructed the context of each RIS and generated certain interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer.

Two open-ended questionnaires were administered at the end of each semester. While RISs generated detailed information on students' perceptions of their own OAPs, these questionnaires elicited more general information on their perceptions of the OAP task and contributed to my understanding of the general trends of the student group. Since the participants in this study often had a busy schedule, we could only spend so much time in RISs, and therefore, the number of things that I could ask in RISs was limited. Thus, the questionnaires also played a role of complementing RISs. Furthermore, the questionnaire solicited students' negative comments (e.g., negative evaluations on others' OAPs, negative attitudes toward the task) which I did not encounter in RISs. Students probably felt less reserved about expressing such negative feelings in the questionnaires than in RISs since the questionnaires were anonymous. Although there were a number of disadvantages associated with the anonymous questionnaires (e.g., respondents' skipping of answering certain questions, lack of opportunities for the clarification of answers, space limitations on the paper), this data collection method nevertheless elicited valuable information which might have been difficult to obtain in face-to-face interviews.
There were also tradeoffs with using many different methods in a single research. One such tradeoff was that although I could obtain valuable information by using multiple data collection methods, I occasionally felt that as an inexperienced, single researcher I might be dealing with too many different tasks. Each method, in fact, requires a lot of training, skills, and expertise by the researcher, and also time. Despite my relative lack of training and expertise in these methods, I observed and participated in the class, recorded OAPs on the video, reviewed the video with participants, interviewed them, and developed and administered questionnaires. Furthermore, some of the participants might have felt overwhelmed by being observed, video-taped, interviewed, and completing questionnaires, although they all kindly cooperated with me throughout the research.

In summary, different data collection methods yielded different kinds of information which added depth to the overall data and ultimately contributed to uncovering the complex nature of OAPs and the graduate students' language socialization. However, there were various tradeoffs associated with each method and also with the use of many different methods in a single research. To possibly reduce the downside of these tradeoffs, a number of changes could have been made. For example, by involving the participants in the video-recording of OAPs (i.e., letting volunteers among the participants video-tape each other's OAP), the obtrusiveness of the researcher with a video camera might have been minimized. This might also have provided opportunities for the participants to learn to use a video camera or to practice data collection by using one. As for RISs, more concrete questions could have been asked especially to the participants who tended to be quiet during the video-reviewing in order to enhance their
productive reflection. Interviews (excluding the video-reviewing part) and questionnaires could have been replaced by class discussions or small group discussions. This might have saved time and also yielded interesting data, allowing the participants to discuss issues collaboratively and share each other's perspectives. Finally, more training and education in these data collection techniques on my part could have been acquired prior to the commencement of this study which may have provided even further refinements to the data collection.
References


Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching (pp. 119-161). New York: Collier-Macmillan.


Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT: A Study of Oral Academic Presentation Tasks from a Language Socialization Perspective

INVESTIGATOR: Naoko Morita
MA Candidate in Teaching English as a Second Language
Department of Language Education, UBC
Tel. (604) 730-2798

PURPOSE: The purpose of this project is to better understand language socialization of university graduate students by investigating oral academic presentation tasks. Language socialization (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Ochs, 1988) refers to socialization to use language and socialization through language. This theoretical framework views linguistic learning and sociocultural learning as interdependent: that is, language and culture are learned simultaneously. This project attempts to describe and understand how non-native speaking graduate students learn language and culture in classrooms through participating in oral academic presentation tasks. This also requires study of native speakers to provide context.

PROCEDURES: The focus of this project is oral presentations in which you will be presenting a research article in course readings in class. Class observations (I will be taking field notes) will focus on your presentations. Interviews and questionnaires will be on your views and opinions on oral presentation tasks and classroom cultures of Canada and your home country. Interviews will be audiotaped. Your oral presentations will be videotaped and/or audiotaped only with your permission to do so. Documents such as handouts you prepare for your presentation will also be collected. You will be invited to a review session where you will have a chance to comment on your presentation while you and I watch your videotaped presentation. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential (names will not be used), and questionnaires will be anonymous. Nobody will have access to any data including videotapes and audiotapes of your presentations except you, my thesis advisor, and I.

TIME: Class observations will be conducted for the duration of the course (i.e. from Sept. 1995 to Mar. 1996). Interviews will take approximately 20 minutes and will be conducted by me at your convenience. I may informally ask you some questions for a few minutes after your presentation. Questionnaires (once a term) will take 15 to 20 minutes. Your entire presentations (usually 20 to 30 minutes) will be recorded with your permission. Review sessions will also take 20 to 30 minutes depending on the length of your presentation.
REFUSALS: You have the right to refuse to participate at any time: it is not a problem if you do not wish to be interviewed or observed, or your presentation to be recorded (videotaped and/or audiotaped). Although you will be welcomed, you do not have to come to the review session if you do not wish to do so.

INQUIRIES: I will be happy to answer any questions about my research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact me either in person or by telephone.

CONSENT FORM

PROJECT: A Study of Oral Academic Presentation Tasks from a Language Socialization Perspective

INVESTIGATOR: Naoko Morita
MA Candidate in Teaching English as a Second Language
Department of Language Education, UBC
Tel. (604) 730-2798

I have read the informed consent form and understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without any problem. I know that my name will not be used in connection with anything I say nor with my presentations. I understand the goals of this research (observations, interviews, questionnaires, and recordings of presentations). If I would like more information about the project, I know that I am free to ask for it.

