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The University of British Columbia
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Date September 25, 2002

DE-6 (2/88)
Abstract

As the student population grows increasingly diverse and international in North American postsecondary institutions, it has become critical, on the one hand, to understand how newcomers from different backgrounds acquire academic discourses in their second language (L2), and on the other hand, how academic communities as well as individual learners may respond to this heterogeneity. This study explores these issues by providing a close examination of the lived experiences and perspectives of L2 international students enrolled in graduate courses at a Canadian university. The participants in this ethnographic multiple case study included six female graduate students from Japan and ten of their course instructors. Data were collected over an entire academic year mainly by means of student self-reports, interviews, and classroom observations.

Grounded in the notion of “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), this study analyzes how the focal students negotiated their membership in their new classroom communities by participating in classroom discussions. The findings suggested that a major challenge faced by the students was negotiating discourses, competence, identities, and power relations in order to participate and be recognized as legitimate and competent members of their classroom communities. The students also attempted to shape their own learning and participation by exercising their personal agency and actively negotiating their positionalities, which were locally constructed in a given classroom. Notably, even though the students shared a similar linguistic/cultural background as well as the same gender, there was considerable variability among them in
the ways they negotiated their participation and experienced personal transformations across different courses.

By demonstrating the idiosyncratic, complex interplay between the individual learner and the classroom context, I argue that academic discourse socialization needs to be seen as a co-constructed and negotiated process, through which the learner's identity as well as the classroom community is constantly created and recreated. I also suggest that educators can work toward emancipatory classroom practices by recognizing the fundamentally dialogic and transformative nature of classroom practices and by critically examining the roles and positionalities that are constructed of different participants in university courses.
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To Oliver
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Although language socialization models tend to imply that the appropriation of target culture norms and practices is always desirable, virtuous, inevitable, and complete, a greater range of possible intentions and outcomes actually exists, including non-conformity, partial and multiple community memberships and linguistic repertoires, and social exclusion. Seen in this way, knowledge and participation in educational activities are co-constructed and are crucially linked with issues of identity, agency, and difference...

(Duff, 2002a, p. 291)

The goal we see for future research on identity and language learning is to develop understandings of learners as both socially constructed and constrained but also as embodied, semiotic and emotional persons who identify themselves, resist identifications, and act on their social worlds. Learners' investments in learning languages, the ways in which their identities affect their participation in second language activities, and their access to participation in the activities of their communities, must all be matters of consideration in future research.

(Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 123)

Rather than serving the academy, accommodating it, and being appropriated by it, we ought to work with others to engage in an enterprise that is far more dynamic, complex, collaborative and intellectually engaging, an enterprise whereby we and our students contribute to, complicate, and transform the academy. This is, after all, the way all cultures, including academic ones, come to be, continually re-created by those who enter and the languages they bring with them.

(Zamel, 1993, p. 38)

1.1 Background

In his book on academic literacy, Prior (1998) notes that in spite of the proliferation of disciplines over the past century, disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and education have historically paid little attention to investigating
disciplinary communities and the "dense jungle of texts, technical objects, practices, and enculturated persons" (p. xii) that they have produced. As he points out, it is only in recent years that scholars have started to examine disciplinary practices, including the socialization of newcomers (e.g., graduate students) into disciplinary communities. In the meantime, given the growing diversity in North American postsecondary institutions, it has become critical to understand, on the one hand, how newcomers from different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds acquire academic discourses, and on the other hand, how academic communities themselves may or must be transformed as a result of such diversity. For this reason among others, issues of academic discourse socialization, including second language (L2) socialization, have received increasing attention in applied linguistics, composition studies, and other related fields in recent years.

Scholars in these fields have examined L2 academic discourse socialization by taking a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. There seem to be at least two major orientations in this area of research. One is a product-oriented approach that focuses on identifying what L2 learners need to know in order to participate competently in a given academic community. The other is a process-oriented approach that emphasizes exploring how L2 students acquire or become socialized into academic discourses. Product and process are by no means mutually exclusive but are closely interconnected, and knowledge about both what and how newcomers learn is vital. However, the distinction between the two approaches is significant because they tend to operate under different sets of assumptions about the nature of academic discourse and that of academic socialization.
One common type of product-oriented research has been to conduct a needs analysis survey and find out what kinds of academic tasks are assigned in various disciplines and what academic and language skills are required in order to successfully complete these tasks (e.g., Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Horowitz, 1986). Genre-based research (Swales, 1990) is another product-oriented approach that has been popular in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Many studies employing this approach have traditionally attempted to identify the specific linguistic and rhetorical conventions of a disciplinary community to be mastered by newcomers, including L2 students (e.g., Basturkmen, 1999; Brett, 1994; Hirvela, 1997; Holmes, 1997; Jenkins, Jordan, & Weiland, 1993; Johns, 2002; Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 1994). The underlying assumptions of these types of research may include the following: that academic learning is primarily the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge, conventions, and skills, and that academic discourses are fairly static and monolithic, and therefore identifiable and teachable (Bizzell, 1992; Prior, 1998; Zamel, 1997). In other words, a product-oriented approach tends to treat academic learning, although often implicitly, as one-way assimilation into a relatively stable academic community with fixed rules and conventions.

Scholars taking a process-oriented approach, on the other hand, often conduct qualitative research and investigate the situated (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Prior, 1998), or socially and temporally constructed process of discourse socialization (e.g., Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1992, 1995, 1998; Duff, 1995, 1996, 2001, 2002a; Harklau, 1999, 2000; Leki, 1995; Morita, 2000; Prior, 1998; Spack, 1997a; Toohey, 1998, 2000). They tend to assume that academic socialization is not simply a matter of acquiring pre-given sets of
skills and knowledge but also a complex process of negotiating identities, cultures, or power relations. Many of them also take the view that there can be multiple, changing, and sometimes competing discourses operating in a given academic community, which can make newcomers' socialization less predictable and less linear. Furthermore, like Zamel (1993) cited above, some argue that disciplinary socialization needs to be viewed as a two-way negotiation rather than unidirectional enculturation (e.g., Casanave, 1995; Prior, 1995a, b, 1998; Zamel, 1997); researchers taking this dynamic view of socialization consider not only how learners from diverse backgrounds negotiate academic discourses but also how discourse communities can change as they are joined by newcomers such as L2 learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Zamel & Spack, 1998a).

While both product- and process-oriented approaches are important, this study corresponds to the latter approach. There are several reasons why a process-oriented approach seems appropriate. First of all, as Duff (2002a) notes, an emerging body of qualitative studies (e.g., aforementioned process-oriented studies) have collectively demonstrated the potentially complex, conflictual, and idiosyncratic nature of L2 academic discourse socialization, suggesting the need for more research examining this process in depth. Secondly, both theoretical and empirical work has suggested that discourse socialization can be transformative (Belcher & Braine, 1995a; Zamel, 1993), implying that a process-oriented approach that can capture how learners and/or communities change over time is important. Thirdly, recent scholarship in various strands of post-positivist inquiry has called for an approach that is sensitive to the multiplicity of discourses, perspectives, and realities in a given social context (Lather,
This study therefore examines the discourse socialization of a group of L2 learners\(^1\) from multiple perspectives by taking a qualitative, process-oriented approach.

This study also addresses a relative lack of research into the acquisition of oral academic discourses. Both product- and process-oriented research has tended to focus on written genres or traditional literacy skills and activities such as academic writing (e.g., Belcher & Brain, 1995b; Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 1994; Ventola & Mauranen, 1996; Zamel & Spack, 1998b; see also the Journal of Second Language Writing). In contrast, academic oral language has received less attention in the literature.\(^2\) Tracy (1997) observes that very few studies have examined academic talk, or what she called “intellectual discussion” (p. 3), in spite of the important role it plays in universities. Similarly, there has been relatively limited research on L2 students’ participation in oral academic activities. However, oral activities such as classroom discussions, academic colloquia, thesis defenses, and conference presentations are an important part of the students’ academic life, and their participation in these activities may be crucial not only for the successful completion of their program but also for their socialization into academic careers. In addition, in spite of a common view that reading and writing tend to be cognitively more demanding than listening and speaking (Krashen, 1982; Krashen &

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\(^1\) In this study, I use terms such as L2 learner, L2 student, non-native speaker (NNS), non-native English speaker (NNES), and L2 international student, to refer to individuals who study in a language other than their first in an academic setting. While being aware of the risk of stigmatizing or essentializing these individuals by using such labels, I use them to highlight the fact that they are simultaneously learning a second language and academic content/practices. I use the terms also because they are commonly used labels not only in the literature but also at the research site of this study. However, the descriptions of the focal students and their classroom experiences provided in this study reveal the extent to which they are multi-dimensional, complex social beings.

\(^2\) One exception to this is the extensive body of research on the issues surrounding international teaching assistants (ITAs) (e.g., Halleck & Moder, 1995; Jenkins, 2000; Mohan, 1998; Pickering, 2001; Plakans, 1997; Salomone, 1998).
Terrell, 1983), studies of oral cultures or practices have suggested that oral communication is interactionally as well as cognitively more complex and demanding than one might assume (Finnegan, 1988, 1992; Hall, 1993, 1995; Tracy, 1997). Another layer of complexity is added when we recognize that oral academic practices are in fact often based on written texts. Furthermore, recent studies have documented a variety of challenges, conflicts, and tensions that L2 learners at schools and universities may experience in participating in primarily oral activities (e.g., discussions, presentations) in “mainstream” content classrooms (Duff, 2001, 2002a; Leki, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000; Toohey, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2002).

Thus, a fertile area of research is to examine L2 learners’ discourse socialization through their participation in oral academic practices. As both Duff (2002a) and Norton and Toohey (2002) note in the introductory quotes, and as I hope to demonstrate in this dissertation, the issue of L2 participation and socialization is closely related to important issues such as identity, difference, power, access, and agency. By drawing on various sociocultural theories, particularly a community-of-practice perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), this study attempts to show how these issues manifest themselves in the experiences of L2 graduate students who participate in new academic communities in a variety of ways.

1.2 Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to better understand how a group of L2 graduate students become socialized into oral academic discourses through their ongoing participation in L2 classrooms. As I will explain in Chapter 2, the underlying assumption of the study is that L2 academic discourse socialization is a potentially complex,
conflictual, and transformative process, involving not only the acquisition of new academic knowledge and skills but also the negotiation of competence, identities, cultures, and power. Based on this assumption, this study addresses the following sets of questions:

(1) How do L2 students negotiate discourses, competence, identities, and power relations in their new L2 classroom communities as they participate in primarily oral activities such as open-ended discussions?

(2) What are the thoughts, perspectives, and feelings of L2 students who remain relatively silent in the classroom? In other words, what "voices" lie behind their apparent silence in the classroom?

(3) What kinds of roles or positionalities do L2 students negotiate in the classroom? What are the relationships between their positionality, agency, classroom participation, and personal transformation?

Each of these three sets of questions will be highlighted and explored, respectively, in Chapter 5, 6, and 7, although the chapters will also discuss overlapping themes and issues.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Scholars have started to examine and theorize the complex, contingent nature of L2 academic discourse socialization only in recent years, and therefore, we have relatively little knowledge about this phenomenon (Belcher & Braine, 1995a; Prior, 1998; Spack, 1997a). While much of the previous work in this area has focused on writing activities, this study attempts to make contributions by examining socialization through primarily oral activities. It also adds to an emerging line of research that examines L2
learners' participation in and socialization through classroom activities within content courses, involving both L1 and L2 speakers. This study is also meaningful because it addresses such issues as identity, culture, power, and agency that have recently attracted much attention and theoretical debates within social science research, including applied linguistics research. In particular, the role of culture and identity in language learning as well as in academic discourse socialization has been a popular topic of research and scholarly discussion for some time (e.g., Atkinson, 1999; Hinkel, 1999; Norton, 1997a). While some researchers emphasize the influence of L1 cultures on L2 learning (e.g., Carson, 1992, 1998; Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966), others stress a more dynamic negotiation of cultures and identities in L2 learning (e.g., Spack, 1997a; Zamel, 1997). This study adds to these discussions by examining the cultural and identity negotiation of L2 learners from Japan and by illustrating some of the complexities involved in these issues.

A unique contribution of this study is to reveal and highlight the perspectives of L2 learners that are often hidden behind their apparent silence in the classroom. On the one hand, there has been a general lack of learners' voices and perspectives reflected in L2 research (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995; Norton, 1997b). Classroom interaction analysis (e.g., Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) has traditionally relied on the researcher's analysis of observable classroom behavior, which is often based on a pre-defined coding scheme, while paying little attention to participants' views and intentions (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). More ethnographically-oriented studies combine the analysis of classroom discourse and that of participants' perspectives (e.g., van Lier, 1988), but do not necessarily foreground the voices of individual students who tend to have little
observable verbal behavior in the classroom. On the other hand, the relative silence of L2 minority students in the mainstream classroom has started to receive some attention in the literature (Duff, 2001, 2002a; Goldstein, Schecter, & Pon, 2002; Harklau, 1994; Losey, 1997). These studies have collectively documented the socially constructed nature of silence as well as its significance, and suggested the need to further explore this issue. This study addresses this call by providing an in-depth examination of L2 students' silence in the classroom, particularly from the perspectives of students themselves, and shows how the issue of silence is crucially linked with issues of identity, culture, power, and practice.

In addition to shedding light on theoretical issues, this study also provides pedagogical implications regarding the issues of classroom participation and L2 students' discourse socialization. As the classroom becomes increasingly multicultural and multilingual, instructors may be faced with many new challenges that may include: how to meet the varying needs of "non-traditional" students from different backgrounds (or sometimes how to deal with L2 students' "language problems"), how to foster quiet L2 speakers' participation and promote equity in the classroom, and how to balance making pedagogical adjustments and accommodations for L2 international students and meeting the needs of L1 domestic students. Also, as I will show, conflicts and tensions can arise from different expectations, cultures, and agendas brought by different participants, as well as from the power relations formed in the classroom (Benesch, 1999; Duff, 2002a; Harklau, 1999, 2000; Leki, 2001; Losey, 1997; Toohey, 2000). These issues are also related to larger issues concerning the roles, statuses, or "representations" (Harklau, 2000) of L2 international students constructed on institutional or even societal levels
(Kubota, 1999, 2001). This study explores some of these issues by examining instructors’ perspectives as well as those of L2 students, and also offers pedagogical suggestions. Suggestions are also made for L2 students who may feel they are struggling to participate competently in their L2 classrooms. While there has been much work on general language learning strategies (e.g., O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 1996) and also on strategies for L2 academic writing (e.g., Leki, 1995; Riazi, 1997), there has been relatively little literature on strategies for L2 academic speaking, other than the aforementioned literature on ITAs. This dissertation provides some recommendations for students by documenting how the focal students in the study developed and used different strategies effectively in dealing with their challenges.

In terms of methodology, the novelty of this research resides in its emphasis on ongoing reflections through collaborative dialogues between the student participants and researcher. While following a tradition in ethnographic research and employing techniques such as observations and interviews (e.g., Heath, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995, Merriam, 1998; Ochs, 1988; Patton, 1990), this study also used student self-report data to encourage the focal students to reflect on their everyday classroom participation on a regular basis for an extended period of time. The student narratives produced in these reports, as well as in interviews, recorded not only the students’ changing participation, challenges, and developments but also their multiple and changing views, thoughts, and emotions. As I will explain later, the reporting process also allowed the students and researcher to collaboratively explore emergent issues. Such collaboration was possible partly because of the nature of the relationship I had developed with the students. This study also attempts to provide thick descriptions
(Geertz, 1973) of the investigated phenomenon and cases by triangulating multiple data and data sources (e.g., reports, observations, interviews, documents) as well as multiple accounts and viewpoints (e.g., students, instructors, researcher). What is particularly notable is that examining L2 learners from a similar cultural and linguistic background sharing the same gender revealed the variability that existed within such a group. As I will show, such variability is not just a result of different personal styles, values, or preferences; it is also because individuals’ roles, identities, and statuses are locally produced and reproduced in a given classroom, and therefore can change across time and space. This is important, given the tendency for some educators as well as researchers to treat learners sharing the same L1/cultural background or gender as a homogeneous, often stereotypical group (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1998; Ehrlich, 1997; Kubota, 1999; Said, 1978; Spack, 1997b; Zamel, 1997).

In short, this study foregrounds and attempts to understand the complexities, tensions, and dilemmas of everyday classroom practices by exploring L2 learners’ discourse socialization experiences in depth, and through triangulation and interactive research.

1.4 Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature and presents the conceptual framework of this study. It first locates the study broadly by summarizing a number of sociocultural approaches to research on L2 learning. It then addresses more specifically the literature pertaining to (L2) academic discourse socialization, and outlines some of the major theoretical perspectives and ongoing scholarly debates. Finally, it describes the conceptual framework of the study that draws centrally from Lave and Wenger’s
situated learning in a community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This framework was also grounded in the collected data and was refined as the analysis progressed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Chapter 3 describes the methods of inquiry including the overall approach, sites and participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and roles of the researcher and the researched. It also provides comments on the trustworthiness of this qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

Chapter 4 introduces in some detail each of the six focal students in terms of their personal histories and backgrounds, goals and investments, and contexts of learning. It serves as an important backdrop for the following findings chapters.

Chapter 5, 6, and 7 present the major findings of the study, each foregrounding different aspects of the focal students’ classroom experiences. Chapter 5 explores how the six students negotiated their classroom participation in three different courses. Each course had a different pair of focal students in it, and the students in each pair belonged to the same department. The chapter provides detailed descriptions of each student’s participation, challenges, and negotiation, while also comparing and contrasting the experiences of the two students in each pair within the same course.

Chapter 6 highlights the issue of silence in the classroom and explores its significance as well as multiple meanings, by featuring three of the focal students who tended to be particularly reticent in their classrooms. Their perspectives, thoughts, and feelings behind this apparent silence reveal that they were nevertheless actively negotiating notions of competence, identity, culture, and/or power.
Chapter 7, featuring the other three students, examines the roles or positionalities each of these students occupied and negotiated in different courses. It illustrates how these students, as active human agents, attempted to take ownership of their learning by accommodating or resisting different aspects of classroom practices. Also described are some of the personally significant transformations experienced by the students through these processes.

A summary and discussion section is provided at the end of each findings chapter (Chapter 5, 6, 7), synthesizing common themes and issues arising from different cases and discussing theoretical implications of the findings.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides implications for theory, pedagogy, and research. It first discusses theoretical implications of this study by revisiting some of the debates surrounding (L2) academic discourse socialization summarized in Chapter 2. It then offers pedagogical suggestions for instructors and educational institutions, while also addressing some of the tensions and difficult issues they may need to grapple with. Suggestions are also made for L2 international students both on a conceptual and a practical level. Comments on directions for future research and on my own experiences as an L2 graduate student conclude the dissertation.
Chapter 2

ACADEMIC DISCOURSE SOCIALIZATION IN A SECOND LANGUAGE:
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Sociocultural Approaches to Research on L2 Learning: An Overview and Basic Assumptions

This study is situated broadly following an emerging trend in the applied linguistics literature that views language learning as a fundamentally social, cultural, and temporal activity rather than just an individual, decontextualized, ahistorical, cognitive activity. In this section, I provide a brief overview of this trend by outlining three research approaches that have been influential in recent years: (1) language socialization research, (2) activity theory and neo-Vygotskyan research, and (3) critical discourse research. The orientation of this study in relation to these approaches is also explained.

2.1.1 Language Socialization Research

An increasingly popular line of research that takes a sociocultural view of language learning is language socialization research. Language socialization is a theoretical framework that emphasizes the centrality of language in the socialization of newcomers in a sociocultural group (Bayley & Schecter, in press; Duff, 1995, 1996; Heath, 1983; Ochs, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Willett, 1995). Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) posit:

The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations, i.e., through exchanges of language in particular social situations. (p. 277)

Within this framework, then, it is assumed that language learning cannot be separated from learning to participate in sociocultural practices as an increasingly competent
member. This view departs radically from the traditional psycholinguistic model of second language acquisition (SLA) that depicts language learning ultimately as the acquisition of a discrete set of linguistic systems. This framework also assumes that newcomers’ learning is normally assisted by more competent members of the group. Many studies on children’s L1 acquisition have documented how adult caregivers guide or scaffold (Bruner, 1983) children’s participation in social activities, through which children acquire tacit understandings of language and culture (e.g., Clancy, 1999; Cook, 1996, 1999; Crago, Annahatak, & Ningiuruvik, 1993; Heath, 1983; Ochs, 1988; Rogoff, 1990; Schieffelin, 1986, 1990; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986). It has been argued, however, that language socialization is a bidirectional, dynamic process where “questions by novices to members may reorder the thinking of both, despite their differences in knowledge and power” (Ochs, 1990, p. 304). In addition, Rogoff (1990) suggests that guided participation—a concept that roughly parallels scaffolding—can include a group of novices or peer learners who “serve as resources for one another in exploring the new domain and aiding and challenging one another” (p. 39).

While language socialization research has traditionally investigated children’s L1 acquisition, researchers have also examined L2 socialization with the premise that language socialization is a life-long, ongoing process (e.g., Bayley & Schecter, in press; Crago, 1992; Duff, 1995, 2001, 2002a; Kanagy, 1999; Larson, 1997; Li, 2000; Mohan & Smith, 1992; Morita, 2000; Ohta, 1991; Poole, 1992; Rudolph, 1994; Schecter & Bayley, 1997; Willett, 1995). By examining a variety of educational contexts involving learners in different age groups, these studies have collectively demonstrated how L2 learning can be conceptualized as a complex process of (re)socialization through language and
(re)socialization to use a second language (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), and how such a process is shaped by the rich sociocultural contexts in which learners find themselves. For example, Willett (1995) found that a group of ESL children’s language learning was affected by the sociocultural ecology of their community, school, and classroom, including gender relations and the multicultural ideology of the community. At the secondary level, Duff (1995, 1996) documents how the macro- and micro-level political and educational changes in Hungary shaped the discursive constitution of English-medium classrooms, particularly the evolution of an oral assessment activity, and the socialization of students learning history through English. In higher education, Mohan and Smith (1992) show how the simultaneous acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge by Chinese students in a Canadian graduate course was assisted by an “expert,” their instructor, and by the carefully organized classroom activities. Similarly, Morita (2000) explicates the process in which graduate students, both native English speakers (NESs) and non-native English speakers (NNESs), gradually became apprenticed into oral academic discourses through ongoing negotiations with their instructors and peers as they prepared for, observed, performed, and reviewed class presentations.

The present study follows the model of language socialization outlined above. At the same time, it also reconsiders some of its theoretical assumptions. First of all, while many previous language socialization studies have tended to assume a relatively clear and static dichotomy between “experts” (e.g., caregivers, teachers, masters) and “novices” (e.g., children, students, apprentices), the present study recognizes a need for a more dynamic notion of expertise in explaining socialization situations that involves a complex
web of social relations such as in a multicultural graduate classroom (Bayley & Schecter, in press; Lantolf, 2000a; Morita, 2000). Some studies have shown the interactionally achieved, shifting constitution of expertise in academic contexts such as meetings of a university physics team (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991), departmental colloquium (Tracy, 1997), and graduate seminars (Morita, 2000). Secondly, the study assumes that L2 socialization involving multiple cultures and languages may accompany a more complex negotiation of identity and power relations than, for instance, primary L1 socialization (Duff, 2001, 2002a; Harklau, 2002; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Toohey, 2000). Finally, while the framework tends to stress uniting forces of culture (e.g., norms, common expectations), this study also recognizes that there can be multiple, sometimes contradicting discourses operating within a given culture or community (Bizzell, 1992; Delpit, 1988; Zamel, 1995, 1997). With this recognition, I try to grapple with the conflicts, dilemmas, and struggles resulting from such multiplicity.

2.1.2 Activity Theory and neo-Vygotskyan Research

Another strand of research that has been increasingly influential over the past decade draws on a sociocultural theory of mind, first proposed by Vygotsky (1978, 1986, 1987) and later extended by his followers (e.g., Leontiev, 1981; Wertsch, 1991) (Lantolf, 1994). Like language socialization, this theory foregrounds the social construction of learning and aims to understand human cognition and development as embedded in sociocultural, material, and historical conditions. According to Lantolf (2000a), the most fundamental concept of the theory is mediation: humans use symbolic artifacts—most importantly language—to establish a mediated relationship between themselves and the external world. In Vygotsky's view, Lantolf (2000a) notes, the task of psychology is "to
understand how human social and mental activity is organized through culturally constructed artifacts" (p. 1). Within this perspective, then, it is crucial to examine individuals and their social environment reflexively as they interact in activities. Wertsch (1991) explains the notion of human action as the unit of analysis in sociocultural research:

> 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. (p. 8)

Following this view, the present study treats the activities students engaged in, particularly the activity of participating in class discussions, as the basic unit of analysis, although its focus is on the students' responses to and interpretations of the activities. In addition, the language socialization framework also recognizes that activity plays an important role in the socialization of newcomers, especially in mediating linguistic and sociocultural knowledge (Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

Many recent L2 studies have explored the implications of activity theory and neo-Vygtskian perspectives for L2 learning and teaching. Recent volumes edited by Lantolf and Appel (1994) and by Lantolf (2000b) are notable collections of such studies. There are several constructs these studies have found particularly useful: *private speech* and *inner speech* (e.g., Donato, 2000; Ohta, 2000a; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), *the zone of proximal development* (e.g., Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Alijaafreh, 1995; Ohta, 2000b), and *scaffolding* (e.g., Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000b; van Lier, 2000). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), for example, explore the retrospective, personal narratives of writers who crossed linguistic and cultural borders in adulthood and struggled to (re)construct their identities.
One of the ways they explain such a struggle is to use the notion of inner speech which, according to Vygotsky, plays a crucial role in mediating human consciousness (Frawley, 1997, cited in Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 165). They describe one writer’s struggle as being in a “semantic twilight zone” (p. 165) in which her inner speech in her first language has stopped functioning, while her inner speech in her second language hasn’t developed yet. In light of a sociohistorical perspective, they argue that this is a particularly painful state because it is through inner speech that we create our experiences of the world.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is defined by Vygotsky as “the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support from someone else and/or cultural artifacts” (Lantolf, 2000a, p. 17). Bruner (1983) calls the support or guidance provided by adults or more skilled members scaffolding. According to Lantolf (2000a), however, the view that the ZPD always involves “expert-novice” interactions is limiting; he suggests instead a broader understanding of the concept as the “collaborative construction of opportunities for individuals to develop their mental abilities” (p. 17). Some empirical studies support this claim: both Donato (1994) and Swain (2000) found that L2 learners were capable of providing guidance to their peers and mediating their own learning through what Swain calls “collaborative dialogue”—dialogue that “mediates joint problem solving and knowledge building” (p. 102) (see also Kobayashi, 2002). As I will show later, some of the participants in the present study made use of their peers as a major source of support and guidance for their linguistic development, completion of assignments, and participation in classroom activities.
As we have seen, many L2 studies have recently demonstrated the usefulness of neo-Vygotskian approaches for examining L2 learning as a socially constructed process that is often assisted by peers or more competent members. However, studies have also revealed that such assistance is not always provided equally to all participants in a given learning context (e.g., Duff, 2001, 2002a; Harklau, 1994, 2000; Leki, 2001; Losey, 1997; Toohey, 2000). As I will discuss later, some students in this study were less successful than others in achieving a supportive relationship with their peers and instructors and using it to their advantage. Some even felt that they were actively excluded from supposedly collaborative group discussions on some occasions. In the next section, I discuss a third strand of sociocultural approaches, namely, critical discourse research, which examines such differing opportunities for learning with a specific focus on the issues of power.

2.1.3 Critical Discourse Research

Like the researchers employing language socialization or Vygotskian approaches, critical discourse analysts are interested in language or discourse as a social practice. Unlike the former two approaches, critical discourse research foregrounds unequal relations of power in society that may be constituted not only by degree of expertise, but also by differences in race, gender, class, and ethnicity, amongst other things. A central assumption and concern of critical research in applied linguistics is that such unequal relations of power are implicated and reproduced in language as well as any language learning and teaching situation, and that therefore issues of power and inequality must be addressed in research and pedagogy. While sharing this basic assumption, according to Canagarajah (1999), researchers have been influenced by at least two different
approaches to power and inequality within the critical paradigm: models informed by *reproduction theories* and models informed by *resistance theories* (p. 22). Based on certain brands of structuralist and Marxist thinking, the former represent a rather deterministic view of power and discuss how existing power structures in institutions and in the wider society are reproduced to serve the interests of the dominant groups. The latter, an alternative approach Canagarajah embraces, are informed by poststructural or postcolonial theories and recognize that “there are sufficient contradictions within institutions to help subjects gain agency, conduct critical thinking, and initiate change” (p. 22). Like Canagarajah, the present study takes a dynamic, rather than monolithic and absolute view of power and considers how power works in a dialectical and conflictual way within multicultural graduate classrooms.

Critical researchers in applied linguistics have explored a variety of issues which include: (1) language and identity (e.g., Cummins, 1996; Ibrahim, 1999; McKay & Wong, 1996; Nelson, 1999; Norton, 2000; Rampton, 1995; Thesen, 1997; Toohey, 2000); (2) language and gender (e.g., Belcher, 1997; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1998; Goldstein, 1995; Losey, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Norton Peirce, 1995; Toohey & Scholefield, 1994); (3) critical literacy (e.g., Comber & Simpson, 2001; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1996); (4) plagiarism and textural ownership (e.g., Currie, 1998; Pennycook, 1996, 1997); (5) the global hegemony of English (e.g., Canagarajah, 1993; Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 1998, 2001; Phillipson, 1992); (6) the notion of the (non)native speaker (e.g., Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Widdowson, 1994); and (7) representations of L2 learners (Harklau, 1999, 2000; Kubota, 1999, 2001;
Spack, 1997b). This extensive body of research has collectively shown how language constructs and is constructed by a variety of social relations and how language learners may negotiate power as they participate in the discursive practices of a given community. For example, critical work on language and gender has revealed the complex relations among gender, linguistic practices, and power (see Freeman & McElhinny, 1996, for an overview of this work). Such work also problematizes sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Tannen, 1990) that assume gender differences in linguistic behavior as "normal," "natural," or merely a matter of style, while ignoring power relations that may be constitutive of such differences (Toohey & Scholefield, 1994; see also Cameron, 1995).

While embracing critical work that has become increasingly popular, Norton (1997a) cautions that it is not a problem-free paradigm. She points out, for example, that educators may feel disempowered by abstract notions and alien discourses used in critical work that may appear unrelated to their daily classroom practices. In his introduction to the recent special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* on critical approaches, Pennycook (1999) similarly argues that the apparent dichotomy between theory and practice in critical work needs to be reconciled; in this regard he draws on the notion of *praxis* that may be understood as "the mutually constitutive roles of theory grounded in practice and practice grounded in theory" (p. 342) (see also Pennycook, 2001). Another point Norton (1997b) makes is that "students' voices are sometimes little more than a backdrop to discussions on the development of theory" (p. 212). Thesen (1997) also questions some of the determinism of critical discourse theory deriving from a "failure to trust people to say (and know) what they are doing" (p. 504). In the present study that employs a more
grounded approach to theory, students' voices take the center stage and their own interpretations of the academic practices they participate in are revealed.

In this chapter so far, I have summarized three research approaches in applied linguistics—language socialization, neo-Vygotskyan research, and critical discourse research—which all take a sociocultural view of language learning but with somewhat different emphases. I have also described my positions in the present study in relation to these approaches. While each approach is based on a distinct body of theoretical work and stresses different aspects of social practices including language learning, I understand that the three approaches are complementary rather than exclusive. Therefore, as I have explained, I borrow ideas from all of them, while also critiquing certain aspects of each approach.

Having located this study broadly in the sociocultural literature outlined above, I discuss in the next section more specifically the body of literature pertaining to academic discourse socialization.

2.2 Academic Discourse Socialization Research: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates

2.2.0 Introduction

This section reviews some of the main theoretical perspectives on (L2) academic discourse socialization research and also outlines a number of issues discussed in recent years. First, I summarize discourse community perspectives that generally promote the idea that (academic) learning is a process of gaining membership in a discourse community. What has been debated within these perspectives includes the following: whether it is productive or even possible to define academic discourse as a unified
system, and whether academic discourse socialization is largely an assimilation process or a more conflictual process of negotiation. Second, I revisit critical discourse perspectives and discuss how they view issues of discourse, discourse community, and academic discourse. As discussed earlier, a contested issue within critical research is, to put it simply, to what extent power works reproductively or in a more dialectic fashion. Finally, I discuss recent theoretical debates within the applied linguistics literature on the role of culture and identity in L2 academic socialization.

2.2.1 Discourse Community Perspectives

Scholars examining academic discourse socialization have drawn from a number of theoretical perspectives that use community-based metaphors to describe language-mediated social practices, including academic practices. In what follows, I summarize some of these perspectives including: (1) Swales’ notion of discourse community, (2) characterizations of academic discourse, (3) disciplinary enculturation perspectives, (4) Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice perspective, and (5) Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) sociohistorical approaches. As I will show, while they all emphasize the social aspect of language they also differ in their views on the nature of discourse and (academic) discourse community.

Swales (1990) defines discourse community as “sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals” (p. 9). In addition to shared goals, members of a given discourse community are familiar with a particular genre or a set of rhetorical features and conventions of texts recognized by experienced members of that community. For example, focusing on research-process genres used in the English-speaking academia, Swales (1990) as well as Swales and Feak (1994) attempt to explicate
the genre of the research paper and identify typical moves (e.g., establishing a research territory) used in its sub-sections (e.g., introduction). In these projects, Swales and Feak emphasize their concern in helping students pragmatically, both NESs and NNESs, to develop their academic communicative competence.

Similarly, many composition scholars have attempted to identify general features of academic discourse in spite of the argument that such an attempt carries the risk of overgeneralizing or trivializing the complexity and variability of academic discourses (Bizzell, 1992; Elbow, 1991; Harris, 1989; Zamel, 1993). Like Swales and Feak (1994), these attempts often derive from the felt needs of many literacy faculty and practitioners to teach students general academic English and the associated sets of thinking and writing skills (cf., Spack, 1988). While acknowledging that “it’s crazy to talk about academic discourse as one thing” (p. 151), Elbow (1991) nevertheless advocates teaching the kinds of metacognition and metadiscourse that help students analyze and understand various academic discourses they encounter. Belcher and Braine (1995a) also argue for “academic discoursal consciousness raising” which promotes “a shared awareness of the rules of academic games and the strategies that successful players use” (p. xv).

Motivated by a similar line of argument, Johns (1997) has provided a list that characterizes the nature, values, and some stylistic conventions of general academic textual practices.

While some researchers attempt to identify generic features of academic discourse, others have found it more useful to define discipline-specific discourses characterized by specific linguistic and rhetorical conventions that supposedly exist in different disciplines (e.g., Bartholomae, 1985; Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin,
1995; Dudley-Evans, 1995; Myers, 1992; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996; see also Riazi, 1997, for a review of 20 recent empirical studies in this area). This has been an influential approach in composition studies and EAP research (e.g., Basturkmen, 1999; Brett, 1994; Hirvela, 1997; Holmes, 1997; Jenkins, Jordan, & Weiland, 1993; Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 1994). These studies generally argue that students need to master sets of appropriate genres and discourse conventions of their chosen discipline in order to become a competent participant in that discipline. This position is often recognized as one of disciplinary enculturation (Casanave, 1995; Prior, 1995a; Toulmin, 1972).

Disciplinary enculturation perspectives, as well as approaches to defining generic academic discourse, have recently been challenged on several grounds. First of all, it has been argued that academic discourse can vary significantly not simply across disciplines but within a single discipline (Bazerman, 1992; Belcher & Braine, 1995a; Elbow, 1991). In addition, some argue that disciplines are in constant flux and therefore should be treated as open rather than closed and homogeneous systems (Prior, 1998). Such heterogeneity and instability of disciplinary discourses, the argument goes, make any effort of essentializing them counter-productive, if not impossible (Blanton, 1994; Prior, 1998). Secondly, some scholars have taken issue with the tendency of disciplinary enculturation perspectives to treat academic discourse socialization as predominantly a one-way assimilation process, viewing students as passive recipients of established knowledge (Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1992, 1995, 1998; Prior, 1998; Zamel, 1993, 1997). For example, Zamel (1997) warns against "the on-going tendency to teach and assign formulaic representations of academic discourse and models of discipline-specific discourses and to resist engaging students in the messiness and struggles of authentic
work that begins, values, and builds on their own 'ways with words’” (p. 343) (see also Street, 1996). Thirdly, recent qualitative studies on academic discourse socialization have revealed how it is a locally and historically situated practice (e.g., Casanave, 1992, 1995; Duff, 1995, 1996, 2001, 2002a; Harklau, 2000, 2002; Morita, 2000; Prior, 1998; Spack, 1997a). Casanave (1995), for instance, found that a group of doctoral students constructed contexts for academic writing mainly from “sources that touched their lives directly” (p. 83) such as their instructors and peers, the local culture of the courses, and the specific writing tasks they engaged in. Similarly, by closely examining graduate students’ writing, professors’ responses, and revisions, Prior (1995a) found that these activities were shaped in complex ways by personal, interpersonal, and institutional histories. Drawing on Bakhtin’s (1986) notion of speech genres, Prior argues:

Examining academic writing tasks as speech genres, that is, as they unfold in concrete situations at specific times with particular participants, we begin to encounter the dialogic forces shaping academic activity and discourse, to see the situated interpretive and interactional work that generates meanings and texts, and to sense how that work is socially mediated or socially impeded. (p. 77)

In short, what Prior (1995b) calls the “structuralist formulation” which “treats disciplines as abstract, uniform bodies of knowledge that can be passed from expert members to novices” (p. 294), has been contested. An alternative framework has increasingly been used to account for the more locally contingent nature of academic learning, namely, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice (see Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1998; Leki, 2001; Flowerdew, 2000; Toohey, 1998, 2000, for studies employing this framework).

