Second Language Socialization in Higher Education: An Exploratory Case Study

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ABSTRACT: Utilizing second language (L2) socialization as a theoretical framework, this study explores international students' performance of speech acts in academic and social settings, and individual and contextual factors underlying their L2 socialization experiences. Data were gathered through a 20-item online discourse completion test (DCT) and semi-structured interviews. Situational prompts in the DCT involved instances such as requesting extra time for assignment completion and negotiating roles in group work. While mostly grammatically correct, the DCT responses were marked by absence of typical speech acts, such as expressions of regret, excuses, and apologies. Interview data revealed a relatively low level of engagement with the target speech community. Findings suggest that present models of language support, which focus almost exclusively on development of academic language and literacy, largely overlook the importance of direct engagement with the target speech community. We recommend such engagement be delivered deliberately as part of the language support curriculum.

Keywords: Second language socialization, speech acts, English for Academic Purposes

RESUMÉ: En utilisant la socialisation de la langue seconde (L2) comme cadre théorique, cette étude explore la performance des étudiants internationaux dans les milieux académiques et sociaux, et les facteurs individuels et contextuels qui sous-tendent leur expérience de socialisation de la L2. Les données ont été recueillies avec un test d'achèvement du discours en ligne de 20 points et d'entretiens semi-structurés. Les invitations situationnelles du test concernaient des instances telles que la demande de temps supplémentaire pour l'achèvement des travaux et la négociation des rôles lors du travail en groupe.

Bien que la plupart du temps, grammaticalement correctes, les réponses du test ont été marquées par l'absence d'actes des paroles typiques, tels que les expressions de regret et les excuses. Les données d'entrevues ont révélé un niveau relativement faible d'engagement avec la communauté cible. Les résultats suggèrent que les modèles actuels de soutien linguistique, qui se concentrent presque exclusivement sur le développement de la langue académique et de l'alphabétisation, négligent l'importance d'entretenir des contacts directs avec la communauté cible. Nous recommandons que ces contacts soient délibérément fournis dans le cadre d'un programme de soutien linguistique.

Mots-clés: socialisation de langue seconde, actes de la parole, anglais à des fins académiques

Introduction

Internationalization figures heavily in institutional priorities across Canadian universities, a fact reflected in student numbers: international students account for approximately 11% of undergraduate enrollment, and 28% of graduate (Universities Canada, 2014). The Canadian government intends to increase these numbers further, with an ambitious target of doubling the number of international students from 225,000 (in 2014) to 450,000 by 2022 (Macgregor & Folinazzo, 2017). While universities strive to increase international student enrollment (whether to reap the benefits of internationalization, to widen participation, or to make up budget shortfalls through international student tuition fees), these students' English language needs often impact "the curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional resources, and, ultimately, the institution's reputation" (Murray, 2016, p. 29). Murray argues that internationalization's advantages often are sought without thorough consideration of the institutional resources required to support the learning needs of international students.

Institutions have attempted to address the English language learning needs of international students through various delivery models of language support. While many models mainly address academic language development, interactional competencies in the target language are, to a great extent, shaped and facilitated through learners' sociolinguistic engagement with members of the target

speech community, that is, through target language socialization experiences. The search for an effective model of academic English language support, one that takes into account the sociolinguistic dimensions of second language (L2) development, provided the impetus for this exploratory inquiry whereby we explored international students' sociolinguistic competence as informed and guided by an L2 socialization framework.

L2 Socialization Framework

The authors assume language learning is "as much a process of socialization as it is of acquisition" (Kinginger, 2009, p. 156), and that language knowledge works alongside cultural knowledge in an interactional and developmental process (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Norton, 1995; Watson-Gegeo & Nielsen, 2003; Ortactepe, 2012). As an interdisciplinary approach drawing from anthropology, sociolinguistics, developmental psychology, and sociology (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), the language socialization framework explores "how language practices organize the life span process of becoming an active, competent participant in one or more communities" (Ochs, 2001, p. 227). Similarly, L2 socialization refers to the process of acculturation into L2 discourse communities in which speakers become competent and legitimate members of the target speech community by coming to know how to engage in forms of talk (Goffman, 1981; Ortactepe, 2012). In this regard, participation in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and daily interactional contexts provide opportunities for L2 learners not only to adopt and internalize the linguistic practices of the target speech community but also to navigate and reconstruct social roles and identities (Cook, 1996; Lam, 2004). By focusing on social and linguistic dimensions of L2 development, we examine how international students engage with the complexities of social interaction by relying on their developing sociolinguistic competence.