I have received a copy of the consent form.

__________________________
Name (please print)

__________________________  ______________
Signature                  Date
Appendix B

INTERVIEW POINTS

Interview 1 (conducted after first OAPs)

1. Article
   - Why did you choose this particular article to present?

2. Preparation
   - How did you prepare for your presentation?
   - Did you rehearse your presentation?
   - Did you consult the instructor and/or your backup person?

3. Performance (if not mentioned in the video-reviewing part)
   - How do you think your presentation went?
   - How do you feel about your own performance?

4. Feedback
   - Did you receive any feedback on your presentation during or after your presentation?
   - What kind of feedback did you receive and from who?

5. Experience with presentations
   a. as a student
      - Have you done many presentations as a student in your schooling?
        (elementary, secondary, university)
      - Do you enjoy giving presentations?
   b. as a teacher
      - Have you had your students do presentations in your teaching?
      - If you have, what kind of presentation tasks have you given to your students? What criteria do you use to evaluate your students' presentations?

6. Classroom culture
   - How would you characterize the classroom culture of TESL 520/TESL 570 compared to other courses you have taken/are taking?
   - What impressions do you have about the content of the course, the instructor, and your classmates?

7. Questions to NNSs
   - What are some of the differences between the classroom culture of Canada and that of your home country?
- Do you have any difficulties in giving a presentation in your second language?

8. OAP tasks
- What values do you see in student presentation tasks in graduate seminars?

**Interview 2 (conducted after second OAPs)**

1. The second OAP
   - How did your presentation go this time compared to the first time?
   - How would you evaluate your second performance compared to the first one?
   - Why did you choose your article this time?
   - Did you prepare for this presentation any differently from the first presentation?

2. Impressions on the program and the course
   - What impressions or opinions do you have about your program so far?
   - What impressions or opinions do you have about this course so far?

3. The nature of learning
   - How would you describe the nature of learning at a graduate level?
   - What kind of things do you think you learn from participating in oral presentations as a presenter/a member of the audience?
Appendix C

Questionnaires

**Questionnaire 1** *(conducted at the end of the first semester)*

1. What graduate program are you in? (e.g. M.A. in TESL)

2. How many years have you been in the program?

3. How many courses have you taken/are you taking?
   
   a. I have taken ( ) courses.
   
   b. I am taking ( ) courses this semester.

4. How many times have you done a presentation so far?
   
   a. In TESL 520 ( )
   
   b. In TESL 570 ( )
   
   c. In graduate courses total (approximately) ( )

5. What do you think constitutes a good presentation for TESL 520/570? In other words, what qualities do you think are important or helpful?

6. What do you think the role of a presenter is? What is the role of the audience, the instructor, and the backup person? If you think these roles vary depending on the courses (TESL 520/570), please explain how.

   **Presenter**

   **Audience**

   **Instructor**

   **Backup person**

7. Do you feel nervous when you present in class? If yes, why do you think you get nervous?
8. How would you evaluate the student presentations done so far in TESL 520/TESL 570?

9. What kind of things do you think you learn from doing a presentation?

10. What do you learn from other students' presentations?

11. What do you think are the expected skills, abilities, or attributes of students in a graduate seminar in TESL?

12. Please write any other comments you have on class presentations in general.

13. Question for international students (non-Canadian students): Do you feel that cultural differences between Canada and your home country affect the way you behave in class in any way? Please describe.

**Questionnaire 2 (conducted at the end of second semester)**

Please circle: I am a (full-time / part-time) student.
I am in (1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th) year.

1. What are some of your reflections or thoughts on having participated in this research project? You may want to refer to the following aspects of the project:
   - the researcher's videotaping your presentations
   - reviewing your presentations on the video with the researcher
   - interviews

2. What do you feel has been the best aspect of TESL 520/TESL 570, and why?

3. What do you feel could have been improved in TESL 520/TESL 570?

4. What are some of the challenges you may have experienced as a graduate student?
Appendix D

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

1. Participants: I = instructor; S = student; Ss = more than one students; A = audience as a whole; Initials used for students identifiable by name (e.g., T, E, R)

2. Left bracket ([]): the beginning of overlapping speech, shown for both speakers; second speaker’s bracket occurs at the beginning of the line of the next turn rather than in alignment with previous speaker’s bracket (for word-processing reasons only)

3. Equal sign (=): speech which comes immediately after another person’s, shown for both speakers (i.e., latched utterances)

4. (#): marks the length of a pause; (0.2) is 2/10 of a second; (2.0) is 2 seconds

5. (Words): the words in parenthesis () were not clearly heard; (x) = unclear word; (xx) = two unclear words; (xxx) = three or more unclear words.

6. Underlined words: spoken with emphasis

7. CAPITAL LETTERS: loud speech

8. Double parenthesis: ((Comments, like “laughs,” “S writes on board,” etc.; relevant details pertaining to interaction))

9. Colon (:): sound or syllable is unusually lengthened, for example, rea::lly lo:ng

10. Period (.) : terminal falling intonation

11. Comma (,): rising, continuing intonation

12. Question mark (?): high rising intonation, not necessarily at the end of a sentence

13. Unattached dash (-): a short, untimed pause (e.g., less than 0.2 second)

14. One-sided attached dash-: a cut-off often accompanied by a glottal stop (e.g., a self-correction); a dash attached on both sides reflects spelling conventions or a glottal stop.