By the term community of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize that people learn primarily by participating in the practices of their community rather than by
being transmitted abstract knowledge about the practices. A defining characteristic of
this situated learning is what they call legitimate peripheral participation (LPP):
"learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners" and "the mastery of
knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the
sociocultural practices of a community" (p. 29). Importantly, peripherality in this
framework does not imply a single core or center in a community, or the only role of
newcomers as being at the very edge of a larger process. Rather, the term suggests the
heterogeneity of a community: "there are multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and-
inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community"
(pp. 35-36). In addition, this framework turns our attention to the process of learning,
whereas some of the perspectives described above tend to focus more on the product or
end goal of learning (see Chapter 1). Since this framework is central to the present study,
I will discuss it in more detail in a later section.

In addition to Lave and Wenger's theory of learning, other so-called
sociohistorical theories have also been employed to account for the socially and
historically situated nature of discourse socialization. Prior (1998), for example, draws
on Bakhtin (1981, 1986) and others (e.g., Becker, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991)
in describing the complex nature of academic writing in disciplines. Bakhtin's notion of
discourse emphasizes its social dimensions (Lemke, 1995): for Bakhtin, our utterances
are not merely the product of individual minds but are "filled with others' words, varying
degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness'" (1986, p 89) (see also
Pennycook, 1996). To put it differently, language is fundamentally dialogic: it
constitutes spaces for dynamic negotiations among differing voices of self and other.
Further, Bakhtin (1981) argues that stability of communities are formed through dynamic interactions and struggles between *centripetal* (unifying) and *centrifugal* (stratifying) forces. Discourse socialization for Bakhtin, then, would not be a predictable, one-way assimilation but a complicated process of negotiation in a *heteroglossic* and conflictual community.

In this section, I have briefly summarized a number of discourse community perspectives. While they all consider community as a useful metaphor, they have different understandings of the nature of discourse community. Some (e.g., Swales; disciplinary enculturation perspectives) seem to assume that a given discourse community is relatively coherent and stable and can be identified in terms of discourse rules and conventions. An important concern here is to draw community boundaries and identify such discourse features. Others (e.g., Lave & Wenger; Bakhtin), on the other hand, believe that a given discourse community can involve multiple, sometimes competing discourses or voices, and that conflicts and tensions are inherent in its practices. Within this view, newcomers may be envisioned as “not entering the autonomous social and cognitive spaces of discourse communities, but engaging in active relations with dynamic, open, interpenetrated communities of practice” (Prior, 1998, p. xii). As I will explain in a later section, the present study follows this latter position.

In the next section, I discuss how scholars with a critical stance view issues of discourse, academic discourse, and academic discourse socialization. I also summarize some of the issues that have been raised against certain critical approaches.
2.2.2 Critical Discourse Perspectives

As discussed earlier, scholars taking a critical view consider it crucial to understand the value-laden nature of all discourses:

Discourse functions ideologically in society to support and legitimate the exercise of power, and to naturalize unjust social relations, making them seem the inevitable consequence of common sense necessity. (Lemke, 1995, p. 20)

Thus, critical discourse theorists treat discourse not as a set of neutral linguistic conventions but as a meaning-making practice that constructs and is constructed by unequal relations of power. In her book entitled, Academic discourse and critical consciousness, Bizzell (1992) emphasizes “the power of discourse communities to shape world views” (p. 226), and maintains that in this sense discourse community is an “interpretive community” (p. 222). Coming from this perspective, Bizzell also questions Swales’ (1990) approach, which she feels does not adequately address the ideological nature of a discourse community:

By treating the discourse community as essentially a stylistic phenomenon, Swales delimits the object of study for his graduate students in such a way as to leave out larger socioeconomic and cultural elements—that is, those elements that most forcefully create world views in discourse. (p. 227).

For Delpit (1988), even stylistic conventions themselves implicate the “culture of power” that exists in society in general and educational settings in particular. Critical feminist research has also challenged what it sees as the male-oriented, white, middle-class, Western academic discourse that has disadvantaged various minority groups including women in the academy (e.g., hooks, 1988; Kirsch, 1993; Luke & Gore, 1992; Smith, 1997).

Increasingly, L2 scholars have explored the issues of L2 academic socialization from a critical perspective. Belcher (1997), for example, discusses the feminist critique
of the “agonistic, competitive nature of male-dominated Anglophone academic discourse” (Kirsch, 1993; Luke & Gore, 1992, cited in Belcher) and argues that such a discourse can present problems to L2 writers from non-Western cultures. Pennycook (1996) critiques what he sees as a paradox of Western academic discourse: it simultaneously stresses individual originality and creativity on the one hand, and a fixed canon of disciplinary knowledge on the other. Concerned with the issue of plagiarism, he argues that the way in which text, ownership, and textual borrowing are understood in the Western academy must not be seen as universal but as culturally and historically specific, and that educators must see issues such as L2 writers’ apparent plagiarism in greater complexity (see also Currie, 1998; Scollon, 1995; Spack, 1997a). Losey’s (1995, 1997) classroom ethnography investigates a basic writing course in a U.S. community college that included bilingual Mexican American and monolingual Anglo American students. Informed by critical theorists (e.g., Cummins, 1986; Fine, 1991; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983), Losey argues that the social status of Mexican American women as “double minorities” (in terms of gender and ethnicity) helps explain their relative silence in the classroom. Also from a critical perspective, Benesch (1999) advocates what she calls rights analysis that examines how power is exercised and resisted in a given academic context. She contrasts rights analysis that recognizes “the classroom as a site of struggle” (p. 315) with a more conventional needs analysis in ESP/EAP (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Robinson, 1991) that assumes student compliance with institutional requirements (see also Benesch, 1996). In the EAP course with which Benesch (1999) conducted a rights analysis, EAP students actively negotiated power with their professor by questioning and complaining about the curriculum and the instruction they received.
As we have seen, for critical researchers power struggles are central to the process of entering and participating in academic communities. As discussed earlier, however, critical researchers have also engaged in theoretical debates on how power operates and to what extent the existing power structures remain stable or unstable. In recent years, certain critical approaches taking “a deterministic perspective on power” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 2) have been critiqued on some grounds. First of all, they tend to assign rather essentialist, reified identity categories to individuals, dividing them into majorities or minorities (Thesen, 1997). And this division often leads to a simplistic assumption that individuals from minority groups are inevitably marginalized and disadvantaged. Such essentialism of identity has been challenged widely by postcolonial and poststructural scholars (e.g., Bhabha, 1990; Hall, 1990; Kondo, 1990; Minh-ha, 1992; Weedon, 1997) who take the view that identity is not unified, fixed, or predetermined but is constructed, or in Kondo’s (1990) term, “crafted,” in social contexts. Secondly, by emphasizing the power of mainstream discourses or Discourses (Gee, 1996), some critical theories may fail to adequately consider individual agency or people’s abilities to selectively appropriate the Discourses or to possibly even change them (Canagarajah, 1999; Delpit, 1993). Qualitative studies such as Benesch (1999), Canagarajah (1993, 1999), McKay and Wong (1996), and Rampton (1995) have documented how individuals may actively resist dominant discourses.

In this section, I have outlined critical discourse perspectives on academic discourse socialization and some of the issues that have been debated within these perspectives. In the next section, I focus more specifically on recent discussions on the role of culture and identity in L2 academic discourse socialization.
2.2.3 Negotiating Cultures and Identities

In recent years there have been intense discussions in applied linguistics over the issues of culture and identity in L2 discourse socialization (e.g., Atkinson, 1999, 2000; Carson, 1998; Elbow, 1999; Hinkel, 1999; Kubota, 1999; Nelson, 1998; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Siegal, 2000; Sower, 1999; Spack, 1997a, b; Sparrow, 2000). On the one hand, especially in fields such as contrastive rhetoric and cross-cultural communication, attempts have been made to identify cultural norms, expectations, and communication styles that are specific to different cultural and linguistic communities (e.g., Hinds, 1987, 1990; Kaplan, 1966). Researchers have also investigated how differences in cultural norms between learners’ L1 and L2 may cause difficulties and tensions (e.g., Atkinson, 1997; Ballad & Clanchy, 1991; Carson, 1992; Carson & Nelson, 1994, 1996; Fox, 1994; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996; Ventola & Mauranen, 1991, 1996; Watanabe, 1993). For example, Carson and Nelson (1994) discuss how group work in ESL writing can be problematic for students from “collectivist cultures” such as Japan and China since they may be reluctant to offer critical comments on each other’s writing for fear of disrupting group harmony. Ballad and Clanchy (1991) argue that educators need to be aware of “fundamentally differing cultural approaches to knowledge, education, and the whole enterprise of assessment” (p. 34). As a primary example of these differences, they identify the “reproductive approach to learning” (e.g., memorization, rote learning) of Asian countries as opposed to the “ultimately speculative approach” (e.g., questioning, searching for new worldviews) of the West. More recently, Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) similarly argue that certain principles and practices of U.S. university writing pedagogy (e.g., “voice,” peer review,
critical thinking, textual ownership) tacitly incorporate a “U.S. mainstream ideology of individualism” and therefore may not be compatible with the cultural approaches taken by many ESL students.

These studies have made important arguments that L2 students’ cultural and educational backgrounds potentially influence how they approach their new academic environment. However, they have recently been challenged by researchers who argue that they tend to assume and promote a rather deterministic notion of culture and stereotype students according to rigid cultural boundaries (e.g., Kubota, 1999; Spack, 1997a, b; Zamel, 1997). These scholars instead take the view that cultures need to be treated as dynamic and multiple. Spack (1997a), for example, argues that in examining students studying across cultures we need a notion of culture that recognizes “the blurred zones in between” (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 209, cited in Spack, p. 54):

Rosaldo’s definition of culture . . . recognizes that cultural identities are constantly “in motion, not frozen for inspection” (p. 217). This definition makes sense in the context of students studying across cultures. When they literally and figuratively cross borders, “it is difficult to discern precisely where one collection of customs and assumptions leaves off and another begins” (Tucker, 1995, p. 57). Students like Yuko thus need to be viewed not as products of culture but as creators of culture. (p. 54)

Along the same lines, Zamel (1997) criticizes what she sees as a deterministic stance of contrastive rhetoric research and instead emphasizes the dynamic and creative nature of cultural contact. She argues that rather than depicting L2 students as rigidly constrained by their cultural traditions, we need to recognize that there are “multiple ways of being, not only as individuals shift languages but when they speak the same language” (p. 345). Borrowing from Pratt (1991), Zamel puts forward the concept of transculturation that “assumes and celebrates the selective, generative, and inventive nature of linguistic and
cultural adaptation” (Zamel, p. 350; see also Kramsch, 1993). Within this model then, L2 students are viewed as active human agents who negotiate and actively construct their cultural identities as they struggle to succeed in their new cultural and academic environment.

Empirical studies have also supported these claims made by Spack, Zamel, and others. Casanave’s (1998) study presents a case of Japanese bilingual scholars who engaged in a generative negotiation of cultures and identities. These scholars, who had completed graduate work in the U.S. and then returned to a Japanese university, had to juggle the two different academic cultures. Rather than situating themselves in either one of these cultures, they strove to manage the competing demands of the two, accepting “the heterogeneity of their writing lives” and learning “techniques of flexible perspective-taking” (p. 196). Spack’s (1997a) aforementioned case study on a Japanese student, Yuko, also documents how cultural negotiation was a significant part of her academic socialization in an American college. In Spack’s observation, while struggling with the cultural differences Yuko perceived, she understood that crossing cultures is a slow process and that she needed patience in negotiating such competing discourses. Shen (1989) describes a similar process of cultural negotiation in reflecting on his experience of learning to write in a new language (see also Lu, 1987, 1992, for similar discussions):

... I pictured myself getting out of my old identity, the timid, humble, modest Chinese “I,” and creeping into my new identity ..., the confident, assertive, and aggressive English “I.” The new “Self” helped me to remember and accept the different rules of Chinese and English composition and the values that underpin these rules. In a sense, creating an English Self is a way of reconciling my old cultural values with the new values required by English writing, without losing the former. (p. 127)
As evident in Shen’s testimony, crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries can also involve a sometimes painful negotiation of identity and a sense of personal loss (see also Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Siegal, 1996). Recently, issues of identity and representation have received considerable attention in the applied linguistics literature. Drawing from various strands of sociocultural theory (e.g., language socialization, Vygotskian paradigms), critical theory (e.g., critical feminism, critical pedagogy), and social constructionism (e.g., postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism), scholars have explored the role of social or cultural identity in L2 learning and teaching (e.g., Angélique-Carter, 1997; Cummins, 1996; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Harklau, 2000; Ibrahim, 1999; Kubota, 1999, 2001; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Ochs, 1993; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Rampton, 1995; Spack, 1997b; Thesen, 1997; Toohey, 1998, 2000). This body of work has examined how individuals negotiate their identities as they cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, how such negotiation impacts their L2 learning or teaching, or from a more critical perspective, how they accommodate or resist the kinds of identity categories and representations that are imposed upon them by educational institutions. An important assumption underlying much of this recent work is that identities are multiple, locally negotiated, and therefore in constant flux (Norton, 1997a). For example, Thesen (1997) analyzes biographical interviews with first-year students in a South African university and describes the dynamic process of identity negotiation and construction in which they engaged as they entered new literacy settings in university. What Thesen highlights as an important finding of her study is the discrepancy between the institutional categories that were used to identify students and the way students described themselves in order to make sense of their transitions.
Similarly, Harklau’s (1999, 2000, 2002) work is concerned with changing identities of ESL learners in transition. Informed by recent poststructuralist perspectives on SLA, Harklau (2000) begins with the notion of identity as being inherently dynamic and unstable. However, what she explores in her study is the fact that on the contrary, identity categories such as ESOL student appear to be stable and taken-for-granted in a given context. According to Harklau, this is an effect of representation—"seemingly static, commonsense categorical perceptions of identity prevalent in particular sociocultural, historical, and institutional settings" (p. 39). Although representations give the effect of fixing meaning, she argues, they are also "subject to continual change and revision" (p. 63). By following a group of U.S. immigrants in their secondary school and then community college, Harklau found that pervasive institutional images of ESL student identities (e.g., hardworking, highly motivated) were appropriated by the students and their teachers in the former context, whereas resisted by the same students in the latter. To conclude her discussion, Harklau (2000) states:

Understanding the nature of these fundamental processes of cultural identity formation is vital in order to recognize that we are never entirely immune from nor entirely subject to the societal positionings of ourselves or our students, and that things we do in the classroom not only serve to teach language but also serve to shape our students’ attitudes toward schooling and their very sense of self. (p. 64)

Another area of research pertaining to social identity that has received relatively limited but increasing attention in the L2 literature is gender and L2 learning/teaching. Ehrlich (1997) notes that recent work in language and gender has also rejected "categorical and fixed notions of social identities in favor of more constructivist and dynamic ones" (p. 421). Recent studies therefore move away from approaches taken by
earlier studies\(^1\) that tend to presuppose a male-female behavioral dichotomy and possibly reinforce gender-related stereotypes (Ehrlich, 1997; Freed, 1995; Toohey & Scholesfield, 1994). Instead, they emphasize the importance of treating gender as a social practice; gender, like other kinds of social identity, is shaped by social, cultural, historical, and other contextual aspects of social practices or activities (Ehrlich, 1997; Norton, 2000; Ochs, 1992, 1993). Drawing from Lave and Wenger (1991), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, 1998) contend that research into language and gender needs to explore how gender is (re)produced in communities of practice or how individuals become “gendered members of local communities” (p. 486).\(^2\) Importantly, they further point out that if we take a close look at local practices, we realize that gender is linked with other aspects of social identity in complex ways:

> And the selves constructed are not simply (or even primarily) gendered selves: they are unemployed, Asian American, lesbian, college-educated, post-menopausal selves in a variety of relations to other people. Language is never encountered without other symbolic systems, and gender is always joined with real people’s complex forms of participation in the communities to which they belong (or have belonged or expect to join). (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1998, p. 486)

The aforementioned ethnographic study by Willett (1995), for example, documents how gender, class, and other kinds of roles and statuses ESL children constructed within their

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\(^1\) Examples of such studies include a series of studies that examine gender differences in L2 learning styles and strategies (e.g., Bacon & Finnenman, 1992; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; see Oxford, 1993, for a summary of these studies). According to Oxford (1993, 1994), these studies suggest that women tend to report “consciously using more strategy types more frequently than men” (1993, p. 550), which in turn leads to female superiority in L2 performance and learning. Ehrlich (1997) argues, however, that such characterizations of gender overgeneralize differences between women and men and ignore the socially constructed nature of gender categories and gender relations. Similarly, Sunderland (2000) questions the tendency for language education research to represent women and girls simplistically as victims of gender bias in language textbooks or of male dominance in the classroom.

\(^2\) While acknowledging the importance of community-of-practice perspectives that emphasize the social construction of gender, Bergvall (1999) posits that gender research must address two other facets of gender, “ideology” and “innateness,” in order to “go beyond the local” (p. 281) and to develop a more comprehensive theory of gender for language research.
local communities affected their classroom participation and L2 acquisition/socialization.

In summary, there has been a growing recognition within the applied linguistics literature that culture and identity play an important role in L2 discourse socialization. On the one hand, many cross-cultural (or cross-gender) studies such as contrastive rhetoric research have identified culturally preferred (or gender-related) ways of communicating, learning, teaching, and thinking, and have examined how they play out in L2 academic learning situations. Underlying this line of research, as some have argued, are notions of culture and identity that are unitary, essential, and fixed. Others, on the other hand, have documented the ways in which individual learners actively negotiate cultures and identities in a given L2 learning context. Scholars taking this latter approach maintain that cultures and identities should be seen as more dynamic and multiple. The present study adds to the second line of research and examines closely how a group of L2 students negotiate cultures and identities as they participate in new academic communities.

In this chapter so far, I have situated the present study in the literature first by outlining three major sociocultural approaches to research on L2 learning in general (Section 2.1), and then discussing some of the main theoretical perspectives and issues on L2 academic discourse socialization in particular (Section 2.2). In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will describe more explicitly the conceptual framework of the present study which, on the one hand, has guided my analysis, and on the other hand, has been revised as my analysis progressed.
2.3 A Community-of-Practice Perspective: Conceptual Framework of the Study

2.3.1 Learning as Increasing Participation in Communities of Practice

While drawing generally from various sociocultural perspectives outlined above, the present study borrows centrally from the works of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). As briefly mentioned earlier, Lave and Wenger view learning not simply as the cognitive internalization of knowledge by individuals, but as a situated process in which newcomers gradually move toward fuller participation in the activities of a community of practice (COP) in interaction with more experienced members—a process called legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). In light of this framework, the present study understands academic discourse socialization as a process by which newcomers including L2 graduate students become increasingly competent in academic ways of knowing, speaking, and writing as they participate peripherally and legitimately in the activities of a given academic community. The notions of peripherality and legitimacy require some elaboration here. According to Wenger (1998), peripherality and legitimacy are two types of modifications that are necessary to make the actual participation of newcomers possible. As for the former, Wenger states:

Peripherality provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice. It can be achieved in various ways, including lessened intensity, lessened risk, special assistance, lessened cost of error, close supervision, or lessened production pressures.... No matter how the peripherality of initial participation is achieved, it must engage newcomers and provide a sense of how the community operates. (p. 100)

In this sense, peripherality is a positive term that suggests “an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37; see also Kanno, 1999, and Toohey, 1999, for a debate on this point). In addition, as I have mentioned earlier, peripherality also indicates that there are multiple
ways of belonging in a COP, not just at the core or the margin, and that individuals’
positions and perspectives within a COP can change over time. Another key concept,
legitimacy, has been discussed by Wenger (1998) as follows:

In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough
legitimacy to be treated as potential members.... Granting the newcomers
legitimacy is important because they are likely to come short of what the
community regards as competent engagement. Only with legitimacy can all their
inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than
cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion. (p. 101)

In short, a COP ensures its own reproduction by allowing newcomers to participate
legitimately and to move from the metaphorical periphery towards full participation.

Importantly, Lave and Wenger note that LPP is never a matter of peaceful
transmission and assimilation but a conflictual process of negotiation and transformation.
This is because, first of all, legitimate peripherality is implicated in social structures
involving relations of power: “Hegemony over resources for learning and alienation from
full participation are inherent in the shaping of the legitimacy and peripherality of
participation in its historical realizations” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 42). In other words,
while having access to a wide range of resources is crucial for newcomers, power
relations in COPs can also organize access in a way to either promote or prevent their
LPP. Secondly, there is a fundamental contradiction in the social reproduction of COPs:
“for the centripetal development of full participants, and with it the successful production
of a community of practice, also implies the replacement of old-timers” (Lave & Wenger,
1991; p. 57). In other words, LPP is simultaneously the means of achieving continuity in
a COP and that of introducing new perspectives and replacing the old. Thirdly, implied
in this continuity-displacement contradiction is, on the one hand, the fundamentally
dialogic relationship between a COP and its members, and on the other hand, the transformative nature of a COP:

Granting legitimate participation to newcomers with their own viewpoints introduces into any community of practice all the tensions of the continuity-displacement contradiction. As a way in which the related conflicts are played out in practice, legitimate peripheral participation is far more than just a process of learning on the part of newcomers. It is a reciprocal relation between persons and practice. This means that the move of learners toward full participation in a community of practice does not take place in a static context. The practice itself is in motion. Since activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives are mutually constitutive, change is a fundamental property of communities of practice and their activities. (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 116-117)

Seen in this light, academic discourse socialization is far more complex than the unproblematic appropriation of established knowledge and skills on the part of newcomers. It is likely to involve struggles over access to resources, conflicts and negotiations between differing viewpoints arising from differing degrees of experience and expertise, and transformations of the practices of a given academic community as well as of the identities of those who participate in them. This is the general theoretical picture with which the present study begins.

2.3.2 Classroom as a Community of Practice

In understanding academic discourse socialization as a process of gaining membership in academic communities, it is helpful to clarify what I consider as the academic communities in which the graduate students in this study sought membership. As I have discussed earlier, what constitutes an academic community is not a simple question. For some researchers, there is a larger, somewhat abstract academic community defined by general academic discourse. For some others, a discipline constitutes a distinct academic community. Furthermore, a more local, concrete entity
that people actually belong to such as a university, department, and classroom can also be considered as an academic community. Accordingly, graduate students' discourse socialization can be conceptualized as their attempts to seek membership in any of these different levels of communities. In this study, while recognizing that graduate students are participating in multiple, overlapping academic communities simultaneously, I focus on the classroom communities that these students belonged to locally and treat them as a particular kind of COP (see Gutierrez, 1995; Toohey, 2000, for a similar treatment of classroom).

There are at least two ways we can think of the graduate classroom as an academic community. On the one hand, graduate courses constitute an important entry point for graduate students into a larger academic community such as a disciplinary community. In this sense, the graduate classroom is a place where students learn to become a fuller participant in their chosen discipline, for example, a researcher in education. On the other hand, graduate courses themselves constitute discrete communities of practice in which students participate and seek membership. In this sense, the graduate classroom is a place where students learn to become competent graduate students. Presumably, graduate students engage in both of these processes simultaneously and in fact, it might often be difficult to make a clear distinction between the two. However, this study focuses on the latter—students' attempts to gain membership within their immediate classroom communities—for several reasons. One is that all of the focal students in this study were newcomers to Canadian graduate school, taking graduate courses for the first time in Canada, and that therefore a significant challenge for them was to learn how to be a graduate student in Canada. Secondly, they
were all in a master's program and at the time of the study, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, they were not necessarily interested in pursuing further academic careers in their chosen discipline; in other words, full membership in a given disciplinary community was not everyone’s goal. Finally, on a more theoretical note, I follow those scholars such as Casanave (1995, 1998) and Prior (1995a) who argue that academic discourse socialization should be viewed as a locally situated, and interactionally achieved process rather than as autonomous, one-way assimilation to broader disciplinary cultures. I therefore consider it important to examine students’ experiences in terms of the local and interactive contexts in which students find themselves on an everyday basis.

2.3.3 Classroom Participation as Negotiation of Membership

So far in Section 2.3, I have noted that I consider academic discourse socialization as increasing participation in academic communities, and graduate classrooms as one of the most immediate academic communities in which students participate. The central question I ask in this study therefore is: How do L2 graduate students negotiate membership in a given classroom community? By drawing from the various sociocultural theories discussed above and also by exploring the graduate students’ experiences and perspectives in detail, I have come to view that negotiating membership in a classroom can involve negotiating discourses, competence, identities, and power relations. Students’ goals and investments (Norton Peirce, 1995) as well as their personal histories and backgrounds are another important element that comes into play in this negotiation. Figure 2.1 shows the theoretical background and framework of this study, which is also a summary of this chapter. In what follows, I summarize my theoretical understandings of these key constructs. As I will show in later chapters, these
Figure 2.1: Theoretical Background and Framework of the Study
constructs are closely interconnected with and often mutually constitutive of each other. In addition, although these concepts are foregrounded, other related notions such as knowledge, culture, positionality, and agency are also implicated in them.

The notions of discourse I find useful come from two related, but separate traditions, both of which recognize language as a social practice. One is the language socialization framework discussed earlier that considers discourse as "a set of norms, preferences, and expectations relating linguistic structures to context, which speaker-hearers draw on and modify in producing and interpreting language in context" (Ochs, 1988, p. 8). In light of this framework, becoming a competent member of a given community entails understanding and appropriating the norms, preferences, and expectations of the discourse practices of that community. While starting with this basic idea of discourse and discourse socialization, I do not assume that discourse is monolithic, stable, or value-free, or that discourse socialization is a process of unproblematic assimilation. In this regard, I find it useful to turn to what Prior (1998) calls sociohistoric theories, particularly Bakhtin's (1981) and Lave and Wenger's (1991), and also what Canagarajah (1999) calls the poststructuralist orientation to language and discourse. These theories recognize that discourse is ideological, heterogeneous, and therefore subject to conflicts and negotiations (see also Lemke, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 1999, for a summary of these theories). Within this view, then, discourse socialization is a conflictual process of negotiating multiple discourses. Furthermore, such a view of discourse "frees subjects to reclaim their agency, negotiate the different subjectivities and ideologies offered by competing discourses, and adopt a subject position favorable to their empowerment" (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 30).
This view of discourse is also closely related to the notion of power that I employ. As discussed in Section 2.1.3, this study takes a dynamic view of power and reveals how power relations are locally negotiated within graduate classrooms and how the focal students accommodated or resisted the power relations constructed in the classroom in different ways.

Within the COP perspective underlying this study, competence is understood not as individuals’ abilities, knowledge, or skills in some generic sense, but as situated abilities—abilities that are necessary to engage competently in the practices of a given COP. While specific abilities required for full membership are established by a given community, Wenger (1998) notes that competent membership in any COP would include the following:

1) *mutuality of engagement*—the ability to engage with other members and respond in kind to their actions, and thus the ability to establish relationships in which this mutuality is the basis for an identity of participation

2) *accountability to the enterprise*—the ability to understand the enterprise of a community of practice deep enough to take some responsibility for it and contribute to its pursuit and to its ongoing negotiation by the community

3) *negotiability of the repertoire*—the ability to make use of the repertoire of the practice to engage in it. (p. 137) [italics in original]

Again, it is important to see competence in dynamic terms: competent membership in a given community is open to negotiation and change. As I will discuss later, negotiating competence in this sense was an important part of the students’ struggles in trying to participate meaningfully in their classrooms.

Like the notion of competence, the concept of identity is also understood, first and foremost, in terms of community membership in this study. Wenger (1998) states:

There is a profound connection between identity and practice. Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants. As a consequence,
practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in that context.... In this sense, the formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities. (p. 149)

In other words, there is a “dialectic struggle between the learner and the community out of which emerges the learner’s position and identity” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 149)—a view consistent also with the recent social constructionist formation of selfhood (Burr, 1995). Furthermore, Wenger notes that “membership in a community of practice translates into an identity as a form of competence” (p. 153): within a COP, we experience and co-construct ourselves with other members in terms of differing degrees of competence recognized by that community. This link between identity and competence is an intriguing one that I explore in later chapters. Another related point is that the negotiated nature of discourse, competence, and identity implies that identity is fluid and constantly shifting across time and space (Kondo, 1990; Ochs, 1993; Weedon, 1997). This means, on the one hand, that a student’s identity in terms of her membership in a given classroom can change over time, and on the other hand, that a given student may construct different forms of membership across different classrooms. It does not mean, however, that identity is simply fragmented or that individuals have completely separate identities in different contexts. In this regard, Wenger (1998) explains:

Our various forms of participation delineate pieces of a puzzle we put together rather than sharp boundaries between disconnected parts of ourselves. An identity is thus more than just a single trajectory; instead, it should be viewed as a nexus of multimembership. (p. 159)

Hence, a student may experience different forms of membership in different classrooms, but at the same time she needs to reconcile them in order to maintain her sense of self as

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3 Coming from a similar perspective, Toohey (2000) describes “school identities” that are constructed in a kindergarten on the basis of various abilities, including academic competence, physical presentation/competence, behavioural competence, social competence, and language proficiency.
a viable one. This work of reconciliation, Wenger notes, may be the most significant challenge faced by, for example, learners who cross cultural (and I would add linguistic) boundaries, for they "must often deal with conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities" (p. 160). As I will demonstrate later, some of the focal students in the present study had to struggle with ongoing tensions as they experienced very different types of membership in the classroom in their home country and that in Canada.

Finally, another aspect that may play a crucial role in negotiating membership in a given classroom is individual learners’ goals, interests, desires, or investments. As international graduate students who have chosen to learn by crossing cultural, linguistic, and in some cases disciplinary boundaries, learners often bring specific goals and interests to their classrooms. In addition, studying at a graduate level in a foreign country is normally an important investment toward future academic and professional careers, and therefore, their classroom participation can be shaped significantly by their desire to meet these goals. Furthermore, as I will show, learners’ personal histories and values (e.g., previous educational experiences) as well as their cultural backgrounds can also impact their negotiation of class participation to a great degree.

In Section 2.3, I have described the conceptual framework of this study drawn from various sociocultural theories, particularly Lave and Wenger’s theory of situated learning in a community of practice. To summarize, I view academic discourse socialization as increasing participation in academic communities, including classroom communities. The process of becoming a fuller member of a given community involves not just mastering academic skills and knowledge but also negotiating discourses,
competence, identities, and power relations, as well as learners' goals and investments. This process of negotiation can be complex, conflictual, and transformative mainly because: (1) there may be multiple, competing discourses in a given community; (2) competence defined by a given community can also be multiple and subject to negotiation and change; (3) students may experience different, sometimes conflicting forms of identity over time and across different communities; (4) members of a given community negotiate power relations locally and interactionally as they participate in its practices; and (5) individual members may bring competing goals, needs, and interests, as well as different cultural/educational backgrounds, personal histories, and values. In this study, I consider the classroom as a community of practice and explore how a group of female graduate students from Japan negotiated their membership within their new Canadian academic communities.
Chapter 3

METHODS OF INQUIRY

3.1 A Qualitative Case Study Approach

This study employs a qualitative (or ethnographic) case study approach (Duff, forthcoming; Johnson, 1992; Merriam, 1998; Nunan, 1992; Stake, 1994, 1995; Yin, 1994) to better understand some of the complexities of L2 academic discourse socialization. By exploring the experiences of a small number of learners in depth in real classroom contexts, it aims for “concrete and complex illustrations” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 364) or “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) of the individual cases, while also attempting to identify some general trends and significant patterns among them. This also means that it considers various sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and pedagogical contexts of the examined phenomenon to gain an ecologically valid interpretation (van Lier, 1988). While the main focus of this inquiry is the focal students’ perspectives, it attempts to understand them by triangulating multiple perspectives (e.g., those of students, instructors, and researcher). In addition, the individual cases are compared with one another, adding richness and complexity to the interpretations. Participants’ narratives obtained through interviews and self-reports are the major source of data, while other kinds of data such as field notes from classroom observations are also used. A unique aspect of this study is that it documents the focal students’ changing perspectives and feelings about everyday classroom practices and their participation in them over an extended period of time, revealing their varying struggles as well as personally significant transformations. In what follows, I describe in more detail the research design of this study.
3.2 Sites and Participants

This study was undertaken at Western Canada University (WCU), a large research university located in an increasingly multicultural city in western Canada. Reflecting the cultural richness of the city, students, including international students and recent immigrants, come from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Walking around the campus, one is most likely to hear multiple languages and may also notice posters, ads, and flyers written in languages other than English. In the academic year during which this study was conducted (1999-2000), about 2,200 students among the total of about 35,000 students enrolled in a degree program (undergraduate or graduate) were international students. Except for those from English-speaking countries, the largest groups included students from East Asian countries such as Japan (251), Hong Kong (168), Mainland China (144), and Korea (105). In addition, there was a large population of immigrant students on campus.

The main participants were six female students who had just arrived from Japan to study in a master's program. In the very beginning of the 1999-2000 academic year, I sent out an invitation letter (Appendix A) to all the newly arrived graduate students from Japan in eight different departments, including six departments in the Faculty of Education, the Linguistics department, and the Asian Studies department. I decided to recruit participants in these departments mainly because I had some academic and professional background in these areas of study and felt that it might be useful in understanding participants' experiences. Students who were new to their graduate program were sought in order to document an initial stage of socialization that can be the

1 Pseudonyms are used for all the names of research locations and participants.
most intense. First year students were also desirable since they tended to take more
courses than later year students. Among the twelve students to whom the letter was sent,
seven agreed to participate and stayed in the study until its completion. In this
dissertation, however, I will not report about the only male student in the group since, in
addition to gender, his situation was considerably different from the rest of the group in
many ways (e.g., he was in a Ph.D. program, held a faculty position in Japan, and came
with a family).

All of the six remaining students were studying at a graduate level outside Japan
for the first time. They were all born in Japan, considered their first language (the
language they are most comfortable with) to be Japanese, and therefore could be
categorized under the same umbrella, “Japanese student,” “international student from
Japan,” or “Japanese female student” in the Canadian classroom. However, they in fact
came from a variety of backgrounds which, as I will show, had an impact on the different
ways they participated in the classroom. In this section, I only describe the general
characteristics of the students as a group and leave more detailed descriptions of the
individual students for the next chapter. The group can be divided into three subgroups
in terms of age and educational/professional background: (1) three students in their early
20s who had recently completed their bachelor’s degree in Japan and had very limited or
no professional experience; (2) two students in their late 20s who came with a master’s
degree from a Japanese university and some teaching experience; (3) a student in her
early 40s who had many years of teaching experience. Two of them had lived in an
English-speaking country for an extended period of time, while the others had lived in
Japan all their lives. One student was a third-generation Korean citizen born and raised in Japan, whose L1 was Japanese.

Another group of participants included ten university instructors who taught some of the courses taken by the focal students. They represented a range of academic ranks and teaching experiences, although this was not a result of a purposeful sampling. There were two male full professors, four associate professors (1 male, 3 females), one female assistant professor, and three female sessional instructors (who each had a Ph.D. degree). One of the sessional instructors had been teaching for many years, while the other two had recently completed their doctoral studies and had just started teaching at the university level. Half of them were from North America, three from Europe, and two from East Asia (though those from outside North America had been living in Canada for some time). Four of them identified themselves as speakers of English as a second language. It is also notable that half of them had experienced studying abroad at a university in a language other than their first, and that all told me that they empathized with international students since they themselves had “been there.”

In accordance with university ethical guidelines, all the participants, including the focal students and their course instructors, provided their signed informed consent (see Appendix B and C for the informed consent forms).

3.3 Data Collection

Multiple data collection strategies were used in this study. The use of multiple methods and multiple sources of data is generally called “triangulation” and is normally considered to be a major strength of qualitative research. It allows the researcher to address a wide range of issues (Yin, 1994), to clarify meaning (Stake, 1995), to confirm
the emerging findings and construct plausible explanations (Merriam, 1998), and to ensure validity (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) or trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998) of qualitative inquiry. Following a social constructionist view (Burr, 1995; Lather, 1991), however, I do not assume that by drawing from several sources of data I am better able to discover “the true story.” But rather, collecting multiple accounts from different sources and viewpoints helps me gain deeper understandings of the examined issues and their complexities.

Data were collected around the entire academic year that started in September 1999 and ended in April 2000. The following five procedures were used for data collection.

(1) **Weekly self-reports (WRs) by focal students**

The focal students provided self-reports about the classes they were attending and their ongoing participation in them on a weekly basis throughout the academic year. Each student reported about two to three courses in each term, some of which I was observing. Initially, I suggested to the students the following reporting options: (1) face-to-face conversation right after class, (2) telephone conversation after each class or once a week, (3) reporting through email, (4) keeping a written journal, and (5) audio-recording comments on their own after each class. Three students chose to report through email and one through telephone conversation. The other two started out with a written journal and later switched to face-to-face or phone conversations. For written reports sent through email, I provided a set of questions for the students to respond to (Appendix D). After a student would send me a report, I would often write her back asking her to clarify

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2 Understandably, they both found that keeping a written journal took too much time and energy, while trying to meet the demands of their courses.
or expand on something she wrote. It was therefore not unusual for us to exchange email messages multiple times regarding a single report, which added richness to the data. For example, when a student wrote, “I am beginning to speak more and more spontaneously [in class],” I wrote her back and asked her what she meant by “speaking spontaneously.”

She then replied:

In the beginning of the term I would always double-check in my mind what I was going to say before I said it. Whenever I wanted to say something, I would say to myself, “Wait a second, is this the correct way of saying it?” When I didn’t do that, I would often be at a loss for words in the middle or couldn’t communicate my thoughts very well.... But now I rarely do that. I can usually say what I want to say without double-checking.... I also think it’s related to the fact that I’m more used to the class and getting to know my instructor and classmates better. (Shiho, WR: 99/11/08) [translation mine]

In this way, the reports created a space for meaning negotiations between the students and researcher.

At the end of the first semester, a student indicated that she would like the format of the report to be more open-ended so that she could write more freely. We revised it together and the new version contained only five general questions (Appendix E). I shared the revised version with the other two students reporting through email and both of them also preferred it and used it in the second semester. This was one of the ways in which the students shaped this research project in negotiation with the researcher.

Although the questions on the reports were all in English, I asked the students to respond in the language they preferred, and most of the time they chose to write in Japanese.

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3 The dates of reports, interviews, and observations are presented in a year, month, day order throughout this dissertation.

4 Since most of the data from student interviews and reports were in Japanese, most of the excerpts from student narratives were translated from Japanese to English by the researcher. In the rest of this dissertation, excerpts that are originally in English will be indicated with a note, [original in English]. Otherwise, it should be assumed that excerpts are translations.
Reporting through face-to-face or phone conversations tended to be less structured and more open-ended, although I tried to cover the same set of questions as in email reports. When I observed a class and the student had some time to stay, we talked immediately after the class. In such situations, students provided the most immediate reactions and often had some questions to ask me about the class. When it was not practical to stay after class, we talked on the phone normally on the same day or within the next couple of days, for it was critical to obtain a report from their relatively recent memories. The duration of each conversation varied considerably, from 20 minutes to over an hour. We talked in Japanese, with the exception of one student who preferred to talk to me in English most of the time. I will describe later why she made such a decision and its multiple implications for her academic and social life. All our conversations, whether face-to-face or by phone, were audio-recorded with the students' permission. Since it was not practical to transcribe all the recorded conversations that amounted roughly to 35 hours of talk, my strategy was to listen to the tapes, make a fairly detailed summary of each conversation, and later transcribe the parts that seemed the most relevant to the ongoing analysis.

This data collection method played a number of important roles in this project. First of all, the reports provided more immediate reactions than the retrospective reflections obtained during the end-of-term interviews (see below). Their descriptions in the reports were often vivid, sometimes emotional, and sometimes analytical. In the following extract, for example, a student describes her sense of alienation and analyzes why she cannot enjoy one of her courses:

I feel very uncomfortable just by being in this class. One of the reasons might be that I missed the first two classes. And today I didn’t know about the classroom
change and got there late.... Another reason might be that all my classmates are Caucasian and I feel overpowered. To make things worse, one of them said to me, “Are you an exchange student?” She probably didn’t mean any harm but it was as if she was saying, “Why are you in this class? You can’t even speak English.” (Nanako, WR: 00/01/19)

I was able to obtain detailed descriptions such as this throughout the academic year, which helped me better understand the students’ everyday classroom experiences.

Second, as is evident in the above example, the reports often described the students’ thoughts and feelings that were usually hidden behind their relative silence in the classroom. One of the strengths of this study, I believe, is that it captured the emotional aspect of class participation through such candid and immediate commentaries, which would have been difficult to capture in observations or retrospective interviews. Third, weekly communications with the students helped me better understand their ongoing struggles, the variety of strategies they employed over time, and some of the personal changes they went through. In other words, I was able to stay close to their live(d) experiences through these reports. In addition, regular communication also helped establish rapport between us. Fourth, the open-ended nature of the reporting provided a space for the students to address their own concerns in addition to the specific concerns of this project. Finally, the students reported not only about the classes I was observing but also about other classes they were attending, which enabled me to understand the situated nature of their classroom experiences. Through their reports I could see how the individual students were participating in different courses in similar or different ways, depending on a variety of local circumstances. This also reminded me that my observations of a student in one course did not necessarily represent her participation in all her courses: cultural description or analysis is always partial, no matter
how "thick" it appears to be (Geertz, 1973). At the same time, having reports on multiple courses allowed me to grasp some of the common issues the individual students were dealing with across the curriculum. By the end of the academic year, a total of 283 reports were collected.

(2) Interviews with students

Separate from weekly reports, I interviewed each student three times, once at the beginning of the academic year, once during the winter break (i.e., after the first semester), and once at the end of the academic year. These interviews were semi-structured and questions were asked based on an interview guide that listed some general topics to be covered (Patton, 1990) (Appendix F). The main purposes of the first set of interviews were (1) to find out about the students' educational, professional, and other relevant backgrounds and (2) to gain information about their program of study, the courses they were taking, and their current concerns. In the second and third set of interviews, the students were asked to reflect on their studies in general, discuss their experiences in each course they took, and also comment on several topics I had prepared on classroom participation, academic needs, English improvements and so on. In these interviews, I tried to achieve a fine balance between asking questions that were general enough to allow the students' own perspectives to unfold, and keeping our conversations focused enough to cover the prepared topics. Each interview lasted about an hour and a half or longer (average 1.7 hours each) and most of the interviews were conducted in Japanese. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed/translated by the researcher.
(3) Classroom observations

Another major part of the data comes from classroom observations. I observed some of the courses the students were taking on an ongoing basis during the entire academic year. The six students belonged to three different departments, two in each department, and fortunately, each pair was taking at least one course together. Since it was practically impossible to observe all of their courses, my primary strategy was to observe the courses that the students took in pairs. With the students’ permission, I approached the instructors of these courses and gained their permission to observe. I also provided all the students in a given class with a brief description of the purpose and procedures of my observations (Appendix G), and gained their permission. Observing more than one student in a single course had a couple of important advantages. Most importantly, I was able to compare two students’ participation in and responses to the same class, which provided valuable insights to my analysis. Second, it seemed to help offset some of the pressure the students might be feeling about being observed, since they were not the only one being observed. In addition to these courses, I also gained permission to observe two other courses in which only one student was participating. My observations in all the courses, except for one, were ongoing (i.e., every class/week for its entire duration), which helped me see how the courses developed and how the students’ participation changed or didn’t change over time. I was also able to observe and explore what kinds of interpersonal relationships were developing within each course over time and how such relationships might be affecting the focal students’ participation. Another advantage of ongoing observations was that I was able to develop the kind of rapport necessary to gain an insider’s perspective not only with the focal students but also with
the instructors. In total, 59 lessons in five different courses were observed, which amounted to 151 hours of observations in total.

Four of the five courses I observed were graduate seminars offered within the Faculty of Education. The other was a senior undergraduate course in the Linguistics Department, although about half of the participants were graduate students. They were all seminar style courses where students' active participation in discussions was expected. I was a participant observer in these courses with a "peripheral membership role" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380): that is, I established some level of membership in the classroom by physically being there every week and observing and interacting with others, but did not take on an active role in actual classroom activities. I normally sat relatively inconspicuous position, usually toward the back corner of the room, and quietly took field notes.

(4) Interviews with course instructors

Ten of the focal students' course instructors were each interviewed on one occasion toward the end of the course that they were teaching (and I was observing). Before interviewing them, I consulted the students about the questions I planned to ask the instructors to make sure that the students felt comfortable with the questions. Gaining the instructors' views was important for the following reasons: (1) instructors potentially played an important role in the students' socialization; (2) they provided another set of perspectives on the focal students' classroom experiences; (3) as more experienced members of academic communities, they could provide insights into issues pertaining to (L2) graduate students' academic socialization. The interviews were semi-structured and the main areas of questions included: (1) characteristics of the course, (2) the focal
student's participation in the course, (3) expectations about graduate students' classroom participation, (4) the role of class discussions in graduate students' academic socialization, (5) challenges faced by international students, (6) their experiences and challenges in teaching international students, and (7) the role of faculty and institutions in supporting international students (see Appendix H for sample questions). Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours (average 1.2 hours each). All the interviews, except for one, were audio-recorded and transcribed.  

(5) Documents

The course outlines (or syllabuses) of all the courses the focal students took during the academic year were collected. It was typical for instructors to provide students with a course outline that specified, for example, course objectives, required and recommended texts, a list of readings with a weekly schedule, assignments, and evaluation procedures. The outlines also provided information regarding the instructors' explicit and implicit expectations about students' performance including class participation. The majority of the outlines collected simply listed "(active) participation" or "class (or seminar) participation" as one of the requirements or expectations, whereas some provided more detailed explanations about expected participation, evaluation criteria and procedures for participation, or the expected "seminar climate." Other relevant documents such as the handouts prepared by the students for their class presentations and the students' self-evaluation of class participation were also collected.

Table 3.1 summarizes the data collection methods and database.

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5 One instructor preferred not to be audio-recorded, and so I took notes during and after the interview.
3.4 Data Analysis

Following a tradition in qualitative research, data analysis in this study was primarily inductive: that is, categories and themes emerged mainly from the collected data, and theories about the settings and participants were grounded in direct experience at the research site (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Patton, 1990; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At the same time, the

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### Table 3.1: Summary of Database

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Data collection period</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Weekly self-reports by students</td>
<td>(Entire academic year: September 1999-April 2000)</td>
<td>- Email messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ongoing • 1-3 times per week, per student</td>
<td>- Audio-taped face-to-face or telephone conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Written journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 283 reports in total, about 16 different courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interviews with students</td>
<td>• Interview 1: Beginning of academic year • Interview 2: End of Term 1 • Interview 3: End of Term 2</td>
<td>- Audio-taped and transcribed interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 18 interviews in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Average 1.7 hours each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Classroom observations</td>
<td>• Ongoing</td>
<td>- Field notes on 59 lessons in 5 courses (151 hours of observation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interviews with instructors</td>
<td>• Once with each instructor toward the end of the courses</td>
<td>- Audio-taped and transcribed interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 10 interviews in total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Average 1.2 hours each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Documents</td>
<td>• Ongoing</td>
<td>- Course outlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Handouts for presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Self-evaluations of class participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2 informed the analysis as well as data collection. Following Marshall and Rossman (1995), I conceptualized the analytic procedures in terms of the following modes: (1) organizing the data, (2) generating categories, themes, and patterns, (3) testing the emergent hypotheses against the data, (4) searching for alternative explanations of the data, and (5) writing the report. As is typical in qualitative research, I engaged in these modes of analysis in an ongoing, cyclical fashion throughout the project including the data collection phase. In what follows, I discuss how I engaged in each of these modes of analysis in some detail.

(1) Organizing the data

Organizing data was an ongoing, creative act of analysis and decision-making. During the data collection phase, I kept the data collected by different methods in separate files. For example, I had files for weekly reports provided by the individual students, files for the interview transcripts, files for the field notes on the individual courses observed and so on. At the same time, I kept a record of what data I had collected so far on each individual student. After the data collection was completed, I organized the data in three different ways in order to make sense of them and also to search for meaningful ways to present them. First, I created a separate file for each of the six focal students in order to look for unique characteristics, perspectives, and experiences that made each student a case unto herself. All the data concerning a single student, including weekly reports, interview transcripts, observational notes, documents, and my journal entries, were compiled into one file. I then reviewed the raw data and tentative categories generated so far and created a case summary for each student. The summary included: (1) the student’s demographic, educational, and professional
backgronds, (2) goals and purposes, (3) information about her program of study and courses, and (4) major themes and issues that emerged. This strategy helped me understand the individual students' personal histories, perspectives, concerns, and struggles holistically and in their full complexity. Second, I organized the data into three separate files, each containing data pertaining to a pair of students who belonged to the same program and were observed in the same course. The purpose of this organization was: (1) to see what themes and issues emerged in different sites (e.g., courses, programs, departments), and (2) to compare the experiences and perspectives of the two students in each pair within the same course. This site-based organization was useful in gaining insights into the locally situated nature of discourse socialization and the multiplicity of academic practices, values, and discourses. At the same time, comparing students' differing responses to the same learning context brought my attention to the important role played by individual learners' personal histories and agency in shaping their own learning. Finally, at a later stage of analysis when central themes for organizing this dissertation were decided upon, I collated the data on the basis of the following three overlapping themes, (1) negotiating classroom participation, (2) voices behind the silence, and (3) agency, positionality, and transformation. Each of these themes will be elaborated upon in later chapters.

(2) Generating categories, themes, and patterns

Weekly reports, interview transcripts, and field notes were reviewed multiple times throughout the project and salient themes and tentative categories were generated. The categories developed during the data collection phase were mostly "folk categories" (Delamont, 1992, p. 150), reflecting directly on the language, concepts, and classification
scheme used by the participants themselves. For example, categories generated from the weekly reports by one student included the following terms which appeared frequently in her reports: class atmosphere, difficulty in listening, (lack of) confidence, (lack of) contribution, nervousness, not wanting to make mistakes, competition, obligation to speak, effective speaker, (ir)relevant topics, and so on. After the data collection was completed and certain recurring themes were apparent, more theoretical categories and constructs were generated both from the data themselves and the relevant literature, and patterns and relations between the categories were explored. Such categories included: discourses of class participation, competent participation, community membership, legitimacy, silence, identity negotiation, power negotiation, accommodation, resistance, agency, personal transformation, and so on.

(3) Testing the emergent hypotheses against the data and searching for alternative explanations

Once the data were coded in terms of salient themes and categories, tentative hypotheses were developed, first of all, about each individual student. These hypotheses were then tested against the data about the particular student obtained from different data sources and were confirmed, revised, or rejected. For example, in analyzing a student’s weekly reports, I developed a hypothesis that her fear of divulging a lack of knowledge in part prevented her from speaking up in class. However, when testing it out through the data obtained in classroom observations, I found that when she did speak in class she tended to ask questions about something she did not know. Then I needed to go back to the data and searched for alternative explanations. Emergent hypotheses were also tested across the individual students. It was a difficult, but fruitful task to compare and contrast
the hypotheses developed about the six students and then to develop “theories” that
seemed to explain the similarities and differences across their experiences. Alternative
explanations were sought when a theory that seemed to explain the case of one student
did not hold true in the case of another. Another strategy was to test a hypothesis about a
student across different courses. For example, the analysis of a student’s experience in
one course seemed to suggest that she couldn’t participate actively mainly because she
felt that she wasn’t recognized as a competent member of the classroom community.
This hypothesis was confirmed when tested against her experience in another course
where she felt she was recognized as a competent member and was able to participate
actively.

(4) Writing the report

Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that writing about qualitative data is central to
the analytic process, since “in the choice of particular words to summarize and reflect the
complexity of the data, the researcher is engaging in the interpretive act, lending shape
and form—meaning—to massive amounts of raw data” (p. 117). The centrality of
writing in qualitative research is also stressed by Richardson (1994) who contends that
writing is “a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis” (p. 516). During
the data collection phase, I kept a journal in which I recorded and explored my analytical
thoughts as well as further questions I had about the participants and investigated issues.
I also wrote whenever something surprised me; surprises often provided critical insights
or new directions for the analysis, as well as opportunities to interrogate my own
assumptions. The following excerpt from my journal is an example of such writing:

This week’s highlight was Rie’s requests to her instructor, including speaking
more slowly, using shorter sentences, and so on…. Rie told me that she feels she
deserves more from the instructor because she is paying the same tuition (actually
more as an international student) as the others in the class and therefore has the
same right to learn from the course. "The right to learn"—this never occurred to
me before. Maybe I tended to assume that it's the students who need to
accommodate, not the instructors. Obviously, Rie expects the instructor to
accommodate her to some extent.... (Researcher's journal: 99/10/09)

Writing this dissertation was also an act of finding out my own assumptions and
positionalities as researcher, as well as interpreting the multiple accounts provided by the
participants. In writing about this inquiry, I do not pretend to be a detached, objective
interpreter, but recognize reflexivity in social research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995),
that is, how my positions as a social and cultural being might shape my interpretations as
well as what my participants told me. Furthermore, as a situated writer, I am aware of the
partiality of this piece of writing and the multiple interpretations that are possible of the
data collected. But I consider partiality not as a limitation that can be fixed but as an
inevitability, given the complexities of human experience, and take the position that
"having a partial, local, historical knowledge is still knowing" (Richardson, 1994, p.
518). In the next section, I describe what I understand to be my positions in relation to
the social context being studied, particularly my relationships with the focal students.

Figure 3.1 summarizes the procedures for data analysis used in this study.

3.5 The Researcher and the Researched

At the onset of the study, I hoped to create a relationship with the focal students
where they would feel comfortable enough to share and discuss with me their classroom
experiences including their concerns, problems, and struggles. My position as a fellow
international student from Japan seemed to help in establishing such a relationship. In
many ways, I was an insider to them: we shared the same first language, were studying in
the same country as a foreign student, and even had similar academic interests (language
Collecting data

Organizing data:
- by data collection methods
- by individual students
- by pairs of students (i.e., site-based)
- by three major themes

Generating categories, themes, and patterns:
- reviewing and coding data
- generating "folk categories"
- generating theoretical themes
- exploring patterns and relations

Testing emergent hypothesis/
Searching for alternative explanations:
- testing hypotheses about individual students against different types of data
- testing hypotheses about individual students across different courses
- testing hypotheses across individual students

Writing the report:
- writing analytical notes in researcher’s journal
- writing drafts of this dissertation
- "member checks" with focal students

Figure 3.1: Data Analysis Procedures
and education). Gender was another commonality we shared. I believe that my insider status and awareness based on these similarities helped me better understand their perspectives, be sensitive about their needs and concerns, and develop a rapport that is critical in this kind of in-depth study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). At the same time, I was an outsider since I did not participate in the immediate contexts of their studies (e.g., programs, courses) as a regular member. Furthermore, although we all shared a similar background in certain respects, each of us had unique personal histories and experiences and occupied slightly different social (e.g., age) and institutional positions (e.g., master’s vs. doctoral student). As I will show later, an important aspect of the study is a detailed look at such individual variation among L2 learners who are often grouped together under common cultural, linguistic, or gender-related labels.

An interesting dynamic observed was that differences in age and seniority between the individual focal students and I played a role in shaping our relationships. As Rohlen (1991) observes, age difference is an important factor that shapes relationships in Japan. In this study, I was older than all of the focal students, except for one, and was also senior to all of them in terms of academic experience: in other words, I was senpai to them. Senpai is a Japanese term that is normally translated as “senior” in English or which “may be understood to mean a person who proceeds or leads, with the implication that those that follow are his or her companions in the same pursuit, career, or institution” (Rohlen, p. 21). And kohai is a term that references someone’s junior status. The fact that most of them treated me as their senpai was indexed in their use of keigo, or honorific forms of the Japanese language that are often used by kohai to show respect to

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6 It is possible that the focal students felt comfortable with me partly because we shared the same gender, although none of them explicitly indicated that that was in fact the case.

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I believe that our senpai-kohai relationship, which was informal and friendly and therefore did not represent a rigid, hierarchical power structure (that is often observed in Japanese institutions), worked advantageously in a couple of ways. First of all, it was probably easier for the students to talk candidly about their problems and difficulties to me, a friendly senpai, rather than to someone they considered as having an equal, lower, or much higher status. Secondly, it helped create a reciprocal relationship between us: the students often sought information, advice, or support from me, which became an opportunity for me to reciprocate their generosity in helping me with this study. Another aspect of such relationships was that the students might construct themselves as less knowledgeable, experienced, or competent than I was, which might have implications for their class participation (when I was present) as well as for the kinds of data collected.

In addition to my providing help and support to the students (e.g., proofreading term-paper drafts, providing feedback on class presentations, teaching how to use a computer program), reciprocity in this study took a few other forms. First, most importantly, the students were offered opportunities to actively reflect on their classroom experiences and learning and to discuss their concerns with me in an ongoing manner. As I will discuss later, this aspect of the study was appreciated by all the students. Second, the students were given opportunities to check the accuracy and plausibility of my interpretations and to provide feedback and input by reviewing multiple drafts of the dissertation chapters. In addition, as mentioned earlier, member checks (Merriam, 1998) were done frequently and ongoingly through our weekly communications. Third, the

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7 One student who was nine years older than I was tended not to use keigo with me, whereas I always used keigo to her. Nevertheless, it was obvious that she treated me as someone who was relatively more experienced academically, and she often sought my help or advice. I did not use keigo to the others who
students could also learn about conducting a research project by participating in one. Having firsthand experience of being a research participant was useful for them since research issues were an important topic of their courses and many of them would have to actually conduct a project in the near future.

To summarize, a notable feature of this study is that the researcher and the researched shared a similar linguistic, educational, and cultural background, as well as similar but in some ways different social positions. We developed a fairly close, supportive relationship through our regular and frequent communications. To the younger students especially, I was not only a researcher but also a senpai or "someone like a big sister" (in a student’s words), as well as a peer who was faced with similar issues as an L2 student and therefore was genuinely interested in exploring such issues with them. This kind of relationship created opportunities for reciprocity as well as for interactive and dialogic research, or what Cameron et al. (1992) characterize as research with the researched. At the same time, I acknowledge my relatively powerful position as a researcher who ultimately interprets the data and writes about the participants. The following chapters therefore should be read primarily as my interpretations developed in ongoing collaboration with the participants.

3.6 Trustworthiness of Inquiry

Many scholars have written about the standards to be employed for judging the quality and credibility of qualitative research (e.g., Cresswell, 1998; Edge & Richards, 1998; Firestone, 1993; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Howe & Eisenhart, 1990; Lather, 1991, 1994; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; were younger than I. This lack of keigo on my part was not a sign of disrespect to them, but instead indexed a friendly, casual relationship that I attempted to develop with them.
Maxwell, 1992; Mishler, 1990; Peshkin, 1993; Wolcott, 1994). In this study, I follow Lincoln and Guba (1985) as well as Merriam (1998) who put forward the notion of *trustworthiness* in qualitative inquiry. In assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four alternative concepts—*credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*—in place of the traditional concepts of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. This study's credibility lies in its triangulation of multiple methods, data sources, sites (i.e., multiple courses for an individual focal student), and viewpoints. "Multiple realities" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296) were captured through not only direct observations of different classroom contexts but also reports and interviews with multiple participants, showing the complexities of the examined issues. The longitudinal nature of the study as well as the forms of reciprocity described above (e.g., member checks) also helped increase its credibility. Figure 3.2 shows the different types of triangulation employed in this study.

Transferability, or more conventionally, generalizability is often considered a major weakness of qualitative case studies (from a quantitative, positivist point of view) because of the difficulty of generalizing from a small non-random sample to a larger population (Firestone, 1993; Stake, 1994; Yin, 1994). Having multiple cases (i.e., 6 subjects in multiple courses) rather than a single case may be helpful to some extent (Merriam, 1998). But obviously, this study would not claim any statistical generalizability of its findings to a population such as L2 graduate students from Japan. Instead, it attempts to increase the transferability of its findings beyond the immediate context of research in two ways. First, it attempts to provide thick descriptions of the examined cases through *contextualization* (Duff, 2002b) in order to allow *naturalistic*
generalization (Stake, 1994, 1995) or reader/user generalizability (Firestone, 1993; Merriam, 1998). The idea is that “richly contextualized, problematized and theorized reports and interpretations” (Edge & Richards, 1998, p. 350) will help the reader judge the applicability of the findings to new contexts. Second, this study also aims for analytical generalization, that is, the generalization of its findings to a broader theory (Firestone, 1993; Yin, 1994). With this goal in mind, I have explicated in Chapter 2 the theoretical framework that guided and was refined by this study.
Dependability or reliability traditionally refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Merriam (1998) notes that the concept of replication is problematic in qualitative social science research including educational research:

> Because what is being studied in education is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes a priori controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible. (p. 296)

Instead, she argues that the reliability of qualitative research can be judged in term of its dependability, that is, whether the results are consistent with the data collected (see also Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). I have attempted to enhance dependability and consistency of this study by providing in this chapter an explicit description of its design features as well as my role or positions as the researcher (Merriam, 1998).

Finally, rather than addressing traditional notions of objectivity, this study deals with the concerns of confirmability, or “whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 145), by using two strategies. First, I have attempted to make explicit my positions or subjective biases as the researcher by explaining the theoretical assumptions I bring to this study (Chapter 2), my positions vis-à-vis the participants and research sites, the basis for informant selection and description, and the social context from which the data were collected (this chapter) (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, cited in Merriam, 1998). Second, the focal students were provided with many opportunities to check or confirm my tentative interpretations or findings through our weekly conversations and also by reading multiple drafts of dissertation chapters.
Having described the methods of inquiry, I will present the findings of this study in the next four chapters. First, Chapter 4 will introduce each of the six focal students in some detail, and then Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will discuss their lived experiences in participating in the L2 graduate classroom under three overlapping, but separate themes.
Chapter 4

INTRODUCING THE STUDENTS:
BACKGROUNDs, GOALS, AND CONTEXTs OF LEARNING

4.0 Introduction

Before exploring the focal students' experiences in Canadian classrooms in detail, I introduce the students in terms of their backgrounds, goals, and contexts of learning in this chapter. The following descriptions include: (1) individual students’ biographical, educational/academic, professional, and English language learning backgrounds; (2) their purposes for coming to Canada, academic goals and interests, and future plans and goals; and (3) their program of study, courses, living situation, and other special circumstances. Such information on individual students’ unique personal histories, desires, and learning contexts is very important for a holistic and in-depth understanding of their perspectives and experiences. In addition, it allows us to see the wide variety that exists among the students who might be represented under a common label such as “Japanese students.”

In the following descriptions, the students were divided into three pairs: (1) Lisa and Jun, (2) Rie and Nanako, and (3) Emiko and Shiho. The students in each pair belonged to the same department and program and were also observed in the same course. This chapter then becomes a backdrop for Chapter 5 where I compare and contrast the students’ experiences in each pair within the same course. At the end of the chapter, an overview of the students (Table 4.1) and a mapping of key elements in the students’ learning context (Figure 4.1) are provided.
4.1 Lisa and Jun

The first pair, Lisa and Jun, were in a Master of Education (M.Ed.) program in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in the Department of Language Education at WCU. They took two graduate courses in English as a second/foreign language together during the first year of their studies. While both were secondary level, EFL teachers in Japan, they were also different in terms of academic background, professional experience, and learning goal.

Lisa was born and raised in a medium-sized city in Eastern Japan and was 29 years old. When I first met her in August 1999, she had a very friendly demeanor and appeared to be strongly motivated to learn. I was also struck by the fact that she had already learned various organizational aspects of the university, which can be difficult for new students to grasp. My impression of her being friendly, motivated, and resourceful did not change throughout the study. Lisa had studied International Relations at university in her home prefecture (i.e., province/state) and received a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree. During her studies, she became interested in Native American cultures as well as the English language, and traveled around the United States for about a month and half. After graduation, she entered a master's program in English Education at another university in Japan. Overall, she enjoyed the program and became interested in issues of teacher education, on which she conducted a research project and wrote a thesis. However, she was unsatisfied with the program's exclusive focus on theory rather than practice. After completing her studies with a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree, she taught EFL at a public senior high school for three years. During these years, she was “busy
dealing with student issues and classroom management issues” and like many other teachers at the school “had little time to seriously think about how to teach English.”

These issues Lisa had faced as a graduate student and later as an English teacher eventually brought her to WCU. In our first interview, she mentioned three major reasons for coming to Canada: (1) “to learn how to fill the gap between theory and practice and help English teachers in Japan,” (2) to gain new knowledge and perspectives on English language teaching in North America, and (3) to improve her English, particularly her listening and speaking. Another goal she had was to write a thesis, since she believed that doing so would help her achieve her ultimate goal of contributing to the research community:

If I wrote a thesis, I could make some contributions to teacher education. I really want to learn about teacher education, particularly about the issue of non-native speaking language teachers.... So I wanted to make sure that there was a possibility for me to write a thesis. (Lisa, Interview 1: 99/09/30)

Thus, Lisa was determined to learn and also brought specific goals to her studies. Her future goal was to teach at the college level in Japan, and she was also considering studying at the doctoral level in North America.

Lisa took three graduate seminars (two 3-credit and one 6-credit courses) on theory and research in ESL/TESL in the first year of her studies. In the first few months, she stayed with a home-stay family and a Japanese roommate, but eventually moved to a campus residence for graduate students. As I will discuss later, this move brought positive changes to her academic as well as social life. Before coming to Canada, she learned English mostly by listening to English conversation lessons on the radio and

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1 There were two sessions at WCU, Winter session and Summer session, and each session contained two terms. Winter session, during which the study was conducted, was divided into Term 1 (September-
reading English newspapers while in university and graduate school. She also took some preparatory courses at an English language school in WCU before commencing her studies.

**JUN** was born and raised in a medium-sized city in Central Japan and was 42 years old. I met her for the first time in the first class of a course I was observing. On that day, the instructor set up a laptop computer and a large screen in the classroom and spent a lot of time explaining the online part of the course by using the computer. Throughout the class, Jun sat quietly in her seat and had a confused look at times. My observation was confirmed after class when she said to the instructor, “I was lost.” Jun and I took a bus together on the way home that evening and she told me that she had been overwhelmed by her classes and also by all kinds of initial arrangements she had to make such as registering in the courses and setting up remote access to the Internet. When I explained about my research project, feeling reluctant about asking her to take on another task, she agreed to participate without hesitation and said, “We should help each other whenever we can.” As I will show, Jun faced a lot of challenges in her courses. But she managed to complete her program within a year, while generously helping me with this study.

Jun received a B.A. in literature from a university in a large metropolitan city in Japan and after graduation went back to her hometown to teach English at a private high school. After teaching there for 16 years, she was granted a one-year leave to study overseas, which also meant that she would have to go back after a year whether she completed her program or not. One of the reasons why she chose Canada was that she

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*December) and Term 2 (January-April). Three-credit courses lasted for one term, whereas six-credit courses lasted for two terms.*
had taken her high school students to the country many times as an escort teacher. In our first interview, she described the purpose of her coming to Canada as follows:

First of all, I wanted to improve my English and gain more confidence. Also, I’ve been teaching for so many years but never had a chance to step back and reflect on what I was doing. I needed a change. I wanted to gain more knowledge about TESL. (Jun, Interview 1: 99/09/22)

Thus, like many of the students in the M.Ed. program, studying at WCU was mainly professional development for Jun. She felt “very lucky to be given such an opportunity” and said, “The time I have here is very precious and I shouldn’t waste any of it.” While Lisa had specific research interests, Jun was concerned with “learning as much as [she could] from the courses” and gaining new ideas for her teaching. Her ultimate goal was to contribute to her fellow teachers in Japan with the new knowledge and skills she would gain in Canada.

During the time of the study, Jun took two graduate seminars on theory and research in ESL/TESL, a graduate seminar on writing pedagogy, an introductory graduate course on research methods, and an undergraduate course in linguistics (all except for one 6-credit course were 3-credit courses). She also took an independent study course in which she read articles on language education under the supervision of her academic advisor. She lived by herself in an apartment off campus throughout her stay and commuted to the university by bus almost everyday. She liked studying in a small library in her department because she could chat with her classmates and also talk about assignments and course readings.

### 4.2 Rie and Nanako

The second pair, Rie and Nanako, were in an M.A. program in sociology and anthropology of education in the Department of Educational Studies at WCU. They had
the same advisor and took a few courses together in the first year of their studies. On a superficial level, they shared many similarities: they were both young women from Japan in their 20s who spoke English as a second language and came to Canada to study education at the graduate level. A closer look at their backgrounds, however, reveals differences between them that are important in understanding their unique perspectives.

RIE, a 27-year old, was born and raised in a large city in Western Japan as a third-generation Korean. She was most comfortable with a variation of the Kansai-dialect of Japanese\(^2\) and like a stereotypical Kansai-person, was often quick and funny when she spoke it. She also spoke some Korean that was, as she put it, “my first language that was taken away from me by the Japanese government, historically speaking.” While many Koreans in Japan choose to assimilate completely into Japan and even adopt Japanese names (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999), Rie and her family had kept their Korean names and citizenship and had never lost their identity as Koreans. She received all her school education in Japan as a minority student. She described her school experience as follows:

I didn’t learn anything about myself because teachers ignored Korean students who might be in their classroom.... They simply assumed that all their students were Japanese and often said to us, “What do you think about this as a Japanese?” ... The social studies textbooks talked about “my country” [i.e., Japan] and I used to feel awkward because Koreans weren’t included as members of “my country.” (Rie, Interview 1: 99/09/24)

Rie went to university in her home prefecture and at first majored in Western literature. In her third year, however, she changed her major to Japanese history because she realized that she “should be learning about issues that influenced [her] life more

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\(^2\) A dialect spoken in a particular region of Western Japan called Kansai.
directly.” After receiving a B.A. in history, she continued to study modern Japanese history in an M.A. program in the same university and wrote a thesis on Korean immigrant students in Japan during World War II. While in graduate school in Japan, she also taught Japanese history at a public high school on a part-time basis for a year. Again, she found herself questioning the premises of Japanese education, this time as a teacher:

When I started teaching, I read the Course of Study written by the Ministry of Education and I was shocked by it. It said something like, “The purpose of education is to raise fine Japanese citizens.” … I had two Korean students in my class and therefore really had to question this premise. (Rie, Interview 1: 99/09/24)

Rie’s experiences as a minority student and later as a minority teacher in Japan eventually brought her to Canada to study multicultural education. As we can see, this topic was not simply one of her academic interests but a reflection of her personal struggles. Her future goal then was to go back to Japan and teach at a secondary or post-secondary level.

In her first year at WCU, Rie took four graduate seminars on topics such as multicultural education, educational policy, educational anthropology, and race and nation in education, as well as an introductory graduate course on research methods (all were 3-credit courses). Like Jun, she lived by herself in an apartment off campus and was generally happy with this arrangement. In terms of her background in English, she learned “exam English just like a typical Japanese person,” which meant that she mostly learned grammar and reading skills. She enjoyed writing in Japanese and had also won a major prize for her essay she wrote on her educational experiences in Japan, which supported her studies in Canada financially. She was also a prolific, dedicated writer for
this project and wrote three sets of e-mail reports every week for the entire academic year.

NANAKO was born and raised in a large city in Northern Japan and was 23 years old. She described her family as having a strong academic background: her father was a professor of linguistics at a Japanese university and her mother also taught there. When she was six years old, her father went to a Canadian university as a visiting scholar for a year and took his family with him. Nanako, who had “just started to learn simple Chinese characters” and knew no English, was “thrown into” a regular elementary school. She remembered that she had suddenly started to speak English after about three months, and also recalled talking to her brother in English at home. After returning to Japan, Nanako had to become re-socialized into a Japanese school which, in her observation, valued sameness. In elementary school and junior high school, she was scared of being alienated by her classmates because of her special status as a “returnee” and felt strongly that she had to act just like everyone else:

When I was in junior high school, I once had to read an English sentence aloud. When I read it, everybody looked at me in surprise. After that, I forced myself to speak English with a typical Japanese accent.... I tried very hard not to stand out. (Nanako, Interview 1: 99/09/29)

In contrast, in her senior high school which she described as “open but academic and competitive,” Nanako felt for the first time that her experience in Canada was “valued and accepted as part of [herself]” and once again she was able to speak English with her natural pronunciation.

Nanako went to university in a large metropolitan city away from home. She majored in English and wrote a graduating paper on language and gender. She became interested in this topic partly because of her mother who studied gender and economics,
and had also questioned the differential treatments that boys and girls seemed to receive in Japanese schools. At WCU, she wanted to study media literacy education, particularly regarding the representations of women in the media. In addition to pursuing her academic interests, she also wanted to "become stronger and grow as a person" by living overseas without the support from family and friends. She said that learning English was a secondary goal for her. At the time of the study, she was unsure about her future goals but was considering pursuing a Ph.D. degree in North America.

In her first year at WCU, Nanako took three graduate seminars on educational anthropology and educational policy, an introductory graduate course on research methods, and an undergraduate course on gender and education (all were 3-credit courses). She lived at the same campus residence as Lisa and enjoyed living there especially because she was able to develop a social network of friends and peers she felt comfortable with. She also received some academic support (e.g., proofreading) from them.

4.3 Emiko and Shiho

The final pair, Emiko and Shiho, the younger ones among the focal students together with Nanako, belonged to the Department of Asian Studies and were both pursuing their first graduate degree, an M.A. in Japanese linguistics. Under the same advisor, they took exactly the same courses in their first year and also taught undergraduate-level Japanese courses as teaching assistants (TAs). As I will show, however, their responses to some of the courses presented a striking difference from each other, which was partly due to the differences in their educational and linguistic backgrounds.
EMIKO, a 24-year old, was born and raised in a small island in Western Japan. She had spent all her life on this island, surrounded by a close network of friends and families until she went to university. She did well in grade school not only academically but also in extracurricular activities. She was “like a big sister” to her classmates and had also gained respect from her teachers. Things changed, however, when she went to university in a large city away from her home: she felt that she was no longer as academically strong as her peers and that her classmates had developed an image of her being “less able.” Reflecting on her university days, she said:

Everyone had an image of me being less able and that image prevented me from participating actively in English conversation classes, even though I really wanted to speak. I felt embarrassed to speak. But in my third year I thought it was a shame that I hadn’t spoken and started to speak again. Then everyone said, “What happened to you? What’s wrong with you?” So I stopped speaking again. (Emiko, Interview 1: 99/10/09)

As I will show, Emiko found herself in a similar situation in her courses at WCU and was also sensitive about others’ perceptions of her. At the same time, she felt that she could deal with the situation because she had had similar experiences before and could reassure herself that “things will get better sooner or later.”

Emiko majored in English at university in Japan. In her junior year, she went to London, England, and took an 8-week intensive course in an English language school. Starting with this trip, she traveled abroad many times, including a two-month trip to Europe by herself. She also used her trips to collect some data for her graduating paper that was about “images of women”; she became interested in this topic partly because of her mother who had always told her to “behave like a woman” since her childhood. After graduating from university with a B.A., Emiko went back to her hometown and began teaching English at local public high schools on a part-time basis. After a year and half
of teaching, however, she decided that she wanted to live abroad and meet different kinds of people, which was her main reason for coming to Canada. She chose her program at WCU partly because of her interest in teaching Japanese as a second/foreign language. She also wanted to further explore the issues of language and gender at the graduate level. Her plan after finishing the program was to teach Japanese in North America.

Emiko took a 6-credit graduate seminar on Japanese linguistics, a 6-credit undergraduate course on sociolinguistics, and two 3-credit undergraduate courses on phonology and syntax respectively. She stayed with a home-stay family at first, but like Lisa, moved out after a while. She then stayed in an apartment off campus with a Japanese roommate. Although she was comfortable and happy with her home that was "like a little Japan," she also wished to expand her social networks and to get to know local Canadian people. However, throughout this study, she found it difficult to gain access to local networks of people, including the network of local students in her classes.

Finally, SHIHO was newly graduated from university like Nanako and was 23 years old. Among the six students, Shiho probably felt the most comfortable with speaking English because she had gone school in London, England, from Grade 4 to 8. Shiho's family had moved around Japan and the world many times because of her father's job: Shiho was born in a large metropolitan city in Eastern Japan, lived in Korea between age 2 and 6, went to school in two different cities in Japan from Grade 1 to 3, and then moved to London. In London, she went to an international school where she took ESL courses in the first two years and was mainstreamed in her third year. Because she was then "still very young and flexible," she learned to speak English very quickly
and also “did not suffer from any significant culture shock.” In the mean time, her father made sure that Shiho retained Japanese as her first language:

I was losing my Japanese very quickly. The thing I hated the most was, I would struggle when talking about what happened in school at the dinner table and throw in English words here and there. Then my father would always tell me to say them in Japanese. Always. ((laughs)) ... He hated the idea that I might become someone without a home country and language. (Shiho, Interview 1: 99/09/24)

Having maintained Japanese in this way, Shiho returned to Japan and went to a public junior high school in Grade 8. Somewhat like Nanako’s case, Shiho’s re-socialization into the Japanese school did not go very smoothly: she stood out as one of the only two returnees in the school and she “hated it.” In addition, she felt that her basic Japanese was not adequate to communicate properly with her teachers and senior students and had to learn keigo or honorifics as well as the kinds of social relations formed in Japanese schools. She then went to a senior high school that was only for kikokushijo, or students who have returned from abroad, and felt more comfortable there.³

Shiho studied Japanese literature at university in a large metropolitan city fairly close to her home. She chose this major mainly because she had always felt the need to learn about Japan since she was in London:

The international school I went to in London had students from all over the world. In history lessons, for example, teachers would ask students to talk about the history of their home country. My classmates knew quite a lot about their country for their age, but I didn’t know much about Japan at all.... I needed to learn about Japan in order to describe it to foreigners. I was also in my adolescence and forming my identity, and perhaps for that reason I felt even more strongly that I should learn about my own country. (Shiho, Interview 1: 99/09/24)

³ There is a growing body of literature on the issues pertaining to Japanese returnee students or kikokushijo (e.g., Kanno, 2000; Matsuda, 2000; Reetz-Kurashige, 1999; Taura, 1998; Tomiyama, 2000; Yoshitomi, 1999).
As I will show later, Shiho continued to have the desire to provide accurate information about Japan and its language to non-Japanese speakers, which in turn influenced her participation in some of her courses at WCU. In university, she became interested in Japanese linguistics after being introduced to “the unique characteristics of the Japanese language” by one of her instructors. Like Emiko, she also decided then that in the future she wanted to teach Japanese. In order to become a Japanese teacher, she thought she would “need at least a master’s degree,” which was her main reason for coming to WCU. She described her main goal at WCU as “learning how Japanese thinking influences the Japanese language pragmatically or syntactically.” As mentioned above, Shiho took the same courses as Emiko did in her first year. She lived in a campus residence with three undergraduate students (two Canadians and a Japanese) and was quite comfortable there.

In this chapter, I have introduced the six focal students in three pairs by summarizing their backgrounds, goals, and contexts of learning. As we can see, individual students brought distinctive personal histories, interests, and goals to their studies at WCU, which, as I will show in the following chapters, in turn shaped their classroom participation to a significant degree. Table 4.1 presents a summary of the students’ characteristics. Figure 4.1 illustrates key elements in the students’ learning context that were salient in the data and are the most relevant to this study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program of Study</th>
<th>LISA</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>RIE</th>
<th>NANAKO</th>
<th>EMIKO</th>
<th>SHIHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Experience</td>
<td>High school teacher of EFL in Japan (3 years)</td>
<td>High school teacher of EFL in Japan (16 years)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>High school teacher of EFL in Japan (1.5 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience outside Japan</td>
<td>Intensive ESL program in U.S. (3 weeks)</td>
<td>Took students to Canada as an escort teacher (many times)</td>
<td>Studied Italian in Italy (4 weeks)</td>
<td>Lived and went to school in Canada (age 6-7)</td>
<td>Intensive ESL program in U.K. (8 weeks)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plan</td>
<td>Teach at college level in Japan; Study at doctoral level in North America</td>
<td>Go back to current teaching job in Japan</td>
<td>Teach at secondary or college level in Japan</td>
<td>Study at doctoral level in North America</td>
<td>Teach Japanese outside Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Took 1 year leave from current teaching job</td>
<td>Korean citizen born and raised in Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Went to a Japanese high school for returnees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Overview of Case Study Participants
Figure 4.1: Mapping of Key Elements in the Focal Students’ Learning Context
Chapter 5

NEGOTIATING PARTICIPATION IN CLASSROOM COMMUNITIES

5.0 Introduction

In Chapter 5, I explore how the focal students negotiated their classroom participation from the community-of-practice perspective outlined in Chapter 2. The focus of this chapter is the students’ experiences and perspectives within the three courses in which I observed them, namely, Course A, B, and C. I attended each of these courses for their entire duration and observed each of the three pairs of students on a weekly basis: Lisa and Jun in Course A, Rie and Nanako in Course B, and Emiko and Shiho in Course C. The data for this chapter come from my observational notes, the students’ weekly self-reports, formal interviews with the students, interviews with the course instructors, and relevant documents such as course outlines. This means that at least four different viewpoints (i.e., the two students in each pair, the instructor(s), the researcher) about each course were incorporated into the analysis. In what follows, I discuss the experiences of the three pairs in three courses respectively; for each pair, I first describe (1) the general characteristics of the course, and then discuss (2) how the individual student participated in the course, (3) what challenges she faced, particularly in terms of her classroom participation, and (4) how she negotiated her classroom participation. In doing so, I also compare and contrast the two students’ experiences in each pair; the main purpose for this comparison is not to evaluate the students in relation to each other, but rather, to see the differing responses to the same learning environment and explore where these differences might come from. It should also be noted that although I try to tap into the multifaceted, complex, and sometimes contradictory nature
of individual students' classroom lives, the following discussions can only illustrate representative experiences and perspectives of the individual students as well as a limited number of telling examples. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the findings discussed in this chapter. It is placed at the beginning of the chapter (rather than toward the end) so that the reader can refer to it as a guideline (as well as a summary) in reading the following discussion.

5.1 Lisa and Jun's Participation and Negotiation in Course A

5.1.1 Course A

Course A was a 3-credit, elective course on theory and research in ESL/EFL in the Department of Language Education mainly designed for first-year master's students. The instructor was Dr. Smith, an experienced male professor who had been teaching this course for a number of years. There were 15 first-year students in the class, and nine of them, including Lisa and Jun, were international students or NNESs who came from different parts of the world, such as Eastern Asia, South America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Dr. Smith considered the presence of international students as a "gift" since the course was about the teaching and learning of ESL/EFL. All the students had experience teaching ESL/EFL, which was a program prerequisite. Only three students were male. Like a typical graduate course, Course A was organized as a seminar where students were expected to actively participate in discussions. According to Dr. Smith, there were also some "non-traditional" aspects to it: (1) a strong emphasis on group work, (2) weekly hands-on assignments, and (3) online discussions.¹ These were designed

¹ The online discussions were designed to be a supplement for face-to-face discussions. Unfortunately, however, according to Dr. Smith, the students were not able to make full use of online discussions due to some technical difficulties experienced by them as well as by the service provider.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>LISA</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>RIE</th>
<th>NANAKO</th>
<th>EMIKO</th>
<th>SHIHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Course A</td>
<td>Course B</td>
<td>Course C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• graduate seminar on theory and research in ESL/EFL</td>
<td>• faculty-wide graduate seminar on research methodology</td>
<td>• senior level undergraduate seminar on sociolinguistics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (observed by researcher &amp; instructors; reported by students)</td>
<td>• relative silence in whole-class discussions</td>
<td>• almost complete silence in whole-class discussions</td>
<td>• almost complete silence in whole-class discussions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• increasingly active participation in small groups</td>
<td>• relative silence in small group discussions</td>
<td>• relative silence in small group discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Challenges (mainly reported by students; sometimes observed)</td>
<td>• not being able to contribute to whole-class discussions as much as she wanted</td>
<td>• theoretical course content</td>
<td>• not fully following discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• theoretical course content</td>
<td>• not fully following discussions</td>
<td>• abstract content</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• not fully following discussions</td>
<td>• abstract content</td>
<td>• not fully following discussions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation (reported by students; interpreted by researcher)</td>
<td>• strong desire to contribute as a competent and responsible participant -&gt; fear of being constructed as less competent by making English mistakes in class</td>
<td>• negotiating different cultural norms/values of classroom interaction between Canada and Japan</td>
<td>• fear of being interpreted as incompetent or ignorant participant</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• strong desire to contribute as a competent and responsible participant</td>
<td>• negotiating gap between the focus of the course and her own interests</td>
<td>• fear of being interpreted as incompetent or ignorant participant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• negotiating different cultural norms/values of classroom interaction between Canada and Japan</td>
<td>• developing her own personal values about oral academic participation</td>
<td>• fear of appearing incompetent by making English mistakes in class</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• negotiating gap between the focus of the course and her own interests</td>
<td>• developing her own personal values about oral academic participation</td>
<td>• concern about others’ views on her silence in the classroom</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• subtle power negotiation with classmates</td>
<td>• developing her own personal values about oral academic participation</td>
<td>• negotiating with instructor about her participation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• (re)interpreting differences in cultural (Canada vs. Japan) and disciplinary (education vs. history) interactional norms</td>
<td>• developing her own personal values about oral academic participation</td>
<td>• being able to provide interesting information about Japan/Japanese</td>
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<td>• negotiating gap between the focus of the course and her own interests</td>
<td>• developing her own personal values about oral academic participation</td>
<td>• identity as a valued and competent member</td>
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<td>• subtle power negotiation with classmates</td>
<td>• developing her own personal values about oral academic participation</td>
<td>• knowing “how to play the academic game”</td>
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Table 5.1: Students' Participation, Challenges, and Negotiation in Course A, B, and C
deliberately and carefully by Dr. Smith, who stressed the importance of student participation:

I think over the years what I'm trying to do is first of all to put a lot of emphasis on discussions and student participation.... And the assignments were particularly important because it was a business of engaging in detail and concretely with the issues of the course.... We were trying to shape the discussions around the assignments and readings so that people come in, they've worked with the issues, they have questions. (Interview: 99/12/13)

The course in fact provided various opportunities for student participation and collaboration. An interesting activity the students engaged in almost every week was what was called a “poster session,” where they put up posters on the classroom walls describing their weekly assignment—normally a small-scale research task—and examined each other’s work. The class usually began with this activity, followed by a small group discussion, which was then followed by a whole-class discussion. Poster sessions and small group discussions allowed the students to discuss each other’s work in a relatively informal setting, which in turn helped create a friendly and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. Dr. Smith’s emphasis on small group work partly came from his consideration for NNESs who might feel intimidated to talk to the whole class:

... whole class versus small group makes a big difference for nonnative speakers. I have a very conscious policy of trying to do small groups first and then when the group has talked and when you are speaking for the group, you could feel easy about doing that. (Interview: 99/12/13)

Dr. Smith also gave more traditional lectures during which students also asked questions or provided comments. Compared to the discussions on assignments, the lectures and the open discussions around them tended to be more formal and theoretical, which as I will show often posed challenges to Lisa and Jun. Classroom participation was not graded in Course A; Dr. Smith wanted to make it voluntary on the part of the students since he
believed that “talking in class is a commitment, kicking ideas around” rather than “an artificial thing you are trying to do.”

In my observation, the class as a whole engaged in lively discussions every week both in small groups and whole class. In addition to serious and theoretical discussions, humor was also a part of their interactions; Dr. Smith mentioned that he deliberately tried to “provide room for people to get their feelings out a little bit” because he believed that “often you get things through jokes that you wouldn’t get otherwise.” Not only the local Canadian students who were in fact in the minority, but also many of the international students actively participated in discussions even from the first week. The students became familiar with each other fairly quickly because they were the first-year master’s students in the department and were also taking another course together. They seemed to develop a supportive network with each other over time.

5.1.2 Lisa in Course A

Lisa’s oral participation in Course A varied qualitatively and quantitatively across the different formats of discussion throughout the term. In poster sessions and small group discussions, especially after the first month or so, Lisa was increasingly able to contribute orally, although she was sometimes dominated by the other more vocal members (both NESs and NNESs) in her group. Dr. Smith was “truly impressed with her progress,” which he understood as her taking an increasingly active role in small group discussions. In whole-class discussions, on the other hand, Lisa seldom volunteered to speak. While she was mostly quiet, her body language, including her facial expressions, eye contact, and sitting posture, suggested that she was listening attentively and was engaged. There were also times especially toward the end of the term when it looked as
though she wanted to speak up, but could not find an opportunity to jump into the fast-paced discussion. In the final lesson of the course, for example, when the class had a heated discussion on issues of racism in schools, Lisa raised her hand after a Chinese student made a candid, but rather shocking comment about her “true feelings toward Japanese people.” However, another student began talking right away and Lisa lost her potential turn. Later in the same lesson, however, Lisa talked fairly extensively in front of the whole class for the first time; she volunteered to describe the final product of a group project. Dr. Smith felt that this represented the progress Lisa had made during the term.

A major problem Lisa often reported throughout the term was about her difficulties in trying to participate orally in her courses including Course A; she felt that she was not able to “speak like others” in class, yet wished that she could. Reflecting on her participation in her Term 1 courses, Lisa said:

I remember in September and October, even in November, I had lots of problems. I always felt I had to speak up in class. That was what I was always worried about. (Lisa, Interview 2: 99/12/10) [original in English]

Over the course of the term, Lisa mentioned multiple reasons why it was difficult for her to speak in class. One was her limited English listening comprehension: during the first two months, she often reported that she understood less than 50% of what others said in class, which made her feel nervous and uneasy, although she reported that her comprehension improved quite dramatically after November. Occasionally, she did not know what to say because she didn’t understand the overall purpose of a given discussion.

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2 It should be noted that most quotations by Lisa come from verbatim transcriptions since our interviews as well as Lisa’s weekly reports were mostly in English. On the other hand, as I have noted earlier, quotations by the other students were mostly my translations from Japanese to English.
or activity; a common complaint she made was that she could not see “the big picture” or the instructor’s intentions behind certain classroom activities. She also felt that this problem might be related to her limited content knowledge; for example, she felt that her limited understanding of the concept “discourse,” which was one of the major themes of the course, made it difficult for her to follow some of the instructor’s lectures and contribute to discussions around them. Another major reason for her reticence was her fear of making English mistakes in public. Interestingly, she felt that she would be able to speak more freely if her classmates as well as herself were not English teachers. In addition, she sometimes felt an inferiority complex toward other NNESs in the class who she perceived “spoke like native speakers” and “were not afraid of speaking.” Another point that added a layer to her difficulties was that she often found herself looking for “the right answer, the right question, the right English” before opening her mouth. She characterized this as a “cultural habit of Japanese people,” or a tendency for Japanese people to “worry about what other people think about you.” In addition, she felt that certain cultural values which she had been “used to for almost 29 years” (e.g., respecting teachers) prevented her from “participating in Canadian ways” (e.g., students can question teachers).

From a traditional psycholinguistic perspective on SLA, Lisa’s challenges might be interpreted mainly as linguistic problems accompanied by psychological difficulties such as anxiety and insecurity. We might also explain them in terms of tensions caused by cultural differences. In light of a COP perspective, I suggest that they can also be understood in terms of Lisa’s attempts to negotiate her membership and role/status in the classroom. First of all, it is important to ask why Lisa felt so strongly that not speaking in
class was a problem for her. It seemed that her desire to speak came mainly from her desire to contribute to discussions as a competent and responsible member of the class:

I always feel that I have to say something in class to contribute to the class.... A small thing is okay. I think it’s very important. It’s not just about my own participation, it’s about cooperation.... I have to play some role in the classroom. I always feel that way. So that makes me feel, because I want to speak in class, I want to cooperate, but right now I can’t, so I feel really stressed. (Lisa, Interview 1: 99/09/30) [original in English]

Thus, in spite of her strong desire to reciprocate and fulfill her responsibilities, she found it difficult to do so by orally participating in discussions, which in turn frustrated her.

Secondly, her fear of making linguistic errors, sense of insecurity, and lack of confidence take on meanings other than psychological difficulties when viewed from a COP perspective. I suggest that these feelings partly came from her fear of not meeting the expectations of her classroom community in terms of competence. Consider, for example, that she hesitated to speak because everyone in the class, including herself, was an English teacher and also because the course was about language education. This seems to suggest that Lisa considered English competence as an essential element of competent membership in this particular class. In the following excerpt, she described her ambivalent feelings about exposing her perceived limited English abilities to her classmates:

Yesterday my classmates asked me to [summarize a group discussion to the whole class]. At first I thought, it's really beyond my ability! (laughs) But the situation is like emergency. If I couldn't do it, everybody thinks that I'm a very um ((long pause)) I feel that I have to say something even if I can’t.... But the result is terrible. (laughs) Anyway, it's really good for me because everybody now knows that my English is not so good. It's really important for me because if they know that, they can help me sometimes, probably. I think that letting them know my ability, my English ability, is important. Yes. So I think I don't have to worry about it too much. (Lisa, Interview 1: 99/09/30) [original in English]
Here, Lisa seems to be negotiating not only her competence—in this case linguistic competence as part of competent membership in this class—but also her identities: on the one hand, she did not want to be constructed as less competent by not performing the task or performing it “terribly,” but on the other hand, she was somewhat relieved to be recognized as someone with limited English who might require help from others.

Thirdly, the above incident also illustrated rather subtle power negotiations between Lisa and her classmates. She reported that she was sometimes “pushed” to speak by her classmates in her courses. While she appreciated their encouragement and scaffolding for her to speak and allowed them to have some power over her actions, she also wanted to maintain control over her own actions so that she could speak when she felt ready to do so. In the following excerpt about the same incident, she describes this dilemma:

I looked at both students [who were in the group discussion] but they just looked at me and said, “You can do it. You can do it.” So I said, “No, I can’t. No, I can’t.” I said twice or three times. But they said, “No. You can do it.” … I felt sooo nervous…. It's risky because I didn't understand [what others said before my turn] and also I didn't have time to prepare…. Yesterday, actually, I felt very bad. Because they know that, he knows that I'm not fluent in English and then I thought actually, “How could he do such kind of thing to me!” … But today I realized that he is right…. I think he gave me a good opportunity. I think I have to think that way. (Lisa, Interview 1: 99/09/30) [original in English]

In summary, Lisa’s main challenge in Course A was to participate orally, especially in whole-class discussions. There seemed to be a tension between her strong desire to take an active role in discussions as a competent and accountable member, and her fear of being constructed as a less competent member because of her perceived limited English. This tension was also manifested in her subtle power negotiations with her classmates.
5.1.3 Jun in Course A

Jun’s participation in Course A was characterized by her almost complete silence in whole-class discussions and relative reticence in small group discussions. It was fairly common that Jun and Lisa were the only ones who did not speak even once in a given whole-class discussion. In contrast with Lisa, Jun’s body language—she normally sat deeply in a chair, slightly further away from the table than others did—suggested no obvious sign of her willingness to participate orally in whole-class discussions. It seemed that she was nevertheless listening attentively and cognitively engaged, and sometimes looked puzzled or confused. In less formal situations such as poster sessions and small group discussions, she did talk sometimes, although she was mostly responding to others’ invitations rather than bidding for turns. When she did speak, her comments tended to be brief, but clear and to the point. Although Jun as well as Lisa tended to be quiet in discussions, they chatted and joked around with their classmates before/after class, during breaks, or outside the class time, which suggested that they both felt quite comfortable with their classmates.

Jun’s major concern was her limited grasp of the course content, which she found was very theoretical. Throughout the term, Jun struggled with the course readings assigned weekly: it took her “forever” to read them because she found them difficult to understand, and also because she summarized each article in Japanese in order to assist her comprehension and memory. This in turn made it difficult for her to follow class discussions that were normally based on the readings. In addition, like Lisa, she felt that her English listening comprehension was limited, “although it was getting better slowly.” As a result, she often felt uneasy and “out of place” in the classroom:
For me, the hardest thing is not fully understanding what people are talking about [in class]. I feel miserable about myself and totally out of place. When I don’t understand something I want to ask somebody but the discussion continues. (Jun, Interview 2: 99/12/10)

Jun also felt that she could not contribute to discussions because she did not understand everything being said; for her, “understanding by listening and reading” was the first step, while “saying something and communicating ideas” was the next step.

Another problem Jun mentioned was that she was “not used to the Canadian style classroom,” which she described on various occasions. To summarize, she felt that in the Canadian classroom, quite contrary to the Japanese classroom, students are expected to (1) “express their ideas and opinions very freely, whether they are right or wrong,” (2) learn not just from instructors but from each other by way of discussions, (3) think critically and have original opinions, and (4) demonstrate their abilities by speaking and writing. In the following excerpt, for example, Jun describes her difficulties in trying to be critical:

Here it’s important to always question whether what someone is saying might be wrong. ((laughs)) I was educated to be very naïve and so I tend to think like, “Yes, I agree with you. I have the same experience!” That’s a big factor [for not being able to think critically]. I have to consciously try to think critically. But it’s difficult to try to understand things and be critical about them at the same time. It’s confusing. (Jun, Interview 2: 99/12/10)

In light of a COP perspective, I suggest that Jun’s challenges can be understood in terms of two fundamental tensions. One is that Jun seemed to be caught in the gap between the main goal of the course, which was to explore issues of theory and research, and her own learning goal, which was mainly to learn about teaching practices:

One problem is that I was expecting to learn more practical things about teaching. But all we are learning is theory and research. Maybe I should have taken more undergraduate courses. (Jun, Interview 2: 99/12/10)
Being faced with this problem, Jun seemed to seek ways of simultaneously fulfilling her goals and meeting at least the minimum demands of the course. In terms of class participation, she concentrated on “learning what [she could] by listening to others,” rather than trying to participate orally. With the major assignments such as term papers, Jun negotiated with and sought help from the instructor. In the following excerpt, Dr. Smith describes the process of their negotiations including the accommodations he made:

I was consciously saying, I'm not going to ask Jun to go and do something different, something new and unfamiliar and un concrete.... Jun and I had two sessions to try and discuss [an idea for her paper]. And eventually Jun came back and said, “I really don’t understand it.” So I said, "Do the stuff which you do understand," which is fine, and I'm happy that Jun does that. (Interview: 99/12/13)

The other major gap existed, as mentioned earlier, between what Jun perceived as the norms and expectations of the Canadian classroom and her own cultural/personal values about classroom communication. Her responses to this gap were often ambivalent. On the one hand, she felt that she needed to adjust to certain aspects of the Canadian classroom culture to survive in the course:

Jun: I'm not used to [the Canadian classroom culture] yet.
Naoko: Do you think you will get used to it eventually?
Jun: I guess I have to understand its advantages and adjust to it. I have to change my thinking. I need to follow the ways people do things here, although I don’t know if I can do that. (Jun, Interview 2: 99/12/10)

At the same time, Jun also observed some disadvantages to the Canadian style, and furthermore, she herself wanted to maintain her own preferred style of participation. For

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3 It should be emphasized that I am discussing here the discourses of classroom communication as Jun seemed to understand them, rather than as I understand them. Since the central concern of this study is to explore issues of classroom participation from the participants’ viewpoints, it is important to highlight how the participants themselves made sense of their classroom experiences.
example, she felt that a drawback of “student-centered, free-form discussions” was that students often talked without considering others’ needs or the overall flow of discussions:

Students don’t seem to care much about the flow of the discussion and say whatever they want to say. Like [name of a student] in today’s class. But I myself want to be sensitive about where the discussion is going and what kinds of comments are expected at a given point in time. (Jun, WR: 99/10/06)

What made the situation complicated, however, was that while Jun felt that students sometimes made “irrelevant comments,” she was also not sure whether she was fully following them. Moreover, even though she wished to “make the right comment at the right moment,” she felt she lacked language skills and content knowledge to do so. In the end, her participation patterns did not seem to change in any marked way during my observations.

In summary, in addition to her perceived limited ability to follow discussions and digest the course content, Jun faced two fundamental gaps in Course A. One was the gap between the course agenda and her own, which she attempted to deal with by negotiating a middle ground with the instructor. The other was related to what she perceived as cultural or educational differences. While trying to adjust to the new culture to some extent, she also wanted to maintain her own cultural/personal styles and values.

As we have seen, Lisa and Jun had similar challenges in Course A, including their difficulties in following class discussions and participating orally in them. However, they seemed to respond to these challenges quite differently: whereas Lisa sought ways to become more proficient member of the classroom community, Jun focused on fulfilling her learning goals while remaining in a relatively peripheral position. This difference might partly come from their differing goals and investments, or in other words, their “imagined communities”—communities that they hoped to gain access to in the future.
(Kanno, in press; Norton, 2001; also see Wenger, 1998). As described in Chapter 4, Lisa envisioned gaining membership in a research community in the future, and for her, Course A provided an entrance to that community. On the contrary, knowing that she was going back to her teaching after her one-year stay at WCU, Jun considered herself as a temporary visitor, or in her words, “observer in the academic world” which included Course A.

5.2 Rie and Nanako’s Participation and Negotiation in Course B

5.2.1 Course B

Course B was a 3-credit, introductory course on research methodology that all master’s students in the Faculty of Education were required to take. It was taught by two instructors, Dr. Baker, a male professor who mainly taught quantitative methods, and Dr. Nelson, a female professor who taught qualitative methods. They belonged to different departments but had taught this course together before. As Dr. Nelson herself said, they both had “charismatic personalities” in the classroom and were quite entertaining especially when they engaged in dynamic and often playful conversations with each other or with the students during classes. There were about 32 students in the class from different departments in the Faculty. It was a large class for a graduate course and the relatively small, narrow classroom was always crowded. Unlike Course A in which the students belonged to the same department, this class was heterogeneous in terms of the students’ academic/professional backgrounds and interests. About ten students, including Rie and Nanako, were international students who came from various countries. There were less male students (about one fifth of the class) than female students.
As an introductory course designed for first-year master’s students, Course B provided a broad overview of different research traditions, approaches, and techniques and only touched upon various issues of research. Nevertheless, it introduced many abstract concepts as well as technical aspects of research that were new to many of the students. For example, in a discussion of validity issues, concepts in both quantitative and qualitative research traditions such as face validity, content validity, concurrent validity, trustworthiness, catalytic validity, and transformative validity were all introduced and explained within an hour. Many students also seemed to struggle with statistical concepts and procedures that were introduced fairly quickly, including correlation, regression analysis, factor analysis, t-test, and ANOVA. In addition to discussions on research methods, the instructors also tried to socialize the students by occasionally explaining how the academic world operates and what graduate students can do to participate in it (e.g., importance of “situating your ideas in the academy,” in Dr. Nelson’s words; importance of working closely with one’s mentor).

The class engaged in various activities over the course of the term, including instructors’ lectures, whole-class discussions, small group discussions, group presentations, individual presentations (optional), and informal open discussions on current issues of education and research. Half of the students, including both NESs and NNESs (and both male and female students), spoke regularly during lectures and open discussions, while there were about six students, including Rie and Nanako, who almost never spoke during these activities. Partly because of the large class size, the instructors expected the students to speak in small groups rather than in the whole class. Dr. Nelson also felt that group work was important in bringing different perspectives and “creating a
community and culture in the classroom.” Most of the students seemed to participate actively in group discussions, although there were a few students, including Nanako, who tended to be reticent even in small groups. Both of the instructors commented that the student group as a whole did exceptionally well in the course and participated in discussions very enthusiastically. As in Course A, class participation was not graded in Course B; Dr. Nelson mentioned that she wouldn’t grade participation because “there are different ways of engagement, different ways of expressing enthusiasm.”

5.2.2 Rie in Course B

Rie’s oral participation in Course B was mostly in small groups. During lectures and open discussions, Rie normally sat quietly and busily took notes both in English and Japanese, occasionally looking up a word in the dictionary. In small groups, Rie usually participated actively in discussions and sometimes even managed the interaction to her own advantage. Once, her group spent almost a half of the discussion time listening to Rie’s ideas for her research as well as her cultural adjustments issues. On another occasion, Rie made some suggestions to a group member who was planning to conduct research with Japanese parents.

Rie felt that her major problem in Course B was her limited ability to follow whole-class discussions, which she found were very fast-paced. Dr. Nelson mentioned that both Rie and Nanako seemed lost at times during discussions. In addition to the problem of English listening comprehension, abstract concepts and vocabulary introduced in the course were another source of her difficulty. Another related challenge for her was not understanding the jokes or humorous interjections people made. To understand such comments often required cultural knowledge (e.g., on local topics;
popular culture) that international students might lack. In addition, not being able to laugh when everyone else did could be alienating since laughs often seemed to create a sense of solidarity in the classroom. In one lesson when Dr. Baker seemed particularly playful and made people laugh many times during his lecture on statistics, I noticed that Rie or Nanako hardly laughed. Rie wrote in a report:

I was lost when the instructor made jokes and everyone was laughing and enjoying themselves. First of all, I didn’t understand his jokes. I also didn’t know when he went back to his lecture after telling a joke. That was a problem. (Rie, WR: 99/11/17)

While having these difficulties in Course B, Rie considered them as relatively minor compared to the challenges she had in the other courses she was taking concurrently (see Chapter 7). Since Course B was a survey course and its content was mostly new to her, she felt that it was “inevitable” for her to be “passive” and to “concentrate on absorbing new knowledge.” In addition, the large class size made it less critical for her (or for any student for that matter) to actively take part in whole-class discussions than in more typical smaller-sized graduate classes.

As Rie took a relatively peripheral role in Course B, she also observed the classroom interactions and attempted to make sense of them. Whereas Jun, who was in a similar position in Course A, tended to frame her observations in terms of general cultural differences between Canada and Japan, Rie, who had experienced graduate school in Japan, tended to see the differences more specifically between the academic culture of Canada and that of Japan. For example, Rie felt that a major difference lay in the kinds of contributions expected of students in the two academic cultures:

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4 Duff (2001) reports about a similar challenge faced by high school ESL students in her study.
In my graduate school in Japan, students were expected to speak in order to critique others or be critiqued by others. Here, in contrast, students often speak in order to share information or to provide information to help others better understand what the instructor is trying to say. (Rie, WR: 99/10/28)

In Japanese graduate school, we weren’t allowed to ask spontaneous questions. We were also encouraged to reflect on someone’s comment and ask ourselves whether the comment was valid or not. But here, it seems okay to say something spontaneously without much thinking. Some instructors even say that there are no stupid questions. (Rie, Interview 1: 99/09/24)

Interestingly, after observing and participating in class discussions for three months, Rie modified her interpretations of the differences. When I interviewed her at the end of the term, she felt that the differences might be rooted more in disciplinary differences between education (her current major at WCU) and history (her former major in Japan), rather than general differences between the two academic cultures. This realization also brought a change to her attitude toward class participation at WCU:

I said in our first interview that one of the differences I found was that it seems okay here to say whatever you think without providing evidence. But later I found that the difference is related more to disciplinary differences between education and history than cultural differences. In history, historical evidence is of course very important because we talk about something that happened in the past. But in education we are talking about the present and future. Since I realized this, my participation has changed. Now I don’t worry too much about expressing my thoughts without presenting hard evidence. (Rie, Interview 2: 99/12/11)

Thus, as Rie crossed disciplinary, cultural, and linguistic boundaries simultaneously, she actively constructed and modified her interpretations of the multiple discourses she had encountered in different classroom contexts. At the same time, she

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5 Notice that Rie’s observation that critical analysis and reflection were very much encouraged in the Japanese graduate classroom is at odds with the stereotypical depiction of Japanese or Eastern educational cultures in the literature as being less critical and analytical than their Western counterparts (see Kubota, 1999, for a discussion on this issue). Lisa, who had also experienced graduate school in Japan, made a similar observation: she said that critical thinking was strongly endorsed in her graduate school in Japan and that it was “very natural for [students] to discuss strengths and weaknesses of academic work.” On the contrary, as mentioned earlier, Jun, who had been teaching at a secondary level, felt that critical thinking was encouraged much more explicitly in the Canadian classroom than in the Japanese classroom in general.
also seemed to develop her own personal values about class participation, regardless of disciplinary or cultural context. For example, she considered it important at the graduate level to be aware of the overall purpose of a given discussion and make “thoughtful contributions,” rather than “saying whatever comes to mind.” She also believed that a collaborative, rather than oppressive atmosphere in the class would be an important condition for her active participation.

To summarize, while experiencing difficulties in following discussions and taking a relatively peripheral role in Course B, Rie nevertheless attempted to participate meaningfully in small group discussions. Furthermore, she actively (re)interpreted the disciplinary and cultural discourses that surrounded her, and also formed her own personal values about oral academic participation.

5.2.3 Nanako in Course B

Like Rie, Nanako’s participation in Course B was marked by her silence in whole-class discussions. Almost always sitting quietly at the back of the room beside each other, Nanako and Rie gave Dr. Baker the impression that “they seemed very reticent, a little shy, hesitant.” Unlike Rie, Nanako hardly took notes during lectures and open discussions because she had accepted an offer from a NES classmate to take notes for her so that she could concentrate on listening. Whereas Rie often took an active role in small group discussions, Nanako tended to be silent and was never observed to bid for turns even in small groups.

Over the course of the term, Nanako reported about challenges similar to Rie’s, including not fully following the fast-paced discussions, not understanding jokes, and not completely digesting the unfamiliar and abstract course content. Participating in group
work was also often difficult for her. Part of the difficulty, she believed, was that she was not used to the format of small group discussions, coming from an undergraduate program in Japan where lectures in large classes were the most common. A bigger problem, however, was her limited grasp of the discussed topic or materials. One type of activity she found particularly challenging was to skim an article or a passage quickly and discuss it in small groups.\(^6\) She also mentioned that her participation in small groups varied depending on group members: she felt more comfortable speaking when the other members were "kind," "considerate," or "patient," and less comfortable when they seemed "cold" or "intolerant of international students." Referring to a particular discussion where she felt quite comfortable, she said:

X and Y helped me, but Z never did. X summarized her point very clearly so that I could understand. Y listened to me very patiently. I was impressed with her patience. I spoke very slowly and paused a lot, but she never rushed me. So even though I wasn’t making much sense and was probably saying something very stupid, I felt supported by these kind people. (Nanako, Interview 2: 99/12/15)

On the contrary, in another group discussion where she was assigned a recorder role (summarizing the main points of the discussion for a later group presentation), she was very uncomfortable because she felt that some members in her group were "cold" and seemed to doubt her ability to fulfill the recorder role.\(^7\)

Another recurrent theme in Nanako’s reports was her frustration with her perceived limited speaking abilities in English. Her major concern seemed to be that she

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\(^6\) In the courses I observed during this study, there were several occasions where students were asked to read or skim something fairly quickly on the spot and discuss it in small groups. Such an activity often seemed to pose difficulties not only to the focal students but also to some other NNESs who might require more time to read and digest materials than NESs would.

\(^7\) Unfortunately, I did not observe Nanako’s group closely during this activity (since I was observing Rie’s group), and therefore it is difficult to speculate what behaviors of the other students made Nanako feel this way.
felt she sounded “stupid,” “not very intelligent,” or “not very logical” when she spoke.

She was also concerned about others’ interpretations of her speech. She explained:

A major difficulty for me is that I don't sound intelligent when I speak [in class]. ((laughs)) I often sound stupid. I can only say simple things. My ideas aren’t stupid but I don't have the sophisticated language to express them.... Another possible source of trouble is that my pronunciation is very good. People expect me to speak perfect English because of my pronunciation, but I can't. (Nanako, Interview 2: 99/12/15)

As mentioned earlier, Nanako had spent a year in Canada during her childhood and felt that she had retained native-like pronunciation in English. The problem for her was the possibility that judging from her pronunciation, others might assume that she was a native speaker or completely comfortable with speaking English, whereas in fact she was not.

Seen from a COP perspective, Nanako’s concerns seem to indicate that negotiating identities was an important, sometimes painful aspect of her classroom participation. For example, her ambivalence toward her NES-like pronunciation was rooted in the mismatch between the NES status that she thought others might attach to her, and her own identity as a NNES who lacked “sophisticated language” despite her pronunciation. Furthermore, Nanako seemed to be dealing with another gap between her sense of who she was based on her previous academic experiences, and that of who she was in her current classroom contexts. The former was an academically or intellectually competent self that had been constructed socially and historically in her previous academic milieu over time: as mentioned in Chapter 4, Nanako grew up in a highly academic family and did very well herself in school and university. It was evident in her reports and interviews that she was fairly confident about her academic abilities in
In contrast, within her courses at WCU, she feared that others might construct her as less competent or less intelligent. Tensions caused by these gaps were well manifested in her feelings of frustration and inadequacy expressed repeatedly in her reports.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Wenger (1998) suggests that maintaining one’s identity across different communities requires the work of reconciling our various forms of participation and membership, “whether the process of reconciliation leads to successful resolutions or is a constant struggle” (p. 160). Being faced with conflicting forms of competence and identity, Nanako seemed to engage in such work of reconciliation in a complex way. For example, she attempted to make sense of her difficulties in participating in small group work at least in two different, somewhat contradictory ways. On the one hand, she seemed to foreground her identity as a NNES student who legitimately required a certain level of support from others. This was manifested, for instance, in her feeling that she could not participate actively in small group discussions when other members were not very supportive or understanding of her needs as a NNES. At the same time, she was also confident about her abilities to learn on her own and in fact did not necessarily believe in the value of peer support. She explained:

I believe that studying is essentially an individual thing.... You can say that I'm independent, but actually, I don't trust other people. I mean I trust myself more when it comes to studying.... I don't learn much from small group discussions or any kind of student-centered discussions. (Nanako, Interview 3: 00/05/12)

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Dr. Nelson made an interesting observation that in spite of their language problems and relative reticence in the classroom, both Nanako and Rie seemed to feel “a strong sense of self-esteem just in their way of sitting, listening, presenting, and trying.”
Thus, while seeking others’ support and accommodations to her status as a NNES student, Nanako also trusted her own abilities to learn independently. This apparent contradiction, I suggest, reveals the complexity involved in (re)constructing identities across community boundaries.

To summarize, Nanako’s participation in Course B was characterized by her relative silence both in whole-class and small group discussions. What seemed to be various language-related challenges on the surface were also her challenges of constructing and reconciling multiple and sometimes contradicting classroom identities. The theme of such identity work was also prominent in her experience in other courses, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

As we have seen, Rie and Nanako participated in Course B in similar ways except for in small group discussions. While facing similar challenges and remaining relatively peripheral, they both actively attempted to make sense of their classroom experience. Most interestingly, Rie tried to understand her experience by comparing what she saw as different academic cultures or disciplinary discourses, whereas Nanako seemed to do so by negotiating her multiple academic identities produced across different communities.

5.3 Emiko and Shiho’s Participation and Negotiation in Course C

5.3.1 Course C

Course C was a 6 credit, two-semester introductory course on sociolinguistics in the Linguistics Department. Unlike Course A and B, this was an undergraduate-level course targeting mainly senior students, although it was also open to graduate students and could also be applied toward their graduate degree. Dr. Hill, a female instructor, had been teaching the course for about 10 years. There were about 25 students in the course,
approximately half undergraduate and half graduate students, and a visiting scholar from Japan. Like the other two courses described so far, only about one fifth of the students were male. The class represented many different cultures and languages: some were international students from different parts of the world, such as Asia, Europe, and Australia, while some others were immigrant or local students also with different ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Persian, French, Serbian, Jamaican). As Dr. Hill said, there was a “feeling of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the student body,” and the students’ backgrounds in fact served as a rich resource for the course on sociolinguistics. In addition, Dr. Hill herself brought her own international background to the course; she had lived in many different countries and spoke multiple languages.

The basic format of the class consisted of the instructor’s lectures, whole-class discussions, and student presentations. Each week, Dr. Hill provided a fairly detailed review and a preview of the weekly assigned textbook chapters, during which the students mostly listened and took notes. The main components of these lectures included explanations of theoretical concepts, previous seminal research, and some examples of sociolinguistic phenomena. In addition to lectures, videos on various topics were shown from time to time. The discussions were normally done as a whole class, except for a few occasions of group work. Most commonly, Dr. Hill asked the students for their feedback on the weekly readings and the students responded by providing comments and questions. An interesting feature of the students’ contributions to open discussions was that they often included concrete examples from different cultures and languages. For instance, during a discussion on kinship terms, examples from Tamil, Turkish, Serbian, Japanese, and two different dialects of Chinese were provided by different students. At
the same time, there seemed to be a limited amount of critical discussions on theoretical materials; Dr. Hill characterized the course as "more of a general type of a course" than a "traditionally scientific" one.

Another common practice in this course, which was perhaps uncommon in graduate courses, was that the instructor called on and asked individual students to share their answers to the weekly assignments (e.g., the end-of-chapter exercises in the textbook; short essay questions). She asked different students each week and made sure that everyone did his/her share of oral work. In the second term, the students were also asked to make a short presentation (normally 10 to 15 minutes) on their long essay, which was the final project of the course. Dr. Hill said, "My aim is for the students to produce and for me to listen to [them], because I think that that way the students learn best." The students' oral participation was graded as part of the mark for "class reports, oral and written" (an excerpt from the course outline) to which 35% of the total mark was given.

The students' engagement in discussions seemed to vary from week to week, perhaps depending on the topic of discussion. In some weeks the students engaged in a very lively discussion on a given topic (e.g., language and gender, language and culture) without much intervention by Dr. Hill, whereas some other weeks Dr. Hill seemed to have a hard time eliciting comments from them. There were about ten students, including several international students, who volunteered to speak regularly during open discussions, whereas there were six or seven students who spoke only when they were asked to do so.
5.3.2 Emiko in Course C

Like the four cases discussed so far, Emiko’s participation in Course C was marked by her relative silence. She normally sat toward the back of the room and quietly took notes during lectures and discussions. The only times she spoke were when she was asked to do so by the instructor, and when she did speak, her speech tended to be short. Between mid-October and the beginning of January, Emiko was not even called upon by the instructor (for the reasons I will describe below). In addition, when the class discussed aspects of the Japanese language and society, which happened fairly often, it was normally Shiho who provided information, while Emiko tended to remain silent.

During Term 2, Emiko had more opportunities to speak, including short oral presentations, and seemed to be more comfortable speaking than she was in Term 1.

Emiko struggled to participate in this course especially in Term 1. A major challenge for her was that she felt extremely nervous about being called upon without warning, which she felt prevented her from learning from discussions. She explained:

Today I was very nervous the whole time because I didn’t fully follow what people were saying.... I feel I’m not learning very well because I’m too nervous to concentrate on learning. I’m constantly worried about being called upon. If I were called upon suddenly, I wouldn’t be able to say anything because I can’t make up things to say on the spot in English. It would be a very scary situation for me. (Emiko, WR: 99/09/28)

The previous week, Emiko was indeed asked to share her answer to an assignment. The following is an excerpt from my field notes about this incident:

[After a lively discussion on British accents and issues of power and dialects], Dr. Hill called on Emiko and said, “Which question did you do?” Emiko said something softly, which I didn’t catch. Then Dr. Hill said, “Oh, that’s a long one. Can you summarize the question for us?” Emiko remained silent for 5 seconds or so, looking down at her notes. Dr. Hill then read the question for Emiko, and Emiko began reading her answer. Emiko was speaking rather softly and Dr. Hill stood up from her chair, perhaps trying to hear her better. After Emiko finished,
Dr. Hill said to the class, “Do you follow Emiko?” (Field notes, Course C: 99/09/21)

Commenting on this incident, Emiko said that Dr. Hill did not understand what she said, which was embarrassing to her, and that she wished her classmates would forget about her “bad speech.”

Emiko felt that her nervousness came partly from her fear of making English mistakes in class. Like Lisa’s aforementioned case, this fear was a salient theme in Emiko’s reports. She mentioned that she tended to be a “perfectionist” about speaking English and that this tendency kept her from speaking spontaneously in class. She also monitored her grammar very carefully whenever she spoke in class. Another source of nervousness was her perceived limited ability to follow the discussions, as described in one of the above excerpts.9 Her lack of confidence also contributed to her reticence. She sometimes found herself in a dilemma: on the one hand, she wanted to speak in order to gain more confidence and get used to speaking, but on the other hand, she often lost confidence after she spoke. Just like Nanako, Emiko was also worried about being viewed as “stupid” or incompetent by her classmates because of her silence or limited speech.

Being faced with these issues from early on, Emiko attempted to improve the situation in different ways. First of all, in October, she consulted Dr. Hill about her difficulties, particularly her nervousness about being called upon. Emiko also told her that she knew she would have to get used to speaking in class eventually and did not

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9 In fact, I myself occasionally found it hard to follow some of the students in this class especially when they spoke with an accent that was unfamiliar to me and inserted words in a language which I did not know.
intend to avoid it indefinitely. In the following excerpt, Dr. Hill summarized for my benefit the advice she had given previously to Emiko:

   I could put myself in her position very easily because I have also been a foreign student .... I said, “You don't have to talk to me in class if you are not able to yet. I'll wait till you are ready.... I know that you do your work and even that is a struggle sometimes because it’s a lot of reading in English.” So I just wanted her to feel happy in the classroom without threats or fears. I think she felt better after that. And I said, “You can tell me when you are ready.” (Interview: 00/03/07)

   Emiko did feel better after talking to Dr. Hill:

   I wanted my instructor to know my situation. At first I wondered if I was being too dependent on her. But if I hadn’t talked to her, I couldn’t have enjoyed the class till the end. I would have been nervous the whole time.... After I talked to her, I was able to relax in the classroom, knowing that she was not going to ask me to speak. (Emiko, Interview 2: 99/12/20)

Since this meeting, Emiko often visited Dr. Hill in her office and they discussed various topics in sociolinguistics as well as issues Emiko had faced in her studies. Through such interactions, Dr. Hill not only found out about Emiko’s appreciation of the subject, but also felt that they had developed a relationship where they “could trust each other.”

   In the meantime, Dr. Hill did not ask Emiko to speak in class until the beginning of Term 2. Although this helped her to relax and learn better, it also contributed to her sense of isolation in the classroom as time went by. She felt she was being “left alone” because eventually she became the only one not participating orally in discussions. Furthermore, somewhat ironically, her prolonged silence made it even more difficult for her to “break the ice” and start speaking again; she found herself in a situation where she “might draw attention and curiosity from everyone” if she spoke. Her worries ended, however, in the first class after the Christmas break when Dr. Hill spontaneously suggested that Emiko present her long essay. Emiko was visibly surprised, but managed to say that she would like to present it in the following class. Dr. Hill then said to the
class, “Emiko is worried about her English being not good enough, but we all understand her, don’t we?” A few students nodded, but there was no verbal response from the students. In the following week, Emiko presented her paper and seemed to receive positive feedback and support from her classmates and instructor. Looking back at her participation in Term 2, Emiko said:

Toward the end I didn't feel pressure to speak perfect English.... I think it's because I talked to my classmates more and they started to know me better. Also, I remember this clearly. When I was presenting my paper, one of them smiled at me. That smile made me feel really good. It's such a small thing but changed the way I felt in the classroom. (Emiko, Interview 3: 00/04/16)

As she mentioned above, another strategy she used was to talk to her classmates one-on-one during breaks. While being mostly quiet in the classroom, she felt that it was important for her to somehow communicate her thoughts and ideas to others and “make [her] presence known”:

If I could talk to my classmates during breaks or outside the class and tell them what I thought about the issues discussed in class, I would feel much better because my classmates would then know what I’m thinking about. If I could do that, I wouldn’t feel so disappointed when I couldn’t make myself understood in class. (Emiko, WR: 99/09/21)

Even though it was not easy for Emiko to approach her classmates, she made a conscious effort to do so; one strategy she used was to approach individuals who showed an interest in Japan and might be willing to talk to her. Emiko also attempted to make up her limited oral performance with her written work. In particular, she put extra effort into her long essay, for which she designed and conducted a small-scale research project, collecting data from Japan through e-mail communications. Dr. Hill thought that Emiko did “tremendous work with her written work” and displayed her “sensitive appreciation” of
the subject matter. In fact, Emiko had always had a strong interest in the subject and also felt that she “discovered the joy of doing research” by conducting the project.

To summarize, Emiko experienced various difficulties in Course C, including her feeling of nervousness, fear of making English mistakes in public, lack of confidence, and concerns about her classmates’ interpretation of her reticence. She attempted to deal with these challenges and negotiated her participation by employing various strategies. In particular, she made a good use of the instructor’s support. Her investment in the subject matter itself also helped sustain her effort to learn from the course.

5.3.3 Shiho in Course C

Shiho’s oral participation in Course C was in rather sharp contrast with Emiko’s. She spoke in open discussions regularly (almost every class) and from the beginning, and also volunteered to discuss her answers to homework questions quite often. Unlike Emiko, she looked calm and seemed to take her time when she spoke. Her comments were often related to the Japanese language, culture, or society: over the course of the academic year, she introduced and discussed, for example, the differences between Chinese characters used in Japanese and those in Chinese, historical use of hiragana (a phonetic Japanese orthography) by women, personal pronouns, address terms, kinship terms, and honorifics in Japanese.

Throughout the academic year, Shiho did not seem to experience any major difficulties in Course C. The only minor problem she reported once in September was that she wished she could “express her thoughts with more accurate expressions.” Overall, she enjoyed participating in discussions and felt comfortable speaking in class, as we can see in the following excerpts from her reports:
I guess I am getting used to giving comments or asking questions in class. At the beginning of the term, I had to prepare myself before I could speak in class, but now I can speak more naturally and spontaneously. This is good because I won’t have to miss the timing to ask or give comments while preparing myself. (Shiho, WR: 99/10/12) [original in English]

I was really involved in the discussion and I really enjoyed being part of it. (Shiho, WR: 99/10/19) [original in English]

Shiho particularly enjoyed the discussions when topics related to Japan or other Asian societies and languages received attention in class. Responding to the question, “Any other comments on your class participation today?” she said:

Very good! I was kind of excited because the discussion was focused on the Asian societies. I think it was the first time we got to really talk about Asian societies. It was nice because I could discuss something that is in me. (Shiho, WR: 99/10/19) [original in English]

Shiho also appreciated the positive responses she received from others on her comments and presentations, and felt a sense of membership in the classroom. The following is an excerpt from her report regarding her presentation:

For Japanese kinship terms presentation, I was asked a lot of questions from my classmates, especially from students of non-Asian background. The question-answer session during my presentation was really nice because we now know each other and can involve ourselves in the discussion in a relaxed mood without being nervous. I really felt as a part of the class. (Shiho, WR: 99/11/02) [original in English]

There seemed to be multiple reasons for Shiho’s successful and very visible participation. First of all, she felt comfortable speaking English, perhaps much more so than Emiko did. Secondly, because of her earlier socialization in a British school, she felt she was used to the kinds of classroom interaction which, in her observation, were normative in English speaking, Western countries (e.g., active interaction between teachers and students). Thirdly, as described above, Shiho contributed to the class by providing interesting information about Japan/Japanese on a regular basis. At the same
time, judging from her reports, she remained sensitive about the needs of her classmates and avoided talking about something that might not interest them. This strategy seemed to work well for her. On the one hand, she was fulfilling her goal of introducing accurate information about Japan/Japanese to those who were unfamiliar with them. On the other hand, she was establishing her status as a competent and accountable member of the classroom community, which in turn facilitated her participation even more. Finally, she seemed to be explicitly aware of the expected ways of oral participation in her courses and attempted to behave accordingly. For example, she felt that in Course C the students weren’t necessarily expected to make theoretical comments, but to talk about personal experiences and examples. She also believed that it was considered important in the Western educational culture to demonstrate one’s knowledge and presence by orally participating in discussions:

By participating actively in discussions, you can demonstrate to your instructor that you are learning well. Your instructor gets to know you better when you speak. I think that’s better than being quiet and being forgotten by your instructor.... Here you need to demonstrate how much you know and how much you understand. When I was in London, I wasn’t aware of this explicitly but knew it implicitly. (Shiho, Interview 2: 99/12/03)

From a language socialization perspective, it seems that Shiho was “ahead of the game,” compared to someone like Emiko who had little experience with the English-speaking classroom. During her childhood and adolescence, Shiho had been socialized into not only the English-speaking classroom but also an academic environment where students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds learned together. In Course C, Shiho was able to use her background to her advantage. Furthermore, since topics related to Japan were brought up fairly often in discussions, Shiho, who offered information
most of the time, was constructed as a good source of knowledge on those topics.\textsuperscript{10} As a result, she seemed be able to establish her position as a relative expert and a competent participant.

To summarize, unlike the first two pairs, Emiko and Shiho participated in Course C in very different ways: whereas Emiko tended to be silent while being faced with a variety of challenges, Shiho participated orally much more actively while experiencing few difficulties. Emiko found herself in a relatively peripheral position, while Shiho seemed to gain a fuller membership by making contributions and having her contributions validated by others. One possible reason for this difference might be that having been educated in an English-speaking, international school, Shiho was in some respects a relative old-timer (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in a classroom like Course C, whereas Emiko was a relative newcomer in such a classroom. Although they seemed to occupy such markedly different positions, both of them used various strategies to maximize their learning opportunities.

5.4 Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored what challenges the focal students faced in participating in some of their courses and how they negotiated their participation in them

\textsuperscript{10} Dr. Hill mentioned that there was more emphasis on Japanese topics during this particular year than usual because there were Canadian students who had taught in Japan as well as Japanese students. Although there were four Japanese people in the class (Emiko, Shiho, the visiting scholar, and the researcher), it was often Shiho who responded to questions on Japanese-related topics. Shiho reported a few times that she wished the other Japanese members spoke more or backed up her comments so that she was not constructed as “the only representative of the language/culture.” In the meantime, Emiko sometimes felt that the class expected Shiho, rather than Emiko, to speak. Emiko also hesitated to speak because she felt that she wouldn’t be as articulate as Shiho. Emiko once surprised herself when she was able to discuss Japan-related topics in a small group “without worrying too much,” partly because Shiho was not in her group. Although this is speculation, it was also possible that Emiko sometimes hesitated to speak because of the presence of the researcher and the scholar, who she might perceive as more experienced academically and knowledgeable about the subject. Thus, there were subtle, mostly silent negotiations of expertise not just between Shiho and Emiko but perhaps involving the four of us.
I have analyzed the students’ lived experiences in depth by focusing on their insiders’ viewpoints, while also incorporating the voices of the course instructors as well as my own classroom observations.

The chapter has revealed a number of interesting points. First of all, it has demonstrated how the local classroom context was an inseparable aspect of the focal students’ oral participation. The three courses discussed represented three different types of classroom environments that the focal students encountered during this study: (1) a graduate seminar on a specific research-related topic where most of the students belonged to the same department and shared similar interests (Course A); (2) a faculty-wide, survey course where students came from different departments and brought various interests (Course B); (3) an undergraduate course where the discussions tended to be less theoretical compared to graduate courses and where the instructor provided more lectures (Course C). Different kinds of classroom communities were constructed in these courses and the kinds of interpersonal relationships created varied accordingly. For instance, the class of Course A developed into a supportive group where the students knew each other well and worked collaboratively both inside and outside the classroom, which in turn had an impact on the ways Lisa and Jun participated in the classroom. In addition, the fact that NNES students’ experiences were considered to be valuable in Course A because of its content (and the fact that NNESs were also the overwhelming majority of the class), might have influenced Lisa and Jun’s status in the course to some degree. Also, there were different expectations of class participation in the three courses, and the challenges faced by the focal students differed accordingly. For example, participating orally in whole-class discussions was in some respects more critical for Lisa and Jun in Course A.
than for Rie and Nanako in Course B. The kinds of comments and questions that were likely to be valued were qualitatively different, for example, in Course A and C. Thus, it seems important to understand students' classroom participation contextually (including their sociohistorical context, such as their previous academic experiences), rather than simply as individual abilities and styles that are static. This theme will be elaborated in later chapters where I compare individual students' experiences across different courses. Table 5.2 summarizes different contextual aspects of the three courses that might have influenced the focal students' participation in them.

Second, in addition to learning new academic content, the challenges faced by the students could be multi-dimensional and complex, involving issues of language, culture, identity, and power often simultaneously and sometimes in a contradictory way (see Figure 5.1). We have seen, for example, how the students' concerns about their linguistic problems were closely linked with their concerns about their roles and identities produced in the classroom. For instance, Lisa, Nanako, and Emiko were all concerned to varying degrees about being viewed as less competent by their peers because of their perceived limited speech in English, and tended to be reticent partly for that reason. At the same time, they were also concerned that their reticence might be taken as a sign of their ignorance, incompetence, or indifference. We have also seen that while experiencing language-related problems such as not fully following the discussions, the students like Jun and Rie nevertheless interpreted the cultural norms and expectations of classroom interaction in their courses in order to make sense of their experiences. What was interesting about Jun's case was her ambivalent response to the cultural gap she observed. Rie's case provided a good illustration that students' perceptions of cultural differences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course A</th>
<th>Course B</th>
<th>Course C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>• Language Education</td>
<td>• Faculty of Education</td>
<td>• Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level/</td>
<td>• graduate seminar</td>
<td>• graduate seminar</td>
<td>• senior-level undergraduate seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Format/</td>
<td>• elective</td>
<td>• required</td>
<td>• elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>• Term 1 (3 credit)</td>
<td>• Term 1 (3 credit)</td>
<td>• Term 1 &amp; 2 (6 credit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>• theory and research on ESL/EFL</td>
<td>• overview of research methods in education</td>
<td>• introductory sociolinguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor(s)</td>
<td>• male full professor</td>
<td>• male full &amp; female associate professors</td>
<td>• female, experienced sessional instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class size/</td>
<td>• 15 (3 male, 12 female)</td>
<td>• about 32 (1/5 male, 4/5 female)</td>
<td>• about 25 (1/5 male, 4/5 female; half graduate, half undergraduate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student body</td>
<td>• 9 NNEs, 6 NESs</td>
<td>• about 10 NNEs</td>
<td>• at least 6 NNEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• all from same department</td>
<td>• from various departments</td>
<td>• various linguistic &amp; cultural backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• similar interests</td>
<td>• various interests</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• all ESL/EFL teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class activities</td>
<td>• emphasis on group work</td>
<td>• lectures/whole-class discussions</td>
<td>• lectures/whole-class discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• weekly &quot;poster sessions&quot;</td>
<td>• some group work</td>
<td>• limited group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• lectures/whole-class discussions</td>
<td>• optional student presentations</td>
<td>• short student presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• online discussions</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>• no mark given for class participation</td>
<td>• no mark given for class participation</td>
<td>• 35% for &quot;class reports, oral and written&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion features</td>
<td>• informal chatting during poster sessions</td>
<td>• relatively fast-paced, theoretical whole-class discussions</td>
<td>• instructor's calling upon individual students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• group discussions on hands-on assignments</td>
<td>• playful exchanges between instructors</td>
<td>• students' sharing of concrete examples from personal experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• theoretical whole-class discussions</td>
<td>• regular contributions by about half the students during whole-class discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• active and vocal participation by most students</td>
<td></td>
<td>• regular contributions by about 10 students during whole-class discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focal students' participation</td>
<td>• relative silence in whole-class discussions (Lisa, Jun)</td>
<td>• relative silence in whole-class discussions (Rie, Nanako)</td>
<td>• relative silence in discussions (Emiko)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• increasingly active participation in small groups (Lisa)</td>
<td>• relatively active (Rie) or passive (Nanako) participation in small groups</td>
<td>• active participation in all activities (Shiho)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• relative silence in small groups (Jun)</td>
<td>• very limited interaction with classmates inside or outside class time (Rie, Nanako)</td>
<td>• informal interaction with classmates during breaks (Emiko, Shiho)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• active interaction with classmates outside class time (Lisa, Jun)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• limited interaction with classmates outside classroom (Emiko, Shiho)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Contextual Aspects of Course A, B, and C, and Students' Participation
can change over time; she interpreted certain differences she observed first as general differences between Canadian and Japanese academic culture and later as disciplinary differences.

Third, the kinds of membership and identities that were constructed of the students within the classroom simultaneously shaped and were shaped by their class participation to a significant degree (Figure 5.2). In particular, a salient theme emerged in the data was the reciprocal relationship between the individual student’s participation and her sense of competence produced as a lived experience of participation in her classroom community. The two perhaps most extreme examples illustrated in this chapter were Emiko and Shiho. Emiko, having struggled to participate orally in Course C from the beginning, developed a relatively peripheral membership, which in turn made it even more difficult for her to speak. In contrast, Shiho, who contributed her knowledge to discussions and received positive feedback, developed an identity as a competent and valued member, which in turn seemed to enhance her participation. These were, however, not the only kinds of membership the students seemed to establish in their classroom, and moreover, their membership could change over time. Lisa, for instance, seemed to project herself as someone with a strong desire to move from a relatively peripheral position to a fuller membership. This projection in turn elicited others’ support, and she was also able to use such support to gradually gain more competence.

Furthermore, not all the students had the desire for a fuller membership in all their courses. For instance, Jun saw herself to a large degree as a temporary visitor to the academic community, and therefore gaining membership by speaking was not an important goal for her. Thus, although both Lisa and Jun occupied a relatively peripheral
Figure 5.1: Focal Students’ Challenges in the Classroom

Figure 5.2: Reciprocal Relationship Between Identity and Participation in the Classroom
position in the same classroom, their peripherality had slightly different meanings, origins, and consequences.

Finally, compared to identities related to competence, culture, and NNES status, other kinds of social roles such as gender and ethnicity were not salient themes in the students' narratives about their participation in the three courses. One reason for this might be related to the two contextual aspects of these courses. First, female students were the overwhelming majority in all of the courses, and many of them were active, vocal participants. Second, the students in the courses were ethnically and culturally very diverse, and moreover, students' ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds were often considered to be valuable resources, especially in Course A and C. In other words, the focal students did not seem to feel marginalized or silenced as minorities in terms of gender or ethnicity in these particular courses.\(^{11}\) In contrast, in the next chapter, I will discuss how specific local contexts of a course related to gender and ethnicity had a significant impact on a focal student's non-participation in that course.

\(^{11}\) Margolis and Romeo (1998) present an opposite case where "women of color" (Ph.D. students) felt marginalized in a sociology department that was characterized by one of them as "very male, very white, very old, very conservative" (p. 1; part of the title of this article). Based on interviews with 26 "women of color," they examine the effect of the "hidden curriculum" of the graduate school (e.g., stereotyping, blaming the victim) that seemed to reproduce gender, race, class, and other forms of inequality.
Chapter 6
VOICES BEHIND THE SILENCE

6.0 Introduction

As was readily apparent from observations as well as in student reports and interviews, most of the focal students tended to be reticent in the classroom in many of their courses. This is congruent with the stereotypical view that many NNESs, particularly those from certain Asian cultures, participate minimally in classroom interactions (Jones, 1999; Liu & Littlewood, 1997). Although there has been relatively little research on L2 students’ classroom participation, studies have provided some evidence that NNES students with Asian backgrounds tend to be markedly less vocal than their NES counterparts when in classes together (e.g., Duff, 2001, 2002a; Goldstein, Schecter, & Pon, 2002; Harklau, 1994; Mason, 1994; Morita, 1996).1 In addition to language difficulties, the relative silence of certain groups of L2 students has been explained by many different factors such as language learning anxiety (Hilleson, 1996; Tsui, 1996), students’ cultural and educational backgrounds (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Harklau, 1994; Jones, 1999; Morita, 1996; Turner & Hiraga, 1996), and their relatively powerless status in the classroom (Leki, 2001; Losey, 1995, 1997). Focusing specifically on university-level NNES students from Asian cultures, Jones (1999) argues that an

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1 Interestingly, four of the focal students observed that NNES students with a Chinese background in their classes tended to speak more than NNESs from other Asian countries. This indeed seemed to hold true in some of the courses I observed. However, it seems unproductive to make sweeping generalizations about students from a given culture or country without considering various contextual circumstances of a given classroom as well as students’ previous academic experiences. For instance, in one of the courses I observed where Chinese students tended to speak more than other NNESs, they were in fact the majority of the class and in addition, seemed to be comfortable with talking to the instructor who also had a Chinese background. In another course, there was a Japanese student who was vocal from the beginning; she had completed a graduate degree in an English-speaking university and was constituted as a more experienced and knowledgeable member of the class.
important factor for their reticence is the mismatch between certain aspects of the educational and interactional norms of their home culture (e.g., deference to teacher authority) and those of their target culture (e.g., informality and solidarity in group discussion). Leki (2001) has demonstrated that relationships of power which L2 learners may form with domestic students in group work can silence the former or undermine their ability to contribute to group projects. From a discourse socialization perspective, Duff (2001) has revealed that the successful oral participation of ESL students (mostly from Asian backgrounds) in Grade 10 social studies classes called for knowledge and abilities that many of them might lack—a knowledge of North American pop-culture and current events, an ability to express critical perspectives on social issues, and an ability to enter quick-paced interactions and to comprehend their NES classmates' utterances.

While researchers have attempted to account for L2 students' apparently passive participation from various theoretical viewpoints (e.g., psycholinguistic, cross-cultural, critical, discourse socialization), few studies have closely examined the perspectives of L2 students themselves by conducting qualitative, narrative-based research. Consequently, we have relatively little knowledge about what L2 learners themselves consider as potential reasons for their reticence or what thoughts and feelings they may have while remaining quiet in the classroom. In this chapter, I provide an in-depth examination of the relative silence of three students, Jun, Nanako, and Emiko. The findings are summarized toward the end of the chapter in Table 6.1. As I will show, their voices reveal that there were multiple, interconnected reasons why they remained quite in the classroom, sometimes willingly and sometimes not so willingly. They also illustrate how the silence of the same individual student might have different reasons or meanings
across different classroom contexts or in the same context over time, suggesting the co-constructed nature of silence. Furthermore, the students’ narratives indicate that they were actively negotiating competence, identities, cultures, and power relations even when they seemed passive or withdrawn in the classroom.

6.1 “I feel as if I’m from a different planet”: Jun’s Voice

Since I came here, I’ve realized how comfortable I am in Japan. As a teacher, I receive recognition and respect from others around me. Here I get no such recognition. I’ve jumped into an academic world that I’m completely unfamiliar with. I often don’t know what my opinions are or how to express my opinions if I have any. I feel as if I’m from a different planet. (Jun, Interview 3: 00/05/05)

As a 42 year-old who experienced graduate studies for the first time in a foreign country after 16 years of teaching in her home country, Jun faced many challenges in trying to adjust to the new academic environment as well as her new role as an international graduate student. She had to learn not only the new academic content, which she found was often difficult, but also new ways of learning, thinking, and presenting herself orally and in writing. In the classroom, at least on the surface, she seemed to respond to the situation mostly with silence. As I will show, a close examination of her narratives reveals that she participated minimally in her courses for multiple reasons, and that she was actively interpreting the new academic culture around her and (re)constructing her sense of who she was within that culture.

During this project, Jun mentioned various reasons why she tended to participate passively in class discussions. In addition to the fact that she was a listener rather than a talker by nature, she felt that a major reason was that she often did not fully follow class discussions. This seemingly simple point becomes more complex when we consider what she described as her thought processes during discussions. She reported that she
often did not know to what extent her limited understanding was due to her limited English listening comprehension, and to what extent it was due to her limited grasp of the course content. In addition, she sometimes wondered if someone’s comment was difficult to follow because it was in fact not very logical, meaningful, or appropriate. She said in one of her reports:

When [name of a student] spoke, I didn’t know where her comment came from. It seemed to me that her comment was not very relevant to what we were discussing at the moment, but I wasn’t sure. Sometimes I feel that people change subjects suddenly and disrupt the flow of the discussion. But at the same time, I may not be following the discussion fully either. It’s often hard to tell. (Jun, WR: 99/10/06)

Thus, for Jun, the problem of not fully following discussions was not simply a linguistic problem. It also involved her making judgements as to the level of her content knowledge as well as the meaningfulness or appropriateness of someone’s comment at a given time in a discussion. In addition, understandably, her limited comprehension often made her feel uneasy, “stupid,” or “out of place.” This was in fact a common experience shared by many of the focal students.

Another major reason for her reticence was related to what she perceived as cultural differences in classroom communication between Canada and Japan. As I have discussed in Chapter 5, Jun had an ambivalent feeling toward this gap, unlike Lisa who seemed to want to make a full adjustment to the new academic culture. On the one hand, Jun appreciated certain aspects of what she saw as the Canadian classroom culture. In the following excerpt, for instance, she describes how her ideas about learning had changed since she came to WCU:

Having received typical Japanese education, I came here with the assumption that a students’ main goal is to absorb knowledge from instructors. I considered learning as receiving.... But as I observed how instructors organize classes here
and how students participate, my idea about learning has changed. I have realized that instructors are not the only source from which students learn. Students can also learn from each other by actively participating in class discussions (Jun, Interview 3: 00/05/05)

On the other hand, Jun did not blindly accept all aspects of the classroom cultures she encountered in her courses. She even felt “very uncomfortable” in one of her courses, Course D, because of certain interactional features she observed. First of all, she felt that in Course D individual students tended to speak in order to fulfill their own personal agenda without much consideration for others’ needs. She did not enjoy this aspect of class interactions because she felt that only outspoken students ended up benefiting from the discussions:

In Course D, I was totally passive.... One reason for this was that the discussions were often about individual students' own research issues rather than general issues related to the course material. (Jun, Interview 3: 00/05/05)

I didn’t like the fact that only those who asked questions benefited from the course. We ESL students often feel intimidated by dominating native speakers and feel discouraged from participating. (Jun, Interview 3: 00/05/05)

Another surprising aspect of the course for Jun was the seemingly conflictual negotiations that occurred quite frequently in class between the students and instructors. According to her, many students criticized certain aspects of the course (e.g., evaluation procedures) and demanded that the instructors make some changes. She did not enjoy these discussions:

The students complained a lot. In particular, they felt very negative about the quizzes ... and even suggested alternative ways of evaluation. People often became emotional and I felt very tense and uncomfortable sitting for 30 to 40 minutes listening to the heated discussion.... I understood that they needed to make their voices heard, but I didn’t like the fact that we spent so much time discussing something other than the course materials. (Jun, Interview 3: 00/05/05)

Such negotiations between students and instructors were new to Jun who came from a
culture where, in her words, “challenging the teacher’s authority is unthinkable.” Jun basically stayed out of these negotiations and tolerated them, while learning about what she saw as culturally specific power relations between students and instructors.

Another cultural difference she observed was in the ways students were expected to present themselves in the classroom. Jun seemed to believe that in the Canadian classroom students speak not only to communicate their ideas but also to demonstrate their presence, knowledge, or intelligence:

Here you have to express your thoughts. It's very different from the Japanese culture where you communicate many things without talking.... My classmates always ask me what I think and encourage me to speak even when I'm nodding in agreement with something. Students here try to highlight their presence by expressing themselves with words. (Jun, Interview 2: 99/12/10)

Jun also felt that in the Canadian classroom silence is often treated negatively as a sign of indifference, ignorance, or absence of ideas, whereas in Japan it tends to have more positive meanings such as a sign of respect or attentive listening.

In addition to limited comprehension, personal tendency, and cultural differences, Jun’s identity as an “outsider” or someone “at the bottom of the class” also contributed to her silence. As I have mentioned in Chapter 5, her sense of being an outsider came partly from the fact that she considered herself as a temporary sojourner to the academic world and tended to retreat to the role of an observer. However, her reticence was also a result of her subjectivity as a less competent member of her classroom communities. In one of her courses, she felt that the instructor also imposed such a role on her by making comments about her limited English. According to Jun, the instructor seemed to assume from early on in the course that Jun lacked the English ability to complete the course. This in turn made her feel reluctant to speak in her presence:
I really don't want to speak in front of her because if I did, she would say something negative about me or my English. From my experience with her, I've learned that teachers should never talk negatively about what students themselves already consider as their weak points. If they do, students will lose motivation to try and improve. How can students trust their teachers if they are made to feel that their teachers don’t believe in their abilities? (Jun, WR: 00/01/28)

To summarize, there seemed to be multiple, interrelated reasons why Jun tended to be quiet in her classes, including her perceived linguistic problems, difficulties in digesting the course materials, personal style and tendency, cultural differences, and her classroom identities. Her voices reflected in the weekly reports and interviews illustrate how negotiating cultures and identities was a large part of her struggle in the classroom. Such a struggle, however, might remain largely invisible to the instructors and her classmates.

6.2 “My silence has different meanings”: Nanako’s Voice

If someone followed me in all my courses and simply observed me, she would have just thought that I was a quiet person. But my silence had different meanings in different courses. In Course E, the instructor made me feel that I was there even though I was quiet. In the other courses my presence or absence didn't seem to make any difference to the instructor or the students. I just sat there in the classroom like an ornament. I don't think anyone could tell from the outside the different feelings I had inside. (Nanako, Interview 3: 00/05/12)

In this section I explore Nanako’s silence across different courses she took. The courses discussed here are Course E, F, and G, and as she mentions above, Nanako had different classroom experiences in these courses despite the fact that she tended to be withdrawn in all of them. Course E and F were graduate courses, each of which was taught by a female instructor in Nanako’s department. Both had a similar class size—about 15 students, a mixture of master’s and doctoral students—and seminar style of classes. Course G was an undergraduate course also taught by a female instructor in her department. It was a large class with about 40 students, and according to Nanako,
most of them were “young Caucasian female students.” I observed Nanako twice in
Course E, but never in the other courses, although she provided reports about all of them
on a weekly basis. In what follows I summarize Nanako’s experiences in each of the
courses, highlighting the different, sometimes changing meanings of her silence.

In Course E, Nanako found it difficult to follow the fast-paced class discussions
on topics that were mostly new to her, and felt that it was “nearly impossible” for her to
“jump into the discussion and say something.” In the classes I observed, the discussions
did seem to proceed fairly quickly and included complex issues pertaining to theory and
research. Also, people often incorporated jokes or playful comments in their discussions,
most of which Nanako later told me that she did not understand. While most of the
students participated actively, Nanako never spoke in open discussions and was also
reticent in group work. Especially at the beginning of the term, Nanako was very
frustrated with this situation and considered her silence as a problem. In the following
excerpt from a journal she kept as part of the course assignment, Nanako describes her
feelings:

All these factors [e.g., cultural differences, language barrier, lack of experience] generate mixed feelings: uneasiness, depression, irritation and so on. Why can I not understand what other students say, though I have been here for two months? Why can I not speak up in class? Will I be able to express well what I want to say in English? As I furthered self-analysis, I found that my self-doubt is the biggest reason which causes uncomfortableness in class. I feel as though my personality itself is denied because I cannot participate in class as other students do.
(Nanako, Journal entry: 99/10/12) [original in English]

As it was the case in Course B (see Chapter 5), constructing a viable classroom identity seemed to be a major part of Nanako’s challenge in Course E:

I hesitate to speak not only because I’m the only NNES in the class but I’m also the youngest. Some of my classmates even have children.... They also have more experience in teaching and research or in life and society in general. I feel
Thus, her sense of being a less experienced or competent member contributed to her silence, while at the same time silence worked as a face-saving strategy for her.

Nanako’s view about her own silence in the classroom changed after she talked one-to-one with the instructor of the course. Nanako approached the instructor because she felt that it was important for the instructor to know that she was having difficulties in the course. She also wanted to make sure that the instructor knew that she was motivated to learn even though she had been silent. The instructor, Nanako reported, was “very understanding and supportive” and offered help (e.g., providing a copy of her lecture notes) and suggestions (e.g., tape-recording discussions). What surprised Nanako was the fact that the instructor did not consider Nanako’s silence as a problem. Instead, she assured Nanako that it was only natural for international students to need time to get used to North American interactional styles, and that she was also entitled to keep her own cultural or personal style of participation if she wanted to. Nanako explains how this piece of advice changed her approach to class participation:

Before I talked to her, I wanted to be able to speak just like a native speaker. I wanted to become a Canadian. But after talking to her, I changed my mind. I thought it’s okay to be myself. I know I should speak more but I don’t feel I have to speak any more. I used to feel that I must speak in class. When she said to me, “Why do you have to speak?” I realized that I didn’t have to speak.... As long as I make an effort and learn what I can at a given stage of my studies, I’m okay. (Nanako, Interview 2: 99/12/15)

Another eye-opening insight Nanako gained from the instructor was that there might be an advantage to being an “outsider”:

What she told me was, I may be disadvantaged by certain things like English abilities and not being able to participate in discussions, but at the same time there is an advantage to being an outsider in a given culture. She said that there should
be things that only I can see from an outsider's perspective. (Nanako, Interview 2: 99/12/15)

These insights had a significant impact on the way Nanako felt and learned in the classroom and, in her words, “changed the way [she] adjusted to academic life at WCU.” Even though her visible or overt classroom behavior did not change, she now understood that she could stay legitimately silent and that her outsider status and perspective could be a strength rather than a weakness to be tolerated by herself and others.

In Course F, Nanako again found it difficult to participate in class interactions. As it was the case in Course E, her classroom identity was closely related to her silence, while the “very theoretical” course content and her perceived language problems also contributed to it. What was different in Course F was that Nanako felt that she and the other NNES students were largely “ignored” and marginalized. Rie, who was taking the same class, felt similarly (her responses will be discussed in Chapter 7). Nanako’s sense of alienation came from a number of related issues. First, the course readings often dealt with topics and theories (e.g., modernism, postcolonialism, critical feminism) which she found were “totally beyond [her] knowledge.” The problem for her, however, was not so much the course content itself as the fact that the course did not seem to help her to improve her understanding or to “gain new knowledge.” Second, according to both Nanako and Rie, the discussions were almost always dominated by NES doctoral students and the instructor, while the international students who happened to all be master’s students mostly kept silent:

There were some small group discussions at the beginning of the term, but most of the discussions were with the whole class. The instructor would raise an issue, some Ph.D. students would discuss it, and then the instructor would provide comments. The class was clearly divided into two groups, the Ph.D. group and
the silent group. The only activities I could join were watching videos and eating
snacks during the break. ((Laughs)) It's true. (Nanako, Interview 2: 99/12/15)

The division between the two groups was not only obvious to everyone in the classroom
but was also reinforced by the instructor's comment one day toward the end of the term.
According to Nanako, the instructor said something like, "I don't like that there is a
voiceless group in this class. I bring questions for everyone but only certain people talk
and I don't like that." The class then discussed how to change this situation and shared
each other's experiences in the class in small groups. Nanako (as well as Rie) felt,
however, that "it was too late" and that the situation did not change after these
discussions. The group division was also apparent in small group discussions: both
Nanako and Rie reported that just like whole-class discussions, small group discussions
tended to be dominated by outspoken doctoral students. An incident that shocked them
was when a doctoral student said to the class that she had nothing to learn from small
group discussions.

Another reason why Nanako felt "silenced" in the course was that she felt that
"[her] voice wasn't heard" by the instructor. Perhaps being encouraged by her
experience in Course E to some extent, Nanako told the instructor about her difficulties in
following discussions and asked her if she could borrow her lecture notes to assist her
understanding. The instructor turned down her request and told her that she needed to
learn from discussions themselves since it was a seminar class. What disappointed
Nanako was not the fact that she could not borrow the lecture notes, but that the
instructor "did not seem to care" about her problems and gave her no suggestions or
words of encouragement. Nanako said, "I wished she tried to listen to my voice and
understand the challenges I was faced with."
Finally, in Course G, Nanako found herself almost completely silent. She felt that there were two major reasons for this, other than her perceived limited English abilities. One was having little background knowledge about the main topic of the course, North American popular culture particularly pertaining to young women, although she was interested in the general issue of the course, gender and education. Consequently, her understanding of the discussions or the videos shown in the class was limited:

I wasn’t interested in the content of that class especially when they talked about things like Spice Girls. To tell you the truth, I’m ignorant even about Japanese pop culture because I grew up watching only NHK [Japan’s national broadcasting corporation] .... So how would I know about the pop culture of a foreign country! (Nanako, Interview 3: 00/05/12)

Secondly, she believed that her perceived outsider status in terms of ethnicity or “race” contributed to her sense of isolation and marginalization:

Nanako: I really didn’t enjoy sitting in that class. You wouldn’t understand the atmosphere of the classroom unless you were there, but I really didn’t like it. Everyone was white except for me. At first I thought I might be too sensitive about it. But later I felt that I wasn’t being too sensitive. The course did seem to privilege white, middle-class women. As you know, feminism has been criticized for that aspect.

Naoko: Were there any situations where you could contribute to discussions as a non-white student?

Nanako: Never. (Interview 3: 00/05/12)

Nanako did not seek help from the instructor or develop a supportive relationship with her classmates who were mostly “young undergraduate Caucasian women” (from Nanako’s perspective). In the following excerpt, she explains how she dealt with the situation:

At first it was painful to sit in the class. But after a while, I didn’t feel anything. That was my way of dealing with the situation. I closed myself off and never got used to the class. I tried to paralyze my feelings. (Nanako, Interview 3: 00/05/12)
It is ironic that Nanako felt marginalized in a course that aimed to “understand how young and adult women, variously located by class, ‘race,’ sexuality, age, and nation make sense of the broader popular cultural contexts and texts of their formal education/schooling” (an excerpt from the course outline). In addition to the critical feminist stance taken by the course and its focus on gender-related issues, the class consisted of all female students and the female instructor. And yet, at least from Nanako’s perspective, she was still alienated from the course for many different reasons related to language, culture, academic content, ethnicity, age, and so on.

In summary, Nanako’s silence seemed to have different meanings, reasons, and outcomes in the three courses as she positioned herself (or was positioned) variously in them. In Course E, her silence was understood and legitimized at least by the instructor, which helped Nanako to engage in the course as a quiet, but legitimate member. In Course F, she was constructed as a member of the “silent group” that consisted of the relatively powerless members of the class. In spite of her attempt to communicate her difficulties to the instructor, Nanako felt that her voice wasn’t heard. In Course G, her silence was closely connected to her strong sense of alienation that was created by many interrelated contextual aspects of the course.

6.3 “I feel I can’t ask them stupid things”: Emiko’s Voice

In Course H, everyone is more knowledgeable and experienced than I am and I feel intimidated. Sometimes the instructor talks as though she thinks I’m not very strong academically, and that also makes it difficult for me to speak. I feel I can’t ask them [i.e., the class] stupid things. (Emiko, Interview 2: 99/12/20)

In the previous chapter, I have described the challenges Emiko faced in Course C, including her fear of making English mistakes, lack of confidence in speaking in class,
and fear of being asked to speak without warning. What if the class was conducted in Japanese, her first language, instead of English? Would she be able to participate more in discussions or would this be a simplistic assumption? In Course H, all the participants including the instructor and the students spoke Japanese and the classes were conducted in Japanese. Interestingly, Emiko nevertheless found it difficult to speak in class for various reasons. In this section, I explore Emiko’s relative silence and struggles in Course H. As I will show, her story tells us that native-speaker language proficiency alone does not guarantee active class participation. In Emiko’s case, her classroom identity as a less competent member in spite of her native-speaker status was a major source of her reticence. Another challenge for her was to learn a “new language,” that is, academic ways of speaking and interacting in her first language. In addition, Emiko’s experience in this course included an interesting negotiation of cultures, which also had an impact on the way she participated. Shiho also took the same class and her responses, which were quite different from Emiko’s, will be discussed in Chapter 7. Since I did not observe Course H, the following discussion is based on the reports provided by Emiko and Shiho.

Course H was a graduate seminar on Japanese linguistics taught by a Japanese female instructor who was also the academic supervisor for all the students taking the course. There were only five students in the class who were all female international students from Japan except for a local student with a Japanese background. As Emiko mentioned in the above excerpt, Emiko and Shiho were relative newcomers to the class and were less experienced than the others in terms of both academic and professional experience pertaining to the subject matter of the course. Similar to Nanako’s case in
Course E, Emiko found it challenging to speak from such a position:

In Course H, everyone knew that I was the least knowledgeable and could not speak very well, either. Sometimes I even sensed that people felt sorry for me. That made it even more difficult for me to speak.... It was easier to say something in Course C because I felt that people treated me as an equal member of the class. (Emiko, Interview 3: 00/04/16)

Emiko’s sense of who she was in the classroom was also partly constructed by the instructor’s comments or, according to Emiko, “different expectations she had of different students.” Both Emiko and Shiho felt that the instructor had a high expectation of her students in general and “pushed” them to work hard in order to become increasingly competent members of the wider academic community. As the students’ academic advisor, the instructor provided them with opportunities to learn about various conventions and rules of their target academic community and expected them to make use of every such opportunity for their academic training. For example, the students were assigned to write a term paper that could actually be presented at an academic conference. Emiko believed, however, that the instructor expected less from her, thinking that she was not as academically strong as the others:

Even before coming here she told me by email that it might take me longer than others to finish the program because my grade average was lower than others.... She also said to me once, “You'd be happy if you survived until winter.” I myself wasn't worried about my progress that much, but she seemed to have such a low expectation of me. I also sensed that during the classes and I didn’t like it. (Emiko, Interview 3: 00/04/16)

Even though Emiko was not comfortable with the role the instructor seemed to ascribe to her, she tended to take up that role and act accordingly in the classroom rather than resisting it. Sometimes she even “took advantage of the instructor’s low expectation” and did not even try to participate in class interactions. Another related reason why Emiko did not feel motivated to participate was the instructor’s advising style. According to
Emiko, the instructor tended to “encourage students to work harder by criticizing them or by being hard on them” (WR: 00/01/19). Whereas some of her classmates seemed to take the instructor’s criticism constructively and use it for their improvement, Emiko tended to become discouraged by it.

Another source of her difficulty in Course H was that she had to learn new ways of speaking, presenting, and interacting as a newcomer to an academic community. Course H was the very first graduate level course for Emiko and even though her first language was used, she felt that she could not speak as the more experienced members did. For example, she observed that her classmates “seemed to speak in order to demonstrate how much knowledge they had by referring to previous research or names of researchers.” She also found that expository or critical comments that were grounded in theory were valued more than personal narratives or anecdotes. While being socialized into such oral discourses, Emiko found it difficult to produce such discourses herself since she felt that she had relatively little theoretical knowledge or resources to draw from. In addition, she did not seem to receive assistance or encouragement to participate in discussions by her classmates or instructor; quite often, she was the only person (out of only 5 students in the class) who kept silent, but “no one seemed to care whether [she] spoke or not.” When it was her turn to play the role of discussion leader, the discussion proceeded without her intervention. Thus, a large part of her discourse socialization in Course H was through the rather passive participation of listening and observing.

Emiko’s status as a less experienced newcomer had an additional cultural meaning that shaped the way she participated in the classroom. Emiko felt that since everyone was Japanese or had a Japanese background, “Japanese rules applied in Course
H” in terms of interpersonal relations, which meant that there was a hierarchical relationship of senpai and kohai, or senior and junior members (see Chapter 3). As a newcomer and as the youngest, Emiko considered herself as kohai to her classmates other than Shiho and attempted to play what she considered as a socially and culturally appropriate role of kohai. An activity that posed a problem for Emiko as a junior member was the one in which the students were expected to critique each other’s oral presentations. In the following excerpt, Emiko explains how she felt she needed to restrict her contributions in deference to her senpai in this activity:

There was no way I could evaluate or critique my senpai’s presentations.... If the discussions were in English, it might have been easier for me to say something because the assumption would have been that we were all equal. But I was aware of the senpai-kohai dynamics in the classroom and couldn’t make myself criticize my senpai.... I thought they might feel bad if someone like me with little experience criticized them. (Emiko, Interview 3: 00/04/16)

At the same time, Emiko knew that the students were expected to critique each other’s presentations regardless of senpai-kohai relationships. She in fact observed that her classmates including Shiho provided critical comments to each other without much hesitation. For Emiko, however, the practice of openly critiquing peers’ performance itself was a new cultural practice that she felt was not customary in the Japanese classroom. She was not used to this practice or did not necessarily enjoy it, either.

Thus, Emiko’s cultural negotiation in this course was quite complex and conflicted. On the one hand, she felt that she should not “break the Japanese cultural rules” since she saw the interpersonal relationships in the class as “essentially Japanese.” In addition, it would be difficult for Emiko as a junior member to act against the cultural code of senpai-kohai relationships. On the other hand, she knew that competent participation required her to go beyond the cultural role of kohai and provide critical
comments even to her senpai. To do so, she would have to appropriate a different kind of role in the activity.

In summary, Emiko’s relative silence in Course H was closely related to her classroom membership and identities that were constructed socially within classroom practices. Her negotiation of cultures and identities was complex since the course itself seemed to be a cultural hybrid to her, having expectations of both Japanese and non-Japanese cultures.

6.4 Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have explored the relative silence of Jun, Nanako, and Emiko in the classroom by closely examining their voices and perspectives reflected in their reports and interviews. These findings are summarized in Table 6.1 (note that some of the findings presented in Chapter 5 that are highly relevant to the themes discussed in this chapter are also incorporated into the table). The chapter has revealed, first of all, that there were multiple, interrelated issues behind their reticence, including not only language related issues but also issues of culture, identity, curriculum (e.g., course content), and power. As mentioned earlier, previous research has examined L2 students’ silence in the classroom from various theoretical viewpoints such as psycholinguistic, cross-cultural, and critical perspectives. However, the preceding examples allow us to see that no single framework can adequately account for the silence of individual students or groups of students. For example, it would be too simplistic to assume that L2 students would start speaking once they have acquired a sufficient level of L2 proficiency. It would be equally simplistic to rely entirely on a cross-culture or gender perspective in
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<th>Student</th>
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<td>Course B, E, F, &amp; G</td>
<td>Course C &amp; H</td>
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<td>Reasons for silence or reticence (reported by students)</td>
<td>• personal tendency</td>
<td>• not fully following class discussions</td>
<td>• fear of making English mistakes in class (C)</td>
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<td>(items that are not specified with course names apply to all the listed courses)</td>
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<td>• limited oral English skills</td>
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<td>• cultural differences in interactional norms/values</td>
<td>• fear of being constructed as less competent/intelligent participant because of limited oral English</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identity as less competent member</td>
<td>• marginal status as NNES or “silent group” (F)</td>
<td>• role as “less capable student” imposed by instructor (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identity as temporary sojourner</td>
<td>• dominating NES doctoral students (F)</td>
<td>• instructor’s pedagogical/advising style (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• role as someone with limited English imposed by instructor (other)</td>
<td>• identity/role as only “non-white woman” (G)</td>
<td>• not being used to new styles of academic speaking (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• remaining peripheral and marginal status (reported by students; interpreted by researcher)</td>
<td>• covert resistance to imposed role (avoidance) (other)</td>
<td>• role as kohai, or junior member (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• selective socialization to target culture</td>
<td>• seeking support from instructor (E, F)</td>
<td>• seeking support from instructor (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• covert resistance to certain aspects of class interactions (non-participation) (D)</td>
<td>• remaining reticent (reticence being legitimized by instructor) (E)</td>
<td>• interacting with classmates individually (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• covert resistance to imposed role (avoidance) (other)</td>
<td>• covert resistance to marginal status (withdrawal from discussions) (F, G)</td>
<td>• mostly accepting peripheral/marginal status (H)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• playing culturally appropriate role of kohai (H)</td>
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Table 6.1: Reasons Behind Students’ Silence and Their Responses to Peripheral/Marginal Status
interpreting the reticence of, for instance, “female Japanese students.” The focal students’ L1 culture did influence their participation in different ways (e.g., Jun and Emiko), but it was certainly not the only reason why they tended to be quiet in the classroom. It was also found that the silence of a given student could have multiple meanings, interpretations, and consequences across different classroom contexts or over time. Given such complexity and variability, the issue of students’ silence in the classroom should be approached contextually and from multiple perspectives.

This chapter has also demonstrated that silence does not necessarily represent inaction or a lack of desire for participation on the part of reticent students. Rather, the students’ narratives show that while keeping quiet in the classroom, they could be engaged with many different cognitive, affective, and social activities. In addition to the mostly cognitive work of understanding discussions and interacting with ideas and materials, they were constantly interpreting the social, cultural, and academic world surrounding them and also negotiating their multiple roles and positions in that world. In this sense, their silence was a socially co-constructed phenomenon. What was particularly salient in the students’ accounts was their silent but profound struggle to (re)construct their identities within the classroom. An important finding of the study is that their subjectivity was not predetermined or limited to their institutional roles such as international student, NNES, first year master’s student and so on (see Thesen, 1997, for

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2 Goldstein, Schecter, and Pon (2002) discuss an interesting example of role negotiation that high school Chinese students in mainstream classes seemed to engage in. They tended to remain silent, because for them, speaking in the classroom could be a “lose-lose situation”: on the one hand, they were afraid of being ridiculed by their NES peers about their English, while on the other hand, they did not want their NNES peers to think that they were “showing off” their English abilities. At the same time, their silence was often interpreted by others as a lack of agency, intellectual deficit, passivity, or lack of engagement, and it was also considered a “burden” for teachers whose pedagogical agenda (e.g., encouraging critical work through active discussions) was disrupted by their silence.
a similar finding). Rather, their (inter)subjectivity was locally negotiated with other members of the classroom community as they participated in classroom activities. Through this on-going process, more subtle identities were constructed, foregrounded, or modified, even though these identities were not always displayed in the classroom. For example, Nanako's identities or roles in her courses included the following: the youngest member with less life and academic experiences than others, a cultural outsider with advantages and disadvantages, someone with less theoretical knowledge but academically as strong as others, a member of a “silent group,” the only “non-white” female student, and so on. Thus, contrary to their seemingly “passive” participation in class interactions, the students were actively engaged with the intricate work of identity negotiation. In addition, presumably, such identity work is not unique to L2 students. Emiko’s experience in Course H as a L1 speaker is a case in point. But perhaps, there can be a wider range of possible subject positions that L2 students from a different cultural and educational background may occupy in a given classroom context.

Although the students’ silence did not always mean inaction or cognitive disengagement on their part, it nevertheless often signified their relatively peripheral position in the classroom. Critical researchers have documented how L2 speakers or certain groups of individuals are marginalized or silenced in classrooms, institutions, or the wider society and how they are also capable of resisting such positioning (e.g., Canagarajah, 1993, 1999; Losey, 1997; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000; Rampton, 1995). In the present study, the students were indeed positioned in layered relations of power, and in some cases they perceived themselves being marginalized or silenced by seemingly more powerful members of their classroom community (see also Chapter 7).
However, in many other cases the students remained silent for various other reasons and sometimes by their own choice. For example, Jun chose not to participate in certain discussions in Course D that she felt were not very meaningful. Emiko’s silence in Course H was partly the enactment of her culturally appropriate social status as *kohai*. Nanako’s silence in Course E was recognized and respected as a legitimate way of participation by her instructor. Lisa considered her relative silence as a stage that she had to go through in becoming a more competent participant (see Chapter 5 and 7). As such, the students’ relative silence or peripherality did not always mean marginality (Wenger, 1998).

In short, an in-depth examination of the students’ voices has revealed the complexity, variability, and significance of their relative silence in the classroom, suggesting that any one-dimensional, decontextualized interpretation of silence is likely to fall short. Instead, we need to look at silence contextually as a socially constructed phenomenon, paying attention to not only linguistic and cognitive contexts but also sociocultural and interpersonal contexts of a given classroom as a community of practice (Duff, 2001, 2002a; Goldstein, Schecter, & Pon, 2002; Losey, 1997; Tannen & Saville-Troike, 1985). It is also crucial to examine students’ multiple positionalities, either real or perceived, in these contexts.

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3 In his discussion on participation and non-participation in communities of practice, Wenger (1998) makes a distinction between peripherality and marginality. Peripherality is a term that indicates that “some degree of non-participation is necessary to enable a kind of participation that is less than full” (p. 163)(see also Chapter 2), whereas marginality is a form of non-participation that prevents full participation.
Chapter 7

AGENCY, POSITIONALITY, AND TRANSFORMATION

7.0 Introduction

I have explored thus far the focal students' classroom experiences by focusing mainly on their difficulties and struggles participating in class interactions and gaining membership in their classroom communities. In this chapter, I shift my focus slightly to the processes by which three of the focal students, Lisa, Rie, and Shiho (a different set from those described in the previous chapter), exercised their personal agency within their classroom contexts and attempted to shape and construct the conditions and opportunities of their own learning (see Table 7.1 provided toward the end of the chapter for a summary). Although these three students are featured in this chapter, this is not to suggest that the other students (Jun, Nanako, Emiko) did not engage in such a process; in the previous chapters (5 & 6), I have already described to some extent how they interacted with their new learning environments as active human agents with unique personal histories, values, and desires. I am highlighting the experiences of the former here since they included telling examples and also represented quite distinctive cases, illustrating the diversity among the group.

My view of agency is based broadly on two theoretical perspectives discussed in Chapter 2, namely, neo-Vygotskyan approaches and critical discourse perspectives. The former emphasizes that agency arises out of individuals' engagement in and with the social world (Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993). Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) state that “agency is never a ‘property’ of a particular individual” but rather, “a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and
with the society at large” (p. 148) (see also Duranti, 1997). As I will show, the focal
students’ agency was enacted in various ways as they interacted with the sociocultural,
temporal, and institutional world surrounding them, in this case, the course participants in
particular. Drawing on Taylor (1985) and others (Gillette, 1994; Norton Peirce, 1995),
Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) also note that human agency is closely linked to
“significance” or what matters to people: individuals’ unique motives that are rooted in
their personal histories ultimately shape their engagement in a given activity. Similarly,
Donato (2000) argues that learner as “the active and purposeful agent” (p. 47) reinterprets
and transforms the world rather than merely conform to it. Thus, agency is understood as
“both unique to individuals and co-constructed” (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, critical approaches, particularly the models based on
what Canagarajah (1999) calls resistance theories, also foreground human agency but
with a slightly different emphasis. Within these models, individuals are accorded agency
to resist being positioned marginally in dominant discourses and even set up a counter
discourse that grants them a more powerful position (Canagarajah, 1993, 1999; McKay &
Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995). In contrast to a more deterministic view of power
and discourse, such a view highlights the possibility for change: human agents are
capable of transforming discourses that frame their lives, and fashioning alternative
subject positions in order to fulfill their goals and purposes (Burr, 1995). Without
resorting to a simplistic, overly optimistic idea that such changes can be achieved easily
without pain and struggles, this chapter describes how the focal students were
simultaneously subjected to and were subject of unequal relations of power.
7.1 “It’s not about the past, I can learn from now”: Lisa’s Agency and Transformations

I was told [by an instructor] that I don't have enough knowledge about language education. At that time I was so shocked. I just thought, oh my God. And I just couldn't believe what she was saying. But what she said was true.... I have to admit. But at the same time I came here to learn. I came here to gain knowledge.... It's not about the past. She said that I should have learned more before coming here. But I don't think that way. I really think that I can learn from now. (Lisa, Interview 3: 00/04/17) [original in English]

Lisa came to WCU with a determination to learn about language education and make contributions to the field. At the same time she faced many challenges in her courses and struggled throughout the first year of her studies. A major challenge for her was her difficulty of speaking in class, especially in whole-class discussions. As I have discussed in Chapter 5, this problem was a profound one for Lisa since she had a strong desire to contribute to class discussions as a competent and responsible member of her classroom communities. In this section, I discuss how Lisa attempted to deal with this challenge and how such attempts eventually led to her personal transformations.

In addition to her desire to participate more actively in class discussions, there were several other reasons why developing good oral English skills was an important goal for Lisa. First, she felt that speaking was the weakest area of her English language skills that often made her feel inadequate as an English teacher. Second, she believed that studying in an English-speaking country provided a precious opportunity for her to improve her spoken English. Third, she considered English speaking ability as a necessary skill in gaining entry to the international community of TESL professionals. Over the course of the academic year, Lisa employed various strategies to fulfill these goals and overcome her difficulties. Similar to Emiko’s case (Chapter 5), one of her
initial strategies seemed to be to speak in less face-threatening situations, such as small group discussions, to practice her speaking and also to compensate for her relative lack of contributions in whole-class discussions. A classroom activity that helped Lisa with this effort greatly was “dialogue groups” implemented in Course I: individual students led a group discussion based on the questions they had prepared about a given reading. Lisa found this activity particularly helpful because she could prepare beforehand what she was going to say and therefore felt more confident in entering the conversation. In addition, as someone who read the reading carefully and prepared questions for the discussion, she was granted some level of expertise and legitimacy to speak.¹

Lisa also tried to speak in whole-class discussions, although it remained quite difficult for her to do so throughout the academic year. An interesting phenomenon was that in some of her courses, her classmates soon learned about Lisa’s desire to speak and often created opportunities for her to speak in whole-class discussions (see also Chapter 5).² In Course I (a Term 2 course in which I observed Lisa every week for its entire duration), Lisa explicitly stated her desire to speak in class, which was part of her strategy of “putting [herself] into the situation where [she] had to speak.” When the students briefly introduced themselves in the first class, Lisa said, “In the first semester I couldn’t participate in class very much, and so in this semester I want to try to speak out

¹ There was another aspect of this activity that worked well for students like Lisa who tended to participate less actively in whole-class discussions: they could communicate their ideas and responses to the readings to the instructors, who received their questions on paper and provided written comments on them. This was advantageous for the instructors as well; one of them said, “Lisa’s questions were very thoughtful questions, and it was through the questions that I came to understand Lisa more” (Interview, 00/04/05).

² It seemed that Lisa’s classmates came to know about her desire to speak mostly through their interactions with and observations of Lisa. It was also possible that they encouraged her to speak in Course A partly because I was observing her. However, Lisa reported that her classmates “always pushed [her] to speak” in another course I did not observe. The fact that her classmates all had experience teaching ESL/EFL might also partly explain the scaffolding they provided.
more" (Field notes, 00/01/06). While Lisa was participating minimally in whole-class discussions in spite of this announcement, the instructors provided some assistance by occasionally asking her for input during discussions, which Lisa appreciated. Other strategies she used included: (1) noting useful expressions in academic papers and trying to use them in her speech, (2) preparing one or two questions or comments for each class and practicing them, and (3) taking a non-credit course designed for international teaching assistants.

Lisa’s effort to maximize her opportunities to speak English extended to her daily life outside the classroom. She was initially living with a Japanese roommate and a home-stay family, but in November moved to a campus residence for graduate students. As she had hoped, this move not only dramatically increased the amount of English she spoke but also provided her with access to academic and social networks of graduate students, including both Canadian and international students in various disciplines. She also tried to speak English with the Japanese people around her including her classmates, friends at the residence, and the researcher. This was not always an easy thing to do, but she was determined to improve her spoken English:

I know that sometimes [speaking in English] makes Japanese people feel awkward .... But I decided to do it because I came here to learn English. I don't want to lose the chance to learn English.... I know I make some people from Japan feel bad at the residence, but I already decided to speak English. (Lisa, Interview 2: 99/12/10) [original in English]

3 At this residence, students interacted with each other frequently through various social and academic functions and, according to Lisa and Nanako, seemed to share a strong sense of community. Both Lisa and Nanako enjoyed and benefited from being part of that community. In contrast, the focal students who lived off campus tended to have very limited access to such a community of peers and also seemed to use English much less frequently in their daily lives.
Thus, in order to achieve her goals, Lisa took some risks both inside and outside the classroom, while at the same time people around her accommodated her needs and efforts. Perhaps, one of the most significant risks Lisa took was to make a presentation at a graduate student conference held at her department in February. At this annual conference, graduate students in the department presented on a voluntary basis, while several faculty members provided feedback about their presentations. Although the conference provided a relatively non-threatening environment, it still took Lisa a great deal of courage to make a presentation there. She decided to present part of the master’s thesis she had written in Japan, and carefully prepared for and practiced her presentation. In my observation, her actual presentation seemed to be a great success: she looked calm, spoke clearly by using visual aids, and received interesting questions and comments from the audience (about 20 people). As she describes in the following excerpt, presenting at this conference was a particularly rewarding experience for Lisa:

First of all I am very glad to have a chance to share my study I did in Japan, and got very wonderful feedback from several people. Today’s presentation went, I think, very well. To tell the truth, I was not so nervous, because I felt that I am the person who did the research, and also I am the only person who can explain it. It is the first time that I felt confident after a presentation. (Normally I always lack self-confidence and feel inferior to classmates so much.) And I could see my improvement of English today. Of course everyday is challenging. Even though today was good, who knows about what will happen tomorrow? My feelings toward academic related things are very unstable…. But at least today, I am very proud of myself!! (Lisa, Email communication: 00/02/26) [original in English; italics mine]

Interestingly, her sense of having relative expertise and ownership helped her to feel confident as she presented. It is also notable that Lisa quickly adds a comment about her daily challenges and “unstable feelings.” The data indeed show that Lisa felt variously

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4 I attended a rehearsal session for her presentation and was asked to provide feedback.
toward her changing abilities, knowledge, or performances at various points in time, suggesting that her journey at WCU was not always a smooth, linear path of progress but included moments of disappointment and self-doubt as well as of triumph such as above.

Over the course of the academic year, Lisa reported a number of incidents where she received negative comments about her English or knowledge from people around her. In particular, comments by one of her instructors had a significant impact on Lisa and in effect impeded to some degree her ongoing effort to improve her class participation. One time, she consulted this instructor about her problem of not being able to speak in class, hoping to get some advice from her. However, according to Lisa, the instructor simply pointed out that she lacked an adequate level of knowledge about the subject matter. On another occasion, she was told by the instructor that her English might not be adequate to pursue further studies. As we can see in the excerpt provided at the very beginning of this section, Lisa’s reaction to these comments seemed to include a combination of accommodation and subtle forms of resistance. On the one hand, Lisa accepted to some extent the role of someone with limited knowledge and English that the instructor seemed to assign her; after the incident, Lisa avoided speaking in front of her for fear of making English mistakes or divulging her ignorance, while “[her] inferiority complex grew stronger.” At the same time, she rejected the idea that such limitations could prevent her from learning or improving; she said, “What she [i.e., the instructor] said is only half right. I believe that I can still study hard and increase my knowledge. That’s why I’m here” (WR: 00/02/03).

For example, a university office worker once said to Lisa, “You should speak proper English,” after Lisa asked a simple administrative question. On another occasion, when Lisa and her partner (a NES) for some pair work went to talk to their instructor, the instructor said to her partner that by working with Lisa, she could learn to listen to “English with an accent.”
As Lisa continued to be proactive about dealing with her challenges, she experienced some personal transformations, especially toward the end of the academic year. First of all, she gradually gained more confidence in participating in class discussions. By March, she was able to say something in whole-class discussions at least once every class. In addition, she became more tolerant of her perceived imperfect performance: “Even though my comment wasn’t very rich, I didn’t care at all. I just wanted to say my opinion” (WR: 00/02/17). The fact that her classmates understood her struggles and intentions also helped in this regard. But the most profound transformation for her was related to her changing ideas about what it means to be a nonnative speaker, or more specifically, a nonnative-speaking language teacher. She used to understand NNSs—herself included—largely in terms of their limitations as a speaker of a given language. However, as she struggled as a NNES and observed how other NNESs behaved and were treated, she began to see such a model as problematic. Instead of learning about “techniques and strategies to fix the language problems [of NNSs],” she became more interested in exploring values and ideologies behind labels such as NNS and different ways of conceptualizing NNSs. This was not just a change in her academic interest but also a profound transformation of her own subjectivity:

I found that my self-image got really really lowered after I came here ... especially as an English teacher because I felt I have lots of English problems. So I just wondered, do I have enough knowledge or competence as a language teacher? ... It took a long time to empower myself. Still I can’t say I’m confident.... But I don’t feel comfortable calling myself a nonnative speaker anymore. (Lisa, WR: 00/03/30) [original in English]

Lisa mentioned that what she learned in Course I also helped her to see the importance of questioning the conventional use of labels and exploring “theory behind practice.”
To summarize, as a human agent with a strong sense of goals and investment, Lisa dealt with her difficulties creatively and by making use of the surrounding environment including classroom activities, peers, instructors, and social networks outside the classroom. Her ongoing struggles, endeavors, and socialization eventually brought her a deep sense of personal change and a new way of understanding herself and the world around her.

7.2 “I have the right to learn”: Rie’s Positionalities and Resistance

I didn't think that the instructor would be able to make all the changes that I asked for. But I did feel that she should accommodate me to some extent in order to meet the needs of her students.... [In class] I said many times that I didn't understand what she was talking about. I think I have the right to say that because I have the right to learn. (Rie, Interview 2: 99/12/11)

In this section, I explore Rie’s experiences in two of her courses, Course J and the aforementioned Course F (Chapter 6; Nanako), which she was taking simultaneously in Term 1. Both were graduate seminars taught by two different female instructors in Rie’s department. They both dealt with current issues in education but with a different focus—Course J on multicultural education and Course F on educational policy. In spite of their apparent similarities, the two courses seemed to provide two very different contexts for Rie in terms of her positionality, and accordingly her class participation in and responses to them differed dramatically.7 In Course J, Rie was able to participate as a valued member of the classroom community and also fulfill some of her learning goals. In Course F, in contrast, she could participate only minimally and, as she mentions in the above excerpt, her marginality in the classroom did not change in spite of her resistance.

7 Since I did not observe her in either of these courses, the discussion in this section is based on Rie’s weekly reports and interviews. In regard to Course F, Nanako’s observations and perspectives also added to my interpretations.
There seemed to be a number of reasons why Rie was able to participate actively and meaningfully in Course J. First of all, she had a strong interest in the subject matter of the course and brought some “burning questions,” which were deeply rooted in her personal history (see Chapter 4). Interestingly, she often felt during classes that she could not afford to worry about her English and not ask her questions, for she came to Canada first and foremost to learn about the issues discussed in this course. Second, her personal experiences, knowledge, and unique perspectives as a Korean student educated in Japan seemed to have currency in the course. Although Rie was not always satisfied with talking about her personal experience (as opposed to discussing theoretical issues), the relevance of her experiences to the core issues of the course allowed her to have legitimacy and relative expertise to speak. Third, her contributions often received positive feedback from her peers and instructor. She was particularly encouraged when the instructor told her by email that her contributions during classes were very thoughtful and “added a great deal to the experience of the students” (the instructor’s words). Rie also felt that her classmates “respected [her] outsider perspectives,” while at the same time she benefited from their various viewpoints. Fourth, in consideration of international students, the instructor often provided background information about the local educational systems, which assisted Rie’s comprehension of and participation in class discussions. Finally, Rie believed that “good human relationships” that developed gradually between her and some of her classmates (both local and international students) also helped her to participate comfortably in class. In addition, these classmates became a resource for her outside the class since she could ask them about things which she wondered about in class (e.g., a joke someone made; English expressions). The
The following excerpt is from Rie's final weekly report on Course J in which she summarized her experience in the course:

... everything about the course—the content, instructor, and classmates—met my needs perfectly.... In the beginning I was concerned that my perspectives might be too foreign for the class, but people seemed to listen to me with respect and gave me positive feedback.... I sometimes had a problem understanding others and couldn't always express myself a hundred percent, either. But the biggest difference between this course and the other courses I took this term is that I could feel my own presence in this course. (Rie, WR: 99/12/01) [italics mine]

The last sentence is significant because it reveals how central her (inter)subjectivity was to her experience in the course.

Rie's experience in Course F was in sharp contrast with that in Course J. Like Nanako who also took Course F (Chapter 6), Rie felt alienated by not only the course materials but also class discussions. In spite of her strong interest in the subject matter, the readings, class discussions, and videos shown in class included topics, theories, and discourses that were mostly foreign to Rie. In a weekly report she listed her feelings she had as follows:

(1) Frustration with my own ignorance about technical knowledge related to the course; (2) feelings of irritation about the fact that there aren't enough resources available for me to study sociology in Japanese; (3) self-doubt about my intelligence: I may be stupid because there are so many things I don't understand (Rie, WR: 99/09/27)

While recognizing her own limitations, Rie did not simply endure the fact that she was not following class discussions. Whereas Nanako dealt with a similar problem mostly with silence during classes, Rie often expressed her needs as a L2 speaker vocally:

I tried to make others, especially instructor, notice that I do not follow the class. I asked them to speak slowly and clearly more than 3 times during the class. (Rie, WR: 99/10/04) [original in English]
In spite of her persistent requests such as those above, Rie continued to find it difficult to participate in discussions, while the NES doctoral students in the class and instructor dominated the discussions. Her sense of alienation seemed to grow stronger as the term progressed:

Today I felt the most isolated ever in this class. In a small group discussion, I happened to be in a Ph.D. student group and the discussion went very fast. In the beginning, I was brave enough to ask what they were talking about, but because they continued talking without even looking at me, I gave up participating in the discussion. And then, the instructor said to me something like, “Can you prepare the snack before ten to seven while we keep discussing?” as if I wasn’t part of the class. I was shocked. I didn’t learn even a single word today, let alone be able to speak up! (Rie, WR: 99/10/18)

Hoping to change this situation, she appealed for help to the instructor by sending her a rather lengthy email message. In the message, she did not simply describe her problems and ask the instructor for advice. She also explained that the situation was not improving in spite of all her efforts and asked the instructor to make certain adjustments in her teaching. Furthermore, as we can see in the following excerpt, her message conveyed a sense of resistance:

... In spite of the development of the media, I, from the opposite half of the earth, am not so familiar with such western issues [as the ones discussed in class]. If you give us ... explanation of some key words or phrase a week before we read and discuss about it, I can more easily understand the material and may have chances to contribute the next class. You often ask the class if we follow you or not, I have noticed that you do not want to let someone leave “voiceless” in your class. So please allow me to send you such a long, bothersome mail. I wanted you to understand my situation well. (Rie, Email communication: 99/10/07)

[original in English; italics mine]

What seems significant about the message is that Rie uses or “crafts” (Kondo, 1990) her identities (see italics) in justifying her requests and also counteracting her relatively powerless positioning. Her use of the term “voiceless” is interesting because she drew it
from the instructor who, somewhat ironically, emphasized that notion in the course in connection with educational equity.

The instructor’s response (another email message) was not what Rie had expected. She wrote that she felt she had made most of the adjustments Rie had requested and that the issue was a “language barrier.” She also mentioned the difficulty of adjusting the course content for a “non-English speaker” and that she could not do much more “without slowing down the rest of class.” Her suggestion for Rie was to get help from other students outside the class (e.g., borrowing their notes). What disappointed Rie the most was the fact that the instructor considered the problem essentially as a language barrier, which Rie did not believe. She said, “If it was just a language barrier, I couldn’t have enjoyed my other classes, either” (Interview 2: 99/12/11). A fundamental gap here seems to be that whereas the instructor appeared to construct the issue ultimately as Rie’s personal problem, Rie felt that the instructor was partly responsible for the difficulties she was experiencing and should accommodate her needs to some degree. This incident raises many questions regarding complex issues of power, participation, and pedagogy and I will come back to these issues later.

Despite her efforts described above, Rie’s marginal status in the course did not change, while she continued to have problems digesting the course materials and following class discussions. What did change, however, were her learning goals and strategies in the course. Instead of trying to meet the instructor’s expectations and gain fuller membership in the classroom, she decided to place her own academic interests at the center of her learning efforts and be selective about what she paid attention to. It was a form of non-participation (Wenger, 1998), but was nevertheless a way of coping and
exercising her personal agency. At the end of the term, Rie sent me an essay-like self-report in which she summarized her experience in Course F, describing the transformation of her class participation in three different stages. As we can see in the following excerpt, the essay provided a thoughtful self-analysis, demonstrating her conscious effort to take control over her own class life throughout:

(1) Stage of hope: ... I hoped to learn a lot from this course because I had special interest in the policy issues.... I realized right away that it wasn't an easy course, but I did everything I could to learn from it.... I was still trying to say something in class, at least a question if not an opinion. Even asking someone to speak slowly was a precious opportunity for me to participate.

(2) Stage of despair: After receiving the response from the instructor, I even stopped asking people to speak slowly in class. I lost motivation to speak up.... I didn’t want to be in the classroom, which had never happened to me before. My body was there, but my mind wasn’t....

(3) Stage of realization: ... I used to try to understand things just as the instructor expected us to, but I gave up on doing so. Instead, I began concentrating on what I needed for my own research. This made it even more difficult for me to participate in discussions because it created a fairly big gap between what was going on in class and what was going on in my head.... Although my participation didn’t change from the outside, I started to participate in my own way.... It was unfortunate that my presence was not respected, but I nevertheless learned various lessons in this course. (Rie, WR: 99/11/30)

To summarize, Rie’s class participation in the two courses reflected two very different positionalities she occupied in them. In spite of her various attempts to reposition herself in Course F, her marginal status did not seem to change. Nevertheless, she coped with the situation by modifying her approach to the course.

7.3 “A newcomer has a role to play”: Shiho’s Positionality and Strategies

In Japan, people would be conscious of the senpai-kohai dynamics. But in Canada, we are simply colleagues working in the same field.... I think that a newcomer has a role to play especially in an academic context. If an academic community doesn’t get new members, it can get stuck.... A brand-new member can bring interesting ideas and fresh perspectives. In that sense, I think I can contribute something to the class even though my contributions may not seem
very meaningful to others.... Newcomers can also remind old-timers of something that they might have forgotten. (Shiho, Interview 3: 00/04/26)

Belcher and Braine (1995a) note that (intellectual) novelty is “at the heart of academic discourse” (p. xxi), although at the same time “innovative students run the risk of being judged as ignorant or incompetent outsiders” (p. xviii). Wenger (1998) also makes a similar point when he discusses “generational encounters” in a community of practice. The above excerpt seems to illustrate Shiho’s appreciation of such ideas; what is particularly notable is that her identity as a newcomer included the role of introducing new perspectives to an academic community. Shiho was the only one among the focal students who explicitly mentioned such a positive role a novice could play. In what follows, I describe how Shiho participated in aforementioned Course H (Chapter 6, Emiko) as a relative newcomer. As I will show, her understanding of the newcomer’s role as well as previous experiences of crossing cultural and community borders allowed her to use a variety of strategies to participate actively and meaningfully in the course.

As mentioned earlier, Shiho and Emiko participated in Course H, a graduate seminar on Japanese linguistics, as relative newcomers to not only the classroom community but also the field of study. Whereas Emiko tended to be withdrawn from class discussions, Shiho reported that she made contributions equal to those of the more experienced members. This difference cannot be attributed to different levels of linguistic competence because the instruction was in their L1. They were both new to graduate school and had a similar level of experience in terms of the subject matter. What did seem very different was their perceived roles: whereas Emiko felt that she was constituted as the least competent, junior member who had little to offer to the class, Shiho, as evident in the above excerpt, considered herself as a less experienced, but
equally legitimate member who potentially had an important role to play. This difference was manifested, for example, in their differing participation in the classroom activity in which students critiqued each other’s presentations. Whereas Emiko felt that it was not socially appropriate for her to evaluate more experienced members’ presentations and tended to be silent, Shiho actively provided comments, believing that even more knowledgeable members could benefit from her newcomer perspectives.

Shiho also employed a variety of strategies to participate in discussions. One was to be explicitly aware of the norms and expectations regarding class participation and interaction and behave accordingly. She explains:

I act according to different expectations in different classes. In Course C, for example, you can almost say whatever you want and so I speak spontaneously without worrying. In Course H, on the other hand, you can’t say stupid things. So I am more careful about what I say. People around me are more experienced academically and I take that into account as well. I try to judge what I am or am not allowed to say. It’s not really an academic skill but a kind of social skill.

(Shiho, Interview 2:99/12/03)

Shiho believed that she had developed this skill or her sensitivity to what was expected of her in a given academic context through her experience of frequently moving to a new country, culture, or school (Chapter 4). She was “experienced in being an outsider in a new learning environment” and had learned to “adapt to new rules and expectations without changing [herself] too much” (Interview 2: 99/12/03). What is interesting here is that Shiho was indeed an “experienced newcomer,” who came equipped with some coping strategies and skills to adjust to a new classroom culture. One such strategy could be to maintain a sense of self that remains relatively stable in spite of the changing environment; she said, “Some people change themselves drastically in order to adapt, but
I don’t” (Interview 2: 99/12/03). Her family socialization that emphasized the importance of keeping her linguistic and cultural identity as a Japanese person (see Chapter 4) perhaps allowed her to take such an approach to some extent.

Shiho’s understanding of the expectations regarding class participation in Course H included two major elements. One was that the students should contribute to discussions actively rather than wait passively to be called upon; indeed, oral performance consisting of “active participation” and presentations made up 45% of the total mark. Shiho was well aware of this aspect of the course and acted accordingly: she said, “I have to participate, otherwise I won’t get a mark for participation.” Second, the students’ contributions should be based on sound theoretical knowledge of the field; Shiho reported that the instructor expected the students to come to class prepared, having read not just the assigned textbook chapters but also all the references listed at the end of each chapter. This second set of expectations was not entirely easy for Shiho to meet since she did feel that her theoretical knowledge was relatively limited. However, contrary to Emiko who found it extremely challenging to speak from a similar position of relative ignorance, Shiho was not afraid to take a risk and speak in class:

... when I’m surrounded by people who are better than me, I try to catch up with them. So for example I tried to find an opportunity to say something even though I felt that most of my classmates were more knowledgeable than I was.... I sometimes spoke as if I knew things, although the instructor could probably tell that I didn’t really understand what I was saying. ((laughs)) ... Also I would say something, see how others respond, and then adjust what I say next. I’m brave enough to do those kinds of things. (Shiho, Interview 3: 00/04/26)

There were a couple of interesting interactional strategies that Shiho consciously used to interject her comments during discussions. One was to speak as soon as an idea...
occurred to her without worrying too much about its meaningfulness. She felt that if she hesitated and waited for too long, she was likely to miss the opportunity to express her idea. Another strategy was to say something right after a new topic was introduced:

For example, when the instructor asks a question and while everyone is still thinking, I try to say something right away. And quite often, my comment leads to a more extensive discussion. (Shiho, Interview 2: 99/12/03)

Shiho used this strategy especially when she felt that she was not very knowledgeable about a given topic that was introduced; once everyone started speaking and the discussion became more technical or theoretical, she might have less opportunities to contribute.

In summary, in Course H, Shiho participated actively in discussions as a relative newcomer. She was able to do so partly because she recognized the positive role a novice could play in a given academic community. In addition, she had experience being a relative newcomer in various cultural and academic communities and brought a variety of strategies to participate from such a position.

7.4 Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have examined how Lisa, Rie, and Shiho attempted to take ownership of their learning and class participation by exercising their personal agency and negotiating their positionalities in the classroom. These findings are summarized in Table 7.1. The three cases described above supports the neo-Vygotskian view of agency that it is simultaneously unique to individuals and socially co-constructed. Bakhtin's (1988) notion of voice or speaking consciousness also captures the sense of the individual in context (Rudduck, 1993; Thesen, 1997; Walsh, 1987). On the one hand, the students' immigrants to a U.S. school and community (see also Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>LISA</th>
<th>RIE</th>
<th>SHIHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses</td>
<td>Course A, I, &amp; other</td>
<td>Course F &amp; J</td>
<td>Course C &amp; H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Positionality**  
(real or perceived by students; sometimes observed by researcher)  
(items that are not specified with course names apply to all the listed courses) | • relatively peripheral status because of minimal participation  
• role as someone with limited knowledge and limited English, imposed by instructor (other) | • competent, valued member; active participant (J)  
• marginal status as member of “silent group” (F) | • competent, valued member; active participant (C)  
• status as relative newcomer /less experienced participant (H) |
| **Agency; attempts to deal with positionality** | • using various strategies to improve oral skills and participation, inside and outside the classroom  
• covert resistance to imposed role (e.g., believing in her ability to improve) | • active resistance to marginal status (e.g., expressing her needs as L2 speaker in class; negotiating roles/statuses and power relations with instructor) (F)  
• modifying learning goals/approach (F) | • foregrounding positive role of newcomer (H)  
• being explicitly aware of instructor’s expectations  
• using interactional strategies to interject comments (H) |
| **Transformation** | • increasing participation (gradual change)  
• increasing tolerance of her own limited performances | • marginal status did not change (F)  
• “hope → despair → realization” (F) | • no reported transformation |

Table 7.1: Students’ Positionality, Agency, and Transformation
voices were deeply rooted in their unique personal histories, experiences, goals, and investments. On the other hand, their voices emerged through their interactions with the surrounding world, including the discourses, curricular aspects, and interpersonal relationships of their classrooms that are embedded in broader institutional and societal forces. In Lisa’s case, for instance, her efforts to participate competently in discussions were sustained by her strong desire to contribute and gain access to the research community in her field. At the same time, her actions were also supported by people around her in activity settings: in other words, certain aspects of her classroom contexts (e.g., supportive classmates; activities such as dialogue groups) allowed her to exercise her personal agency in the way she did. Shiho’s understanding of her role as a relative newcomer and her actions based on it were also co-constructed by her personal values and the particular social and curricular arrangements of Course H.

We have also seen that the students’ positionalities were co-constructed by the individual student and a given classroom context. The students’ experiences discussed in this chapter (as well as Chapter 5 and 6) have revealed this dynamic co-construction in several ways. First, the same student could experience different kinds of positions or roles across different classroom contexts. Rie’s case discussed in this chapter was a telling example in this respect. What was interesting is that the two courses in which Rie occupied very different positionalities apparently shared many similarities. And yet, there were enough contextual particularities (e.g., pedagogical arrangements, interpersonal relations, curricular demands) that allowed Rie to have such contrasting classroom experiences. Second, the positionality of the same student, perceived or real, could change over time as the student became socialized into the classroom culture and
tried to reposition herself. Lisa’s personal transformations described above are a case in point: she gradually gained fuller membership in her courses and as a result, her perceived role as a NNES was modified. However, there were also cases where a student’s outsider status remained the same throughout a course for different reasons (e.g., Nanako and Rie in Course F). Third, students with a similar institutional or social status could construct different roles and participate differently within the same classroom context. While Shiho and Emiko had a similar status as a novice member in Course H, they interpreted their role differently and behaved differently. In this particular case, such differences seemed to mainly come from their differing personal histories including earlier socialization experiences and educational backgrounds. Figure 7.1 illustrates the dynamic co-construction of agency and that of positionality with some examples from this study.

The preceding discussion has also illustrated that the co-construction of agency and positionality is not always a peaceful, collaborative process, but often a struggle involving a web of power relations and competing agendas. Rie’s experience in Course F provides a compelling example. When Rie found herself in a marginal position, she attempted to reposition herself by using different coping strategies. Interestingly, one of her strategies was to confront the instructor, who she felt contributed to her marginality but at the same time had power to change such positioning. The negotiation between Rie and the instructor via email was not simply about how to deal with the problem, but also about the nature of the problem (i.e., whose problem it was) and each other’s roles and statuses. On the one hand, Rie seemed to project herself as a legitimate, but marginalized participant, while constituting the instructor’s role as someone accountable to Rie’s “right
Figure 7.1: Co-construction of Agency/Positionality in the Classroom
to learn.” On the other hand, the instructor seemed to reify Rie essentially as someone with a deficit, while stressing her institutional responsibility of meeting the needs of “the rest of the class.” Being faced with this fundamental gap, Rie ended up changing her approach to her participation in the course. Lisa also struggled to resist an identity imposed upon her by an instructor, although she demonstrated less confrontational forms of resistance (e.g., avoiding the instructor) than Rie did. Thus, as recent case studies have demonstrated (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Harklau, 2000; McKay & Wong, 1996; Thesen, 1997), students are subjected to relations of power, but at the same time they can actively participate in the construction and reconstruction of power relations. In addition, students can bring to the classroom resources and strategies that they have accumulated and developed in their lives (Leki, 1995). For instance, Rie’s sensitivity and resistance to inequality partly came from her personal history of constantly questioning and resisting her minority status in Japanese schools.

The students’ experiences also tell us that power negotiation in an increasingly multicultural and multilingual classroom can be complex and unsettling. For example, the situation Rie faced in Course F raises many questions: Who should accommodate whom and to what extent?; Is it simply the student’s responsibility to deal with her language limitations and lack of certain cultural knowledge?; If instructors make pedagogical adjustments to meet the needs of international/NNES students, does it always have to be at the expense of local/NES students?; Are instructors provided enough resources to meet the needs of different groups of students? In some courses in which the focal students participated, international students were in fact the majority in number. What kinds of power relations would be formed in such a context? I will explore some of
these questions in the next chapter where I provide implications and suggestions for pedagogy and research. But for now, to summarize, a key to tackling these issues seems to be a view of power that is dynamic and contextual rather than deterministic and monolithic. As we have seen, particular power relations emerged in a given classroom context, and the focal students were positioned variously over time and across different classroom contexts.
Chapter 8

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, PEDAGOGY, AND RESEARCH

8.1 L2 Academic Discourse Socialization: Revisiting Theoretical Debates

In this study, I have explored the academic discourse socialization experiences of NNES graduate students by closely examining their changing thoughts and feelings about classroom practices. This section provides theoretical implications of the study by revisiting some of the theoretical debates and issues surrounding (L2) academic discourse socialization discussed in Chapter 2.

8.1.1 Discourse Socialization as Co-constructed and Negotiated

As discussed earlier, an intriguing debate within discourse community perspectives is whether discourse socialization should be viewed largely as a predictable one-way assimilation or a more complex negotiation. Obviously, this study suggests that it is a complex, dynamic process of co-construction and negotiation, supporting the findings of other recent qualitative studies (e.g., Casanave, 1995; Duff, 2001, 2002a; Morita, 2000; Prior, 1998; Spack, 1997a). As we have seen, a major challenge faced by the focal students was negotiating competence, identities, and power relations, in addition to dealing with issues of language and cultural adjustments. By participating in classroom practices, the students were not simply acquiring a new set of academic skills and knowledge but also (re)constructing the sense of who they were in a new community. An interesting finding of the study is that the students were actively engaged in such negotiation even when they appeared relatively passive or silent in the classroom. In many cases, the creative, but often painful process of identity construction and transformation remained largely invisible to others in the classroom (Wenger, 1998)
Nevertheless, the voices of the focal students indicated that identity negotiation can be central to learners' classroom experiences and can impact their class participation to a significant degree. This study therefore suggests the limitation of treating silence simply as a lack of speech or action, and instead points to the need to explore its significance, complexity, and situated nature as well as its multiple meanings and interpretations (Duff, 2002a; Goldstein, Schecter, & Pon, 2002). Furthermore, in classrooms increasingly characterized by diverse student populations, role negotiation often generates tensions and uncertainties. For example, ambiguities and resulting conflicts were observed around the role of instructor or academic advisor in dealing with the "special" needs of L2 international students. This in turn provides an insight into language socialization or apprenticeship models that tend to assume that newcomers are provided assistance by "experts": such assistance was not always readily available to the focal students.

This study also lends support to a view of an academic community that is imagined not as a coherent, static entity with an easily recognizable center, but as dynamic and ever-changing practices involving competing discourses, interests, and demands. A given academic community can also contain individuals operating within multiple discourse communities. For example, the students' experiences across the curriculum in this study have revealed that there were many different expectations and assumptions regarding classroom communication even within the same discipline or department. Such multiplicity is manifested, for instance, in the wide variety of assessment practices for participation employed in the students' courses; the mark for oral participation (sometimes including a mark for presentations) could range anywhere
between 0 to 45% of the total mark (most commonly 10-15%), and the assessment could be done by instructor, student (self-assessment), or both parties (negotiated assessment). More importantly, the instructors as well as the students in the study brought diverse personal and cultural views about what it means to participate meaningfully in the classroom. For instance, to some, cognitive engagement without verbal participation was a legitimate form of participation, whereas others considered verbal contribution as crucial not only for individuals’ learning but also for the classroom community as a whole. While some saw participation as a way of exchanging ideas and co-constructing new knowledge, others saw it primarily as a way of demonstrating one’s knowledge and constructing oneself as a “knower.” Furthermore, what was considered to be competent participation could differ across different classroom communities (see Chapter 5). The multiplicity of academic communities also provides an implication for discourse socialization models which tend to assume a relatively stable set of norms in a given discourse community; if the norms and values of a target community are diverse and sometimes even contradictory, socialization into that community inevitably involves tensions and contradictions (Duff, 2002a; Prior, 1998; Zamel, 1997).

8.1.2 Participation, Power, and Personal Agency

As critical researchers would argue, power negotiation was an important part of the focal students’ classroom experiences. An ongoing theoretical debate within critical research is, simply put, whether power works deterministically and reproductively or in a more dialogic fashion. This study suggests that power relations formed within a given classroom community do not simply reflect the institutionally defined power hierarchy that is predictable and static. Rather, complex layers of power relations can be
constructed and reconstructed among participants with different social roles, institutional statuses, expertise, experiences, and agendas. For instance, tensions can arise not just between different institutional statuses (e.g., students vs. instructors; doctoral vs. master's degree students) but also among peers with different roles or experiences (e.g., NSs vs. NNSs; highly verbal NNSs vs. less verbal NNSs; senior vs. junior Japanese students; “white” vs. “non-white” female students). In this sense, the focal students were not simply subjects of stable hierarchical power structures but active participants in the locally situated, often delicate negotiation of power. The same students therefore could occupy different positionalities across different classrooms (and also over time), and participate in different ways.

At the same time, however, there were also cases where institutionally more powerful members (e.g., instructors, NES doctoral students) seemed to impose certain identities or roles upon the focal students. In some of these cases, it appeared that the students could not “shake off” the imposed role, no matter how persistently they resisted it. Rie’s case in Course F was the most extreme example (Chapter 7). As I have mentioned, Lisa, Jun, Nanako, and Emiko also came across instructors (and others) who tended to define them monolithically and deterministically in terms of their limitations, which in effect restricted their class participation to some degree. At the same time, there were also cases where instructors assisted the focal students in taking on a more positive or empowered role than the one initially assumed by the students themselves (e.g., Nanako’s case in Course E, Chapter 6; Rie’s case in Course J, Chapter 7). This tells us, on the one hand, about the powerful role that “experts” or in this case instructors can play in learners’ socialization, and on the other hand, about the limitations of learner agency.
The focal students' varying responses to their marginality or peripherality provide another theoretical implication. Whereas many theoretical accounts tend to provide two mutually exclusive options, accommodation or resistance, this study suggests that learners' responses can be more complex, ambivalent, or subtle, and may change at different points in time. For example, Lisa seemed to deal with the subject position imposed upon her by her instructor with a combination of accommodation and resistance (Chapter 7). Nanako's withdrawal from Course G was not just a form of apparent accommodation to her outsider status, but simultaneously a covert form of resistance to what she perceived as classroom practices that privileged "white women." Even Rie, who demonstrated a relatively overt form of resistance in Course F, initially had a strong desire to meet the instructor's expectations and "absorb knowledge exactly as it was presented in the course" (Chapter 7). In Course H, Emiko appeared to be accommodating the role of a "less able student" that her instructor/advisor seemed to ascribe to her (Chapter 6). However, her resistance to that role and to the instructor surfaced after the academic year when she decided to change her advisor; she said that she needed an advisor who respected her and her work. Thus, there may be layers of meanings and intentions behind students' actions or apparent lack of actions.

8.1.3 Reconstructing Cultures and Identities in the Classroom

This study suggests that dynamic, rather than monolithic and static notions of culture and identity are called for in order to explain the complex and generative process of L2 discourse socialization. There are several ways by which the study has revealed the complexity around the issue of culture. First of all, although the focal students (as well as the researcher) did share some L1 cultural values (e.g., considering others' needs when
speaking; avoiding interrupting others), the expectations about classroom communication that they brought also varied considerably, depending on their previous educational experiences. In other words, their "L1 culture" was by no means monolithic. For instance, whereas Lisa and Rie who had studied at the graduate level in Japan expected that critical analysis be the basis for class discussions (whether in Japan or in Canada), others who were new to graduate school did not necessarily bring such expectations. Shiho brought different sets of values and repertoires of skills that she had appropriated in various cultural and educational contexts in the past. Second, the target culture for the students (e.g., "Canadian/North American classroom culture"; disciplinary cultures) was also multiple and evolving. Accordingly, the individual students' views about or constructions of the target culture also varied, depending on the particular disciplinary or classroom contexts to which they belonged. In some cases, international students were the overwhelming majority of the class, in which case the target was not simply the "traditional Canadian classroom culture." One of the strengths of multiple case studies such as this is to reveal this kind of variability behind conventional cultural labels such as "(female) Japanese students," "(reticent) Asian students," and the "Canadian classroom culture" (see Schecter & Bayley, 1997; Elbow, 1999, for a discussion on intra-cultural variation).

Third, contrary to the assumption of many studies in contrastive rhetoric or cross-cultural communication (see Chapter 2), the focal students did not always behave according to their L1 cultural norms when confronted with a new set of cultural norms. They were well aware that in order to participate competently in their new academic contexts, they needed to adjust to what they saw as the local cultural norms. And in
many cases, they did gradually become socialized into the new classroom culture by appropriating new ways of speaking, interacting, and participating (e.g., Lisa, Chapter 5 & 7; Emiko, Chapter 5). Fourth, at the same time, the students were also selective about their cultural adjustments: they accepted some aspects of the new culture but rejected others. In addition, whereas many socialization models tend to assume that the goal of newcomers is to gain fuller membership, the focal students did not always seek such membership for various reasons (e.g., Jun, Chapter 5; Nanako in Course G, Chapter 6; Emiko in Course H, Chapter 6). Fifth, cultural adjustments could also be a creative process; for example, Rie’s understanding of the new classroom discourses that she encountered in her courses evolved over time, as she generated and tested different hypotheses about them (Chapter 5). As Zamel (1997) argues, linguistic and cultural adaptation therefore needs to be seen as a generative and transformative process.

Students do not simply leave one culture and enter another, but may position themselves in what Homi Bhabha (1990) calls “the third space” which “enables other positions to emerge” (p. 211) (see also Kramsch, 1993).

Identity has been a major recurrent theme in this study since, as we have seen, participation and identity are closely interconnected and mutually constitutive (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). While identity has been framed variously in the L2 literature (Norton, 1997a), I have conceptualized it primarily as being constantly negotiated within a given community. I have also used notions such as membership, role, status, and positionality interchangeably to signify its situated nature and fluidity. This concept of identity has been helpful in this study since it revealed rather than concealed the multiple and changing roles—not just cultural and linguistic minorities—L2 students
could play in increasingly diverse academic communities. As discussed in Chapter 6, the identities that the focal students constructed in their courses extended beyond socially or institutionally defined roles and conventional labels, and included a variety of subject positions that were locally co-constructed by the individual students and their classroom contexts. In addition, such situated identities could also interact with the students’ past identities (e.g., roles they had played in their previous academic contexts) as well as future identities in their target or “imagined” communities (e.g., professional communities in which they hoped to participate in the future) (Norton, 2001). Again, this is an important finding, given that L2 students may be characterized monolithically as linguistic or cultural minorities by some instructors and also within the applied linguistic literature. The notion of situated identity also allows us to treat L2 students as active human agents who, successfully or unsuccessfully, attempt to (re)position themselves in a new community in order to fulfill their goals and desires (Chapter 7). As Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) note, a linguistic cross-over itself is an “intentional renegotiation of one’s multiple identities, which are reconstructed in communications with members of another discourse” (p. 172).

In relation to identity issues, this study also provides implications for research on gender and language learning. First, the findings suggest the importance of analyzing women’s (or men’s) interactional or language learning behavior as embedded in the local context of the community and its practices in which women participate (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1998; Ehrlich, 1997). As we have seen, the focal women participated in different courses in a variety of ways, depending on the specific social, curricular, and interpersonal arrangements of a given course. It is therefore unproductive
to treat their participation apart from actual classroom contexts and draw generalizations. Instead, we need to examine how gender is constructed within the activities of a particular community (Ochs, 1992, 1993). This dynamic notion of gender is illustrated, for example, in Nanako’s experiences across different courses (Chapter 6); her identity as a woman was foregrounded only in Course G where gender-related issues were discussed as the main topic of inquiry and where the participants were all female.¹

Second, the findings demonstrate how gender may interact with other aspects of identity and how it is therefore often difficult, if not impossible, to determine the extent to which gender impacts classroom interaction, participation, or learning. Again, Nanako’s experience in Course G was particularly illustrative in this respect, since her silence in the course was related to many different issues including ethnicity, culture, age, language, course content/orientation, and her personal history and interest, as well as gender. Freeman and McElhinny (1996) similarly argue:

Given the difficulty of drawing generalizations about the relationship between linguistic practices and gender within relatively homogeneous communities, let alone across heterogeneous communities, it is equally difficult to generalize about the linguistic behavior of men and women, boys and girls within heterogeneous second language classrooms where factors such as race, ethnicity, and culture are likely to interact in significant ways with gender.² (p. 437)

¹ As discussed in Chapter 6, this case was particularly ironic because Nanako felt marginalized in an environment where the very issue of gender-related inequalities was addressed. Another telling example comes from data pertaining to the male participant who was excluded from this dissertation (see Chapter 3). One of his instructors (female) felt that some international male students sometimes lacked a certain level of respect for female teachers. She also felt that this posed a serious problem for her in the particular course this male student was taking. At the same time, the male student felt that the instructor tended to impose her feminist perspectives upon her students, which he saw as a limitation to her teaching as well as to her research approach to the issues examined in the course. He also attempted to resist this imposition by taking a different theoretical approach (that he believed was useful) in some of his assignments. These cases show how gendered roles and identities can be produced and negotiated in complex ways in graduate courses, involving participants from different ethnic, cultural, or educational backgrounds, and/or course content that includes gender-related issues or perspectives.

² Another interesting point they raise is that researchers need to question two commonly held assumptions about how gender should be best studied: (1) that gender is always relevant, and (2) that gender is best studied when it is maximally contrastive. These assumptions, they argue, tend to result in
Thus, a context-sensitive, grounded theory approach seems important in examining complex relations among L2 learning, learners' participation in L2 practices, and their (gendered) role or identity.

Finally, this multiple case study has also illustrated that there is considerable variation among Asian or Japanese women in the way they participate in and respond to classroom practices. Moreover, a commonly held stereotype that Asians in general, and Asian women in particular, tend to be quiet, passive, timid, or indirect, did not always apply to the focal women (see Cheng, 2000; Kwan, 2000; Spees, 1994; Takano, 2000, for a similar discussion). In fact, as documented in this dissertation, the focal women were often very creative, proactive, and critical about dealing with the challenges they faced in the classroom. Even though many of them tended to be reticent in their courses for various reasons, they nevertheless analyzed the cultural norms of class interactions, employed a variety of strategies, sought support from people around them, and sometimes actively resisted their marginal position in more or less overt ways. This finding suggests, on the one hand, that researchers and educators should always be aware that women, Asian women, or Japanese women are not static, homogeneous categories. On the other hand, it points to the value of research that looks closely into individual learners' actions, intentions, and perspectives, as well as the contexts in which they participate.

_overgeneralizations or oversimplifications about gender issues. In a similar vein, Ehrlich (1997) notes that the binary category of gender “can be a powerful ‘lens’ (Bem, 1993)” that may impose gender upon individuals and conceal “great heterogeneity among women and among men” (p. 438)._
8.2 Rethinking Socialization, Participation, and Classroom Practices: Pedagogical Implications and Issues

By taking an ethnographic approach, this multiple case study has revealed the variability and complexity involved in L2 learners’ classroom participation and discourse socialization. I have therefore stressed the importance of attending to differing individual needs and backgrounds as well as specific local contexts of a given classroom or academic community. Nevertheless, general pedagogical implications and suggestions can be drawn from this study regarding how to foster the participation of students with various needs and how to promote equity in the classroom in terms of the opportunity for participation and for access to the curriculum. The following discussion is not meant to be prescriptive, but summarizes the pedagogical insights I have gained through this study as well as recommendations made by the students and instructors in this study. It also addresses some of the tensions, dilemmas, and difficult issues that faculty members or students may need to grapple with not only on a personal level but also institutional levels.

8.2.1 Suggestions for Educators and Educational Institutions

This section provides suggestions for educators on two different levels, a conceptual and a practical level. First, on a conceptual level, I suggest that educators (e.g., professors, course instructors) and educational institutions can rethink their notions of participation and socialization and also critically reflect on their assumptions about the roles of different participants (e.g., international/L2 students, domestic/L1 students, instructors). I then offer more practical suggestions and hints for classroom practices.
On a conceptual level, first of all, it seems important for instructors to recognize the socially constructed nature of classroom interaction and participation. Rather than assuming that individual students simply behave according to their abilities or preferences, instructors should question what kinds of roles and statuses are being constructed in the classroom and how those roles are shaping or being shaped by class interactions. It is also helpful to critically examine how the representations of different participants such as NNES, international student, and Asian student are constructing discursive classroom practices (Harklau, 2000; Kubota, 2001; Toohey, 2000). This, however, may be more difficult than it seems, because, as Harklau (2000) points out, "[d]iscourses ... direct and limit what may be seen as normal, commonsense, or appropriate (Fairclough, 1995)" (p. 40) (see also Hall, 1990). An intriguing example of this is how Rie's instructor, whose work emphasized educational equity and critical analysis of power, did not seem to feel responsible for the marginality perceived by certain learners (e.g., L2 students such as Rie and Nanako) in her own classroom. Another layer of complexity is added when L2 students bring, at least initially, different assumptions and expectations about various roles. This means that instructors may need to consider not only their own assumptions but also students' expectations that may be culturally specific or evolve as they enter a new classroom/academic culture.

Second, more specifically, this study points to a need for educators to critically reflect on or reframe their constructions of L2 international students not only on an individual level but also various institutional levels (e.g., departmental, faculty-wide, university-wide). On the one hand, the focal students (as well as many other L2 students I talked to during the study) indicated that individual instructors' assumptions about and
treatment of L2 students could greatly impact their classroom experiences, either enhancing or hindering their participation and learning. Nanako’s experiences in Course E and F provided two opposite examples in this respect (Chapter 6). What is particularly notable is how the instructor for Course E empowered Nanako by pointing out a positive role international students could play in a new culture. On the other hand, some instructors felt that they were not provided enough time or resources to deal with the needs of L2 students and that this issue needed to be addressed at an institutional level. One instructor was particularly concerned about the fact that the international students in her class lacked some basic knowledge about Canada, which in effect slowed down the class discussions considerably and also, according to her, frustrated the domestic students. For her, this problem was not just about this particular class but raised larger curricular or policy issues:

A course like that requires a certain level of knowledge and with the [international] students sometimes I felt like it was a Grade 10 geography class because when students don’t know the layout of the country geographically we can’t proceed.... And it really raises larger issues about ... what’s the purpose, like I don’t think any of us disagree that it’s nice to have international students, but then what are the implications for teaching and learning because this course in its current format does not work for that class. So does it mean that we change the learners or do we change the course? And then what does that mean for more local learners? Because we can’t do everything for everybody. (Interview: 00/03/30) [italics mine]

The question she raises above (shown in italics) is a poignant one that has implications for not only classroom teaching but also institutional practices. Given the

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3 My own observations of this class on two separate occasions largely confirmed the instructor’s observations: the class discussions on Canadian educational systems were often interrupted by the international L2 students’ questions about the basic geography (e.g., Where is Newfoundland?; What is the difference between province and territory?), or by the miscommunications between the L2 students and the instructor about fairly basic instructions on class activities (e.g., who should go first among the three presenters of the day; what students should be doing with a map provided by the instructor).
growing diversity in the classroom as well as the increasingly international and interdisciplinary nature of academic communities, instructors as well as institutions can no longer assume that they are dealing with monolingual, homogeneous groups of learners or colleagues. Accordingly, the view of L2 students simply as linguistic or cultural minorities may no longer be adequate or productive; as this study has demonstrated to some extent, it seems crucial to treat them as resources who bring unique perspectives, knowledge, and experiences. Such a view would also change the way we define the role of domestic (or NS) students or even that of instructors: they are not simply the dominant group, target, or norm, but groups of learners who also need to be socialized into increasingly heterogeneous communities that continue to evolve and be transformed (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Three instructors in this study expressed a similar view, but also suggested that they were still minorities among the faculty.

Third, reframing roles may also mean, on the one hand, that individual instructors need to explore new ways of teaching and designing courses so that different groups of learners can benefit from one another. With regard to making pedagogical changes, a couple of instructors warned against the tendency for instructors to conceptualize changes as “watering down” the course content. As it was the case with Rie’s instructor, some were concerned about “slowing down the rest of the class” or “lowering the standard” if they were to make adjustments for L2 students. While these concerns may be valid and very real, if educators are to embrace diversity and be committed to educational equity, they need to face such tensions rather than avoid them, and deal with them creatively and flexibly. One instructor said:

I do feel pulled between moving slowly enough that international students are staying with me and moving quickly enough to deliver what I promised. I do find
that that's a conflict.... But that's actually a place for creativity to happen .... And I don't think people are harmed by a diversity of teaching strategies ... any time we implement a strategy for one “special group,” we always find that people benefit, who we never thought would. So philosophically I think we need to do that. (Interview: 99/11/10)

On the other hand, in order to allow international students to contribute to academic communities, efforts also need to be made on institutional levels. For example, one instructor suggested that discussions take place on a departmental level about making more or less radical changes in the existing curriculum or policies to better meet the needs of the diverse student population. It seems also helpful to provide course instructors with resources, workshops, and training for teaching in intercultural situations, although some instructors I interviewed felt that they lacked enough time to “do anything extra.” Another potential problem is that those who are less aware of issues surrounding L2 learners and therefore are likely to benefit from such training the most, may also be less interested in learning about the issues. Many instructors (as well as students) mentioned that the university should provide better services and programs to support the linguistic needs of international students specifically.4 A key to change seems to be, however, to borrow an instructor’s words, “recognizing it as a mutual responsibility” between L2 students and other stakeholders. Another instructor made a similar point

4 There was a center that provided L2 students with training for academic writing at the university, but four of the focal students who used its services expressed their dissatisfaction with them. A common difficulty shared by all of the focal students (as well as many international students I talked to) was finding a skilled proofreader for their written products (e.g., term papers, theses). Some simply did not know where to look for one, whereas others managed to find one but could not afford the service on a regular basis (e.g., one student was charged more than 300 dollars for a 10-page term paper). At the same time, instructors tended to expect that students’ written work had been proofread before it reached them, and felt that it was not their responsibility to correct English mistakes. There was little support for academic oral skills in the university, other than a program that provided training for international teaching assistants. Lisa participated in the program for a short period of time, but had to drop it because of the high demand of her regular courses. There once was a university-wide program that provided tutoring sessions and workshops for academic spoken English a few years prior to this study, but was discontinued because of a lack of funding. The English Language Institute in the university offered non-credit, full-fee EAP courses, but they were mainly for undergraduate students.
when he discussed his concern about the university’s plans for increasing the enrollment of international students:

[At a meeting of the faculty association, a university administrator] was saying that the five main points in developing universities are research, learning, people, community, and internationalization. She said we are going to recruit next year 1700 international students. I asked her, “What do you put in place to help them to learn?” … “Do you think that 1700 students from Asia will learn the same way Canadian students do and they don’t need any specific help with that? Is it enough to just have them here?” She seemed to be completely surprised … (Interview: 99/11/27)

As this instructor implies, if the university is committed to internationalizing its community, it also needs to be committed to addressing the tensions and possibilities that may be generated by its increasing heterogeneity as well as to transforming its practices on different levels in order to benefit from it.

On a more practical level, a number of suggestions for pedagogical intervention can be drawn from this study. First of all, instructors can use strategies to assist L2 students’ comprehension of class discussions, which will in turn help facilitate their participation. This is important, given that many of the focal students hesitated to speak when they did not fully understand a discussion. Strategies may include: (1) providing cultural or local background information which international students may not be familiar with, (2) also encouraging local students to do so when they speak, (3) providing a brief summary of what has been discussed from time to time during a discussion (either orally or in writing), (4) clarifying or paraphrasing contributions that seem unclear or difficult

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5 During my observations, one instructor repeatedly asked the local students in the class to avoid acronyms and to be sensitive about the needs of the international students when referring to cultural items or local topics. This instructor later told me that he did this not just for international students but also local students who need to learn how to communicate effectively in intercultural contexts.

6 One instructor I observed seemed to use this strategy very effectively. She occasionally provided a quick oral summary of the major points raised so far and also explained where the discussion was going. Nanako told me that this assisted her comprehension immensely. Another instructor jotted down the main points on
for others to understand; (5) providing time for students to ask clarification questions, (6) being explicit about the purpose of a given discussion, and (7) summarizing the main points discussed at the end of a discussion. It is useful to remember that L2 learners’ comprehension of oral texts may be assisted greatly by the use of written texts or visuals (Tang, 1991); one focal student mentioned that even having the agenda of a lesson written down on the board was helpful in following what was going on in the classroom.

Second, instructors potentially have “emancipatory authority” (Giroux, 1988, cited by Norton, 2000) and should be encouraged to take an active role in legitimizing the participation of learners, including L2 learners, who struggle to participate or tend to be positioned marginally in discussions (Leki, 2001). In this respect, I have emphasized above the importance of treating L2 learners as people with valuable intellectual and cultural resources. More practically speaking, strategies can be used to promote equity in discussions. One is to intervene in turn-taking practices to ensure opportunities for different students to participate. For example, one instructor engaged in what she called “traffic directing”: while encouraging students to speak on a voluntary basis, she also intervened occasionally to allow different students to speak. Similarly, another instructor used an “order system”: instead of letting individuals “fight” for their turn on their own, the instructor maintained a level of control and allowed them to take turns in a more egalitarian fashion. It may also be useful to raise critical awareness in all participants about the issues of participation and interaction, although overemphasizing this concern

the board as a discussion unfolded. Two focal students found it helpful since it was difficult for them to take notes and listen simultaneously during a discussion.

7 Rie who participated in this course saw both advantages and disadvantages in this system: for example, while allowing a more equal distribution of turns, it sometimes made the discussion less spontaneous or
may make participants overly self-conscious or less spontaneous. In the very first lesson of a course, one instructor employed an activity during which students collaboratively created general guidelines for class discussions. Another instructor explicitly stated in a course outline the importance of being “respectful of each others’ diverse views, experiences, and styles,” and of being “sensitive to the dynamics of the seminar and to the sensibilities of everyone present.” Raising participants’ awareness of these issues can also contribute to creating a classroom community in which members feel safe and respected; such an atmosphere may in turn encourage L2 learners to take risks and participate more actively. Another practical way to include reticent students is to ask them individually to speak, although instructors need to be careful not to “put them on the spot” or patronize them. Instructors can also creatively design discussion topics so that international students’ perspectives may be incorporated as legitimate sources of knowledge and that participants can benefit from their multimembership (Wenger, 1998). It might also be helpful with some students to initially allow them time to adjust, and then encourage increased participation at a later time (e.g., as Emiko’s instructor did in Course C, Chapter 5).

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8 She mentioned that it was important (and also legitimate) to raise students’ awareness about participation issues in this particular course since it was on qualitative research methods; she believed that being aware of one’s own interactional or participation styles (as well as others’) is crucial for conducting fieldwork as a qualitative researcher.

9 One unsuccessful intervention reported by the focal students was when instructors tried to elicit L2 students’ input by publicly labeling them “the silent group,” “quiet students,” or “students who need help.” On the contrary, asking individual students to comment on a specific topic of which they have some personal knowledge may be a better strategy. For instance, one instructor seemed to be quite successful in including the otherwise reticent international students by occasionally asking them to share their knowledge and expertise about the educational systems of their home country and compare them critically to those of Canada.
Third, employing different kinds of classroom activities, not just lectures and whole-class discussions, can encourage the participation of students with various learning or interactional styles. Small group work is one commonly used activity. However, simply employing small group work does not always ensure L2 learners' active participation; some of the focal students felt that they were actively excluded even from small group discussions by their peers who occupied more powerful positions (see also Leki, 2001). Small group work used in the observed courses that seemed relatively successful in eliciting otherwise reticent students' participation included: (1) "poster sessions" that encouraged informal and formal peer work (Course A, Chapter 5), (2) "dialogue groups" in which students took turns raising questions (Course I, Chapter 7), (3) group work requiring some end-product (e.g., oral, written, or online summary of the group discussion to be shared later by the whole class), (4) group work with participant roles (e.g., recorder, reporter, discussion leader), (5) group work requiring every member to contribute, and (6) pair work (see also Liu & Littlewood, 1997). Oral presentations (both individual and in groups) can also provide a certain level of legitimacy for L2 learners to take an active part in class, as well as opportunities to learn both linguistic and cultural aspects of oral academic discourses (Kobayashi, 2002; Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2002). Online discussions such as bulletin board discussions as a supplement to face-to-face discussions may also facilitate the participation of certain groups of learners including L2 learners (Carey, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000). At the same time, recent research also shows potential limitations of online discussions (e.g., creating power structures that favor particular groups of learners) (Belcher, 1999; Herring, Johnson, & DiBenedetto, 1998; Selfe & Meyer, 1991). Nevertheless, incorporating
different kinds of texts (e.g., oral, written, visual, computer-mediated) into class activities, on the one hand, may increase opportunities for different students to participate. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly important for students as well as instructors to acquire multiliteracies (see Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, for a collection of discussions on this topic by the New London Group) in order to participate meaningfully and competently in various educational communities.

Finally, the focal students offered a number of suggestions for instructors in the final set of interviews, which I briefly summarize here. While acknowledging that instructors have a limited amount of time and resources, they all felt that it is extremely important for instructors to be willing to listen and talk to L2 students when they approach them for support or advice. Many of them benefited greatly from one-on-one meetings with instructors outside the regular class time. Some emphasized the importance of instructors’ having awareness of cultural differences, although they also indicated that it is partly students’ responsibility to inform instructors about their L1 cultures. Whereas all the students suggested that instructors need to be encouraging and supportive toward L2 students, a couple of them stressed that encouragement must be sincere and that the assessment of their performances be fair. Rie said:

I find that some instructors are almost too encouraging. It makes me uneasy.... For instance, sometimes instructors praise what I said so much that I doubt whether they would do the same if the same comment came from a Canadian student.... I would welcome legitimate support and care but would not appreciate exaggerated encouragement or an affirmative action. (Rie, Interview 3: 00/04/19)

At the same time, some students (including Rie) indicated that instructors should creatively deal with the “linguistic handicap” of L2 students rather than ignoring it (e.g., allowing extra time for L2 learners’ oral presentations, if they need it). Many also
mentioned the powerful role that academic advisors can play (see Belcher, 1994; Dong, 1996; Luebs et al., 1998, for a discussion on this topic). Interestingly, four out of the six students expressed their dissatisfaction with their original advisor and three of them ended up changing their advisor. The most common complaint was that their advisor seemed to have developed a negative image about them (e.g., as a less competent or less knowledgeable student than their peers). In contrast, the students who had a positive experience with their advisor felt that their advisor was respectful of their abilities, needs, or challenges. In addition to one-on-one advising, advisors can also assist new international students in gaining access to peer networks, for instance by introducing them to other advisees.

8.2.2 Suggestions for L2 International Students

In this section, I offer suggestions for L2 international students by summarizing the insights I draw on from this study, the literature I have reviewed, and my own experience as an L2 international student. Also incorporated are the recommendations made by the focal students and instructors. Suggestions are made regarding: (1) general approaches to and understanding of academic discourse socialization, and (2) practical strategies to facilitate socialization and classroom participation. Many of the suggestions may also apply to domestic/NS students as well as immigrant students who also need to become socialized into new academic communities (Morita, 2000).

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10 In this study, I have focused on international students (who come to North America to study at a postsecondary level), rather than immigrant students or "Generation 1.5" bilingual students (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999) who are educated at a secondary level in North America and then enter higher education. Implications provided for or about L2 international students here may or may not apply to immigrant students, since immigrant students may also have their own specific needs (Harklau, 1999, 2000; Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999).
First of all, students may benefit from understanding graduate studies not simply as the linear acquisition of new knowledge and skills but also as the potentially complex negotiation of identities, cultures, and power relations. Being explicitly aware of this aspect of discourse socialization might help them better understand and deal with the conflicts and tensions that they may experience. Recognizing the multiplicity of discourses and instability within disciplinary communities (Prior, 1998) might also help them in this respect. Furthermore, having such awareness might also encourage students to critically examine the discourse community they are entering in terms of its interpretive nature (Bizzell, 1992; Delpit, 1988; Lemke, 1995), as well as their changing positionalities within it. Second, students are encouraged to see themselves as active participants in the co-construction of knowledge in a new community (e.g., classroom, discipline) rather than just as passive recipients of an established body of knowledge. The focal students who had or gradually developed such a view with others’ assistance (e.g., instructors) were often able to participate meaningfully in their classroom communities. Two instructors in this study who were recent graduates emphasized a similar point. Third, understanding linguistic and cultural border-crossing as a generative, transformative process might help L2 learners cope with the pain and struggles associated with that process. Many of the focal students indicated that they gained a deeper understanding of their changing identities as they dealt with the tensions created by (what they perceived to be) cultural differences and as they explored who they were in a new culture. In addition, as Nanako’s instructor suggested, international students may be in a privileged position of being able to engage in a critical analysis of target cultures as well as their home cultures. Finally, it might be helpful for L2 learners
to remember that NS students may experience similar challenges as they attempt to acquire new discourses (e.g., Emiko and Shiho in Course H) (Morita, 1996, 2000). In fact, as Flowerdew (2000) notes, the labels NS and NNS “mark two ends of a continuum that mask a whole range of language competencies” (p. 146), and I would add, academic and social/interactional competencies (see also Braine, 1999; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Liu, 1999).

On a more practical level, it seems very helpful for L2 learners to have access to various networks (including virtual networks) of peers, classmates, and colleagues. Being part of such networks will provide L2 learners with precious opportunities to gain information, learn academic content, language, and culture, work collaboratively, practice the target language (in less face-threatening contexts than the classroom), and importantly, gain membership in their new communities. Active involvement in networks can also assist them in overcoming the feeling of isolation (Huxur et al., 1996).

There are at least three such networks that seem particularly helpful: (1) a network of classmates collaborating outside as well as within the classroom; (2) a network of graduate students working in a similar field with different levels of experience; (3) a network of fellow international students who may face similar challenges. In addition, a network of L1 peers may be helpful especially at an earlier stage of socialization, although some of the participants cautioned against exclusively associating with L1 peers, which might prevent or delay L2 learners’ integration into the target community.

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11 Morita (1996) found that many NES students who were newcomers to graduate studies experienced insecurities and uncertainties about performing oral tasks (e.g., class presentations, speaking in discussions). It is also interesting to note that three of the instructors interviewed in the present study (2 NESs, 1 NNES) mentioned that they had hardly spoken in their own graduate classrooms for different reasons (e.g., personal preference, cultural style, lack of confidence).
It should also be noted that the focal students often found it difficult to gain access to peer networks (other than L1 peer networks) for various reasons. While students can actively seek membership in existing networks or even take initiative and form a supportive study group, institutional support to ensure their access would be helpful.

With regard to improving class participation, we can learn from the strategies employed by the focal students. They included: (1) speaking in less face-threatening situations such as group work, (2) preparing a few questions or comments about course readings before class, (3) speaking up without worrying unnecessarily about linguistic accuracy, (4) interjecting a comment in early stages of a discussion, (5) listening to tape-recorded discussions and learning about turn-taking strategies, (6) talking to classmates individually during breaks and before or after class, (7) communicating with instructors individually and seeking advice (or sometimes their accommodation), and (8) working collaboratively with classmates outside the classroom. Obviously, these are just some examples and may not work for everyone in every context. Also, I am not recommending that everyone try to speak; as discussed earlier, different interpretations of and values about participation exist, and speaking is certainly not the only way to engage oneself in the classroom. Nevertheless, communicating one’s ideas to peers and colleagues orally remains an important academic skill for graduate students (which is also

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12 As mentioned earlier, Lisa and Nanako gained access to peer networks by living in a residence for graduate students. Lisa and Jun benefited greatly from collaborating with their classmates outside the classroom. In my own experience, participating in informal study groups with a small number of supportive peers (4-6) was particularly helpful. In one such group, we not only helped each other with course assignments (e.g., presentations) and thesis work, but also worked toward a collaborative conference presentation. Working with my advisor and fellow advisees on colloquium presentations for conferences also provided valuable opportunities for learning and socialization.

13 One instructor in this study felt that “the worry itself [rather than linguistic limitations] is actually a barrier” for L2 students.
evaluated in thesis or dissertation oral defenses), and the classroom may be one of the places where students can learn to do so in a relatively safe environment.

8.3 Directions for Future Research

Finally, I would like to offer some implications for future research. Most importantly, this study suggests the value of inquiring into learners' perspectives that may not be observable but may be a key to understanding their classroom behavior. It seems particularly fruitful to capture the voices of learners who are not very verbal or vocal in class. On the one hand, by bringing such voices to center stage, this study demonstrated the importance of listening to quiet learners' inner voices that tell revealing stories and therefore shed light on classroom practices. On the other hand, it points to limitations of research that focuses only on observable classroom behaviors, especially what is said rather than what is left unsaid, and interprets them solely from an etic perspective. At the same time, this study also speaks about the value of triangulating research methods and data as well as participant perspectives. For example, direct observations allowed me to examine many different aspects of classroom practices and the focal students' participation (e.g., body language) that the students might not describe in their self-reports. Such information not only helped contextualize what they said in interviews and reports, but also helped me understand the socially and temporally constructed nature of classroom practices and experiences. Incorporating multiple viewpoints (e.g., the focal student(s), instructor(s), researcher) into the analysis of a given course enriched interpretations and also revealed complexities, tensions, and sometimes contradictions of the examined phenomenon. In addition, a longitudinal, in-depth
investigation of a small number of participants allowed the documentation of their
gradual development, changing feelings, and personally significant transformations.

One obvious line of future research therefore is to continue to document voices of
individual learners that may not have been adequately examined in the literature.
Contextualized, ecologically valid interpretations of such voices (Duff, 2002b; van Lier,
1988, 2000) can help us better understand complex social practices such as disciplinary
socialization in a second language. While this study examined a particular group of
learners (female, first-year master’s program students from Japan in three social science
departments), future research can investigate different groups of learners including: (1)
male learners as well as female learners, (2) learners in a doctoral program, (3) learners
from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, (4) learners in different disciplines,
and (5) learners at a later stage in their program, but still taking courses, presumably. In
addition, examining the socialization experiences of NES domestic learners will provide
useful baseline data against which data on NNESs can be compared (e.g., Morita, 1996;
Tracy, 1997; Zappa-Hollman, 2002).

Another population that deserves a closer investigation is that of professors and
course instructors. An overriding issue is how they respond or adapt to the increasing
cultural and linguistic diversity in the student population. In this study, instructors’
perspectives provided important insights into the focal students’ experiences and related
issues, but they were not investigated fully in their own right. However, given the variety
of issues raised around and by instructors documented in the study, more in-depth inquiry
into their pedagogical practices, perspectives, and concerns will be valuable. Further, if
we take the view that academic socialization is a two-way negotiation, it is also important
to explore how an academic community (e.g., discipline, department) and its relative old-timers (e.g., professors) may be transformed as they interact with new members such as L2 international students. In addition, the mentoring practice or the role of academic advising/advisor is another area that requires more investigation, given the tensions and conflicts reported by the focal students around this issue.

Future research can also examine the role of different types of communicative practices in L2 academic discourse socialization; while previous research in this area has focused on traditional literacy practices (e.g., academic writing), this study suggests that socialization through and into primarily oral academic practices is also a fertile area of research (Duff, 1995, 2002a; Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991; Morita, 2000; Tracy, 1997). In fact, literacy scholars such as Street (1995) and Gee (1986, 1996) argue that if we examine literacy practices as situated social practices, we find many complex relationships between oral language and literacy. Street (1995) states:

From a theoretical standpoint, it is also incorrect to conceive of ‘literacy’ in isolation from other media of communication. Literacy practices are always embedded in oral uses .... Even within the academy, Ong’s [e.g., 1982] major exemplar of the literate mentality, we find conventions for mixing oral and literate discourse: lectures, seminars, and tutorials are both oral situations and ‘literacy events’, in Shirley Brice Heath’s sense (1983) ... (p. 157)

Again, inquiry into multiliteracies will be of increasing importance, particularly with rapid technological advancements. A new line of research in this area, as mentioned earlier, is to examine online academic discussions that can be compared and contrasted with face-to-face discussions.

In terms of research methods, future research can consider combining the analysis of participants’ narratives and the discourse analysis of classroom interactions. It was beyond the scope of this study to conduct a detailed analysis of classroom discourse and
to identify communication patterns and characteristics that posed problems for the focal students. As discussed in Chapter 3, a particularly productive data collection method was weekly self-reports by the focal students that worked like collaborative weekly dialogues between the participants and researcher: it not only elicited rich data but also facilitated rapport and trust between us, while providing the students with opportunities to reflect on their daily classroom lives. In addition, I believe that it helped increase the credibility or trustworthiness of this inquiry. At the same time, providing reports regularly demanded the students’ time, energy, and a certain level of commitment to the project. It is therefore critical for researchers to make such an activity as meaningful as possible for their participants as well as for research itself.

This study also suggests that collaborative or participatory inquiry is important in examining issues such as identity and power negotiation that may not be easily observable from an outsider’s point of view (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Ethical considerations are also important since such negotiation can touch participants’ lives in a profound way. Furthermore, as Lather (1991) contends, participatory research can also offer “a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations” (p. 56). Although it was not an explicit goal of this study to change the participants’ lives for

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14 Duff (2002a) effectively combines the two methods and shows how silence was co-constructed in a secondary classroom involving NES and NNES students as well as discussion topics that tended to favor the latter. Morita (1996, 2000) also links discourse data of student oral presentations to data from interviews, questionnaires, and stimulated recall (i.e., showing students the videos of their own class presentations and asking them to explain what they were thinking or what they did not understand during different stages of their presentations). As a tradeoff, however, these studies do not inquire as deeply as the present study into individual learners’ changing perspectives over time. In addition, these studies examine only a small number of classroom contexts (e.g., two courses in Morita’s case), whereas the present study considers students’ experiences across many different courses.
the better by taking a critical stance, it still provided them with a chance to reflect on and possibly change some aspects of their academic life, which they appreciated:  

I learned a lot from [participating in this study]…. I discovered new things about myself by being interviewed and reflecting on my life. To me, it felt like you [i.e., the researcher] were doing me the favor of listening to me. (Emiko, Interview 3: 00/04/16)

I appreciated the opportunity to look back at what I did each week and think about how to improve things…. I think this research was a big part of my life here. It was helpful to talk to someone like you who had more experience. (Jun, Interview 3: 00/05/05)

As I talked to you I grasped more things. It was great to have an opportunity to reflect on my studies and to realize how things really are. (Shiho, Interview 3: 00/04/26)

Thus, future research can explore ways of collaborating with participants in a manner that is beneficial to both participants and researchers and is also sensitive to participants’ needs and contexts.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude this dissertation with a reflection on my own experience of participating in and becoming socialized into new academic communities in Canada as an L2 graduate student from Japan. Similar to Lisa and Jun, I came to Canada to gain new knowledge about ESL/EFL education after teaching EFL at a Japanese high school for four years. I tended to be a relatively quiet participant in many of my graduate courses, despite being used to speaking English in front of others as an English teacher. As in Lisa’s case, the feeling of not being able to fully express my thoughts and ideas in the classroom had been a major source of frustration, disappointment, and insecurity for

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15 Casanave (1998) and Spack (1997a) similarly document how their participants became increasingly analytical and insightful about the academic activities they engaged in as they reflected on them through participating in the research.
me. Over the years, I had always wondered why it often seemed difficult for me to speak in the classroom or in other kinds of academic meetings, and was also puzzled by the rare occasions when I felt I was able to express myself with confidence. In the beginning, like many of the focal students, I felt that my challenge was mainly due to my own limited linguistic abilities and limited background or content knowledge as well as certain cultural differences in interactional norms and styles. Also, much of the SLA literature I was introduced to during my master's program, or at least my reading of it, seemed to suggest that individual learners' cognitive/linguistic abilities, background knowledge, personal styles and tendencies, and cultural/educational backgrounds are among the main factors that influence language acquisition, use, and performance. However, as I participated in many different academic contexts in different ways, encountered a variety of interactional practices, and observed the full range of participation by different individuals, I came to appreciate that individuals' participation could be socially and interactionally constructed. I began to wonder if my participation was shaped by the context in which I participated and the kind of identity I developed in that context, rather than being predetermined by my language abilities, knowledge, or personal/cultural dispositions. What I did not know, however, was what aspects of a given context might shape my participation, to what extent, and how.

This ongoing, informal self-analysis and interrogation eventually led me to conduct a more formal research project on the issues of oral academic participation and socialization. In the meantime, I was also introduced to the sociocultural and critical literature that problematizes individualistic premises about (language) learning and instead explores the social or discursive construction of practice, identity, and power.
relations that in turn impacts individuals’ learning and participation in communities of practice. This literature presented me with a new way of understanding my own experiences as well as a useful window for interpreting those of the focal students in this study. However, by observing everyday classroom practices as a researcher, listening to and recording the multiple and changing voices of the students and instructors (as well as my own), and (re)interpreting and writing about the students’ experiences and perspectives across the curriculum, I was struck by the richness and complexity of classroom practices and of individuals’ experiences participating in them. In particular, I came to know the idiosyncratic, complex, and fascinating interplay between the classroom context and the individual learner—the interplay through which the learner’s identity as well as the classroom community is constantly created and recreated. Because of this interplay, even though the focal students shared a similar background with each other (and with me) on a superficial level, they constructed different identities across different classroom contexts, enacted their personal agency in different ways, and experienced different kinds of personal transformations. Recognizing such co-construction, on the one hand, has helped me reinterpret and better understand my own journey through graduate school in Canada. At the same time, it reflects how my views about learning, teaching, and research have evolved as a result of this study. I now have a much greater understanding of the profoundly dialogic relationship between the individual and the educational context, as well as between the researcher and the research context, and the transformative nature of educational and research practices. This understanding does not necessarily provide a solution to my ongoing struggle to participate meaningfully in multiple academic communities. But rather, it offers me a
powerful tool to reflect on, interpret, and possibly change what I do as a learner, educator, and researcher.

I hope this inquiry will contribute to our understanding of learners who cross linguistic and cultural borders, attempt to gain access to a new community, and participate in its practices by negotiating multiple roles and positionalities. These learners are complex cognitive, social, and emotional beings whose accounts not only tell us about themselves but also about social practices in which they participate(d) in the past, present, and future. It is also my hope that the stories told in this dissertation from multiple perspectives and viewpoints will help us see not only challenges but also new possibilities for ever-changing educational practices.
References


Appendix D

QUESTIONS FOR WEEKLY STUDENT SELF-REPORTS

Name: Course: Date:

1. What did the class do today? (In summary: e.g., whole-class discussion about X; instructor’s lecture on Y; small group discussion on Z; student presentations)

2. What is your general impression of today’s class?

3. Did you have a chance to speak in class today?

4. If you spoke in class:
   (1) How many times did you speak? (If you don’t remember, an approximate number is fine.)
   (2) During what activities did you speak? Did you volunteer to speak or were you called on by your instructor/classmate?
   (3) What was the main content of your comments? (e.g., question about X to whom, opinion about Y, information about Z)
   (4) What kinds of responses, if any, did you receive on your comments/questions, and by whom? And how did you feel about the responses?
   (5) What kinds of things, if any, were you thinking before you gave your comments/questions?
   (6) How did you feel after you gave your comments/questions?

5. Were there moments during your class today when you wanted to speak but you didn’t? If there were, why do you think you didn’t speak at those moments?

6. Any other comments on your class participation today?

7. Any observations about other people’s participation?

8. Any other thoughts or concerns on today’s class in general?

9. Any thoughts or concerns about your studies in general?

10. Any thoughts or concerns about your English language skills?
Appendix E

QUESTIONS FOR WEEKLY STUDENT SELF-REPORTS (REVISED)

Name: Course: Date:

1. What did the class do today? (In summary: e.g., whole class discussion about X; instructor’s lecture on Y; small group discussion on Z; student presentations)

2. How did you participate in today’s class? (Please also reflect on your participation.)

3. Any observations about other people’s participation?

4. Any other thoughts on today’s class in general?

5. Any thoughts or concerns about your studies in general?
Appendix F

INTERVIEW GUIDES AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS
FOR FORMAL INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

INTERVIEW 1 (conducted at the beginning of Term 1)

Backgrounds:

1. What was your academic and professional background prior to coming to WCU?
2. What is your background in learning English?
3. Have you ever lived/studied outside Japan?

Reasons for coming to WCU/Academic goals and interests/Future plans:

3. Why did you choose Canada/WCU to do your graduate work?
4. What are your academic goals and interests?
5. What are your future plans after completing your studies at WCU?

Program of study/Courses:

6. Please describe your program of study and plans to complete it.
7. What courses are you currently taking? Why are you taking them? Please describe your courses (e.g., content, assignments, classroom activities, instructor, classmates).
8. What concerns, if any, do you have about your program?
9. How are you participating in your courses? Do you have any difficulties or concerns?

Initial impressions and adjustments:

10. What are your initial impressions of WCU, your program, your advisor, and your courses? Was anything surprising to you?
11. Are you experiencing any difficulty in adjusting to life here?
INTERVIEW 2 (conducted at the end of Term 1)

General impressions of Term 1 studies/courses:

1. What are your general impressions of your Term 1 studies/courses?

2. What did you enjoy about your studies/courses?

3. What kinds of difficulties, if any, did you experience in your studies/courses in general? How did you deal with your difficulties?

Classroom participation in Term 1 courses (ask about each course):

4. What general impressions do you have about the class discussions of Course X? Please describe any interactional patterns that you have noticed.

5. What observations do you have about your classmates’ participation in Course X?

6. How did you participate in Course X (quantity/quality/content)? Did your participation patterns change over the term? If so, how did they change and why do you think they changed?

7. How do you feel about your participation in Course X? Did you have any concerns or difficulties about your participation over the course of the term? If you experienced difficulties, how did you deal with them?

8. Was your class participation evaluated in Course X? If so, how was it evaluated and what evaluation did you receive?

9. If your participation patterns differed across different courses, why do you think they differed?

Course instructors/advisor/classmates:

10. Do you have any comments about your course instructors?

11. How did you interact with your course instructors, advisor, and classmates inside and outside the classroom?

Academic/English abilities:

12. What concerns do you have about your academic skills and abilities in general? What kinds of academic skills do you feel you need to improve?
13. Do you feel that your English has improved over the term? What kinds of English abilities do you think you need to improve? Do you make any special efforts to improve your English skills?

14. What opportunities do you have to use English (speak/listen/read/write) inside and outside the classroom?

Academic life at WCU:

15. Please describe your typical day/week.

16. What are some of the significant events that happened to you since you came to WCU?

17. Do you have any other concerns about your (academic) life at WCU in general?

Plans for Term 2:

18. Do you have any objectives/goals for Term 2?

19. What courses are you planning to take in Term 2?

Participation in this research:

20. Do you have any comments about your participation in this research project?

21. Do you have any concerns or suggestions about this project?

INTERVIEW 3 (conducted at the end of Term 2)

General impressions of Term 2 studies/courses:

1. What are your general impressions of your Term 2 studies/courses?

2. What did you enjoy about your studies/courses?

3. What kinds of difficulties, if any, did you experience in your studies/courses in general? How did you deal with your difficulties?

Classroom participation in Term 2 courses (ask about each course):

4. What general impressions do you have about the class discussions of Course X? Were there any typical patterns?
5. What observations do you have about your classmates' participation in Course X?

6. How did you participate in Course X (quantity/quality/content)? Did your participation patterns change over the term? If so, how did they change and why do you think they changed?

7. How do you feel about your participation in Course X? Did you have any concerns or difficulties about your participation over the course of the term? If you experienced difficulties, how did you deal with them?

8. Was your class participation evaluated in Course X? If so, how was it evaluated and what evaluation did you receive?

9. If your participation patterns differed across different courses, why do you think they differed?

Course instructors/advisor/classmates:

10. Do you have any comments about your course instructors?

11. How did you interact with your course instructors, advisor, and classmates inside and outside the classroom?

Academic/English abilities:

12. What academic or English abilities do you think have been improved over the academic year? Why do you think they improved? Did you make any special efforts to improve your academic/English skills?

13. What areas of academic or English abilities do you feel you still need to improve?

14. What opportunities did you have to use English (speak/listen/read/write) inside and outside the classroom?

Reflections about first year studies in general:

15. Do you have any comments about your classroom experiences throughout the academic year?

16. Have your class participation or attitude toward/values about participation changed over the academic year in any way?

17. Please describe some of your most interesting/challenging/rewarding experiences during your first year studies.
18. Do you have any comments about your course instructors, professors, advisor, or your relationships with them?

19. Do you have any other comments about your academic life at WCU in general?

Advice/suggestions for L2 international students, instructors, and the university:

20. Based on your first-year experiences, what advice or suggestions would you offer to incoming L2 international students?

21. Do you have any advice or suggestions for course instructors/faculties, particularly in regard to issues around international students?

22. What kinds of institutional support do you think would be helpful for international students? What institutional support did you find helpful?

Future plans:

23. What are your future plans about your academic/professional career?

Participation in this research:

24. Do you have any comments about your participation in this research project?
Appendix H

INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS
FOR FORMAL INTERVIEWS WITH COURSE INSTRUCTORS

I. Questions about the course

Characteristics of the course and the student group:

1. What is the nature of this course in terms of content, format, and assignments? Is there anything special about this course compared to other courses that you teach?

2. How would you characterize this year’s student group? Is there anything special about this year’s students that has influenced the way you organized the course or class discussions?

Expectations for and evaluations of classroom participation:

3. What expectations do you have about individual students’ classroom participation in this course? Is there an official requirement for classroom participation in this course? If there is, what is the purpose of such requirement?

4. Are there any norms or rules of classroom interaction/participation that you promote in this course? If there are, what are the norms/rules, and how do you promote them?

5. What do you see as your role in classroom discussions in this course? What do you see as the role of the students?

6. Is classroom participation evaluated? If so, how is it evaluated and what are the criteria for evaluation?

7. What impressions do you have about the classroom discussions you had with this class?

Challenges and strategies:

8. Have you experienced any challenges with regard to classroom interactions in this class? If you have, how did you deal with them?

Impressions of the L2 international students/focal student(s):

9. What impressions do you have about the L2 international students in this class? How do they participate in the classroom? Do you see any difference between NES domestic students and NNES international students in terms of class participation?
10. What impressions do you have about the focal student(s)? Do you have any comments about her classroom participation?

Pedagogical adjustments:

11. Have you made any pedagogical adjustments to meet the needs of the L2 international students in this class?

II. General questions on the issues of classroom communication, academic socialization, and L2 international students

Expectations for classroom participation:

12. What expectations do you have about students’ participation in graduate classrooms in general?

13. Any other comments about issues of classroom participation?

Role of class discussions:

14. What role do you think class discussions play in graduate students’ academic learning and socialization?

Difficulties experienced by international students/suggestions for students:

15. What kinds of challenges have you seen L2 international students face in the graduate classroom?

16. What advice or suggestions would you offer or have you offered to L2 international students who are having such difficulties?

Difficulties experienced by course instructors:

17. What kinds of difficulties or issues, if any, have you faced in having L2 international students in your classroom? How did you deal with such issues?

18. Are there any positive aspects of having students from diverse backgrounds in your courses?

Other issues:

19. Are there any other related issues you would like to comment on?