From a language socialization perspective, sociolinguistic competence—i.e., "the mastery of the socio-cultural code of language use" (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1995, p. 7) — is gained through participation in contextually situated, recurrent interactions with target speech community members (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Shi, 2006). Through such socializing routines in various contexts, L2 learners not only practice and acquire linguistic rules for communication but also develop their cultural knowledge

base underlying the context and content of the communicative practices (Leung, 2001; Shi, 2006). Shi (2006) points out that "the socio-cultural ecology of home, community, school or workplace impacts strongly on the second language learners' communicative practices, which shape and reshape, construct and reconstruct the learners' interactive routines and strategies" (p. 3). Similarly, Li's (2002) study on a Chinese immigrant woman's language socialization in the workplace also highlights the role of scaffolding provided by experts and more competent peers in promoting the development of sociolinguistic competence and identity reconstruction. Through the facilitative role of social interactions and scaffolding, the participant in Li's (2002) study was able to make more strategic and direct requests in the workplace, while at the same time reconstructing herself as more empowered and open in social encounters. In this regard, prior research points to the role of L2 socialization in the development of sociolinguistic competence and learners' attempts to negotiate and establish "particular status and relationships in the social environment where the learning takes place" (Lam, 2004, p. 46).

Adopting L2 socialization as a theoretical framework, the current study explores international students' sociolinguistic competence through performance of speech acts in academic and social settings. Speech acts, as central interactional units in communication, enable speakers to encode intentions in utterances that perform specific acts, such as issuing requests, apologies, invitations, or refusals (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). By performing speech acts, speakers also negotiate and take on specific social roles. For instance, by employing the utterance, "Could you give me one more day to complete my assignment?", a learner issues the speech act of *requesting* to his/her professor thereby assuming the social role of *requester* in this particular communicative event. Thus, performance of speech acts entails matching the performative intent with appropriate linguistic form based on the socio-cultural context of the communicative event including such considerations as directness, relevance, and politeness (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995). The growth of sociolinguistic competence as expressed through performance of speech acts emerges as a critical factor for learners in their communicative efforts to engage with each other and with professors in academic and social settings. The current study, therefore, attempts to

explore international students' performance of speech acts in socio-culturally situated speech events commonplace to higher education contexts.

While critical to explore the development of sociolinguistic competence through learners' speech acts performance, individual and social factors affecting this development is another important dimension of L2 socialization. In a study of an international doctoral student's L2 socialization in the USA, Ortactepe (2013) demonstrates evidence as to how affective and socially structured variables influence language learners' access to social interactions (p. 215). In addition, Ortactepe (2013) calls "for more research at the discourse level to explore how power relations within speech communities influence the nature of interaction between international students and the host culture" (p. 215).

In response to Ortactepe's call and similar to her study, the current inquiry investigates the role of individual and social variables in learners' L2 socialization through Norton's (1995) notion of investment, Miller's (2003) audibility, and Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital. Through these theoretical and conceptual lenses, we attempt to capture a) the ways in which learners relate to the changing social world (i.e., investment) (Norton, 1995); b) the degree to which they "sound like, and are legitimated by, users of the dominant discourse" (i.e., audibility) (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2003, p. 24); and c) how they negotiate and establish membership with different social spaces and networks within and outside the university community (i.e., social capital) (Bourdieu, 1986).

Given the multilayered dimensions of L2 development, the current study attempts to respond to the following research questions:

1) How is L2 socialization reflected in learners' sociolinguistic competence as indicated by the performance of speech acts?
2) How is L2 socialization shaped by individual and social factors as examined through the lenses of investment, audibility, and social capital?

Methodology

This study follows an exploratory case study design (Yin, 2014) relying on data from the first phase of an ongoing research project. As such, it is aimed at exploring social and linguistic issues surrounding international students' L2 socialization practices in Canada. The setting for the study is

an academic language program within a large Canadian university, which provides academic language and study support for students whose first language is not English. As the program offers a route for admission into university degree programs, students who do not possess the required English language proficiency (ELP) generally commence degree studies upon taking a series of academic language courses in a pre-enrollment English language support delivery model (PRE-ELS). Additionally, the program has recently started to offer language support through the post-enrollment (POST-ELS) delivery method (the English language support is delivered concurrently with the student's chosen program of study).

The study focuses on a group of 17 students (12 female and 5 male) enrolled in the academic language support program to explore how these students negotiate and navigate their L2 socialization experiences in a tertiary institution. Participants, whose first languages included Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Farsi, Arabic, Urdu, and French, represented diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While participants varied with respect to the length of previous English language study (ranging from two years to over 16 years), they were admitted to the academic language program with relatively close English test scores (i.e., a minimum score of IELTS 5.5 and 6.0 is required for admission to PRE-ELS and POST-ELS programs respectively). After receiving formal approval from the institutional research ethics office, students were invited to participate voluntarily in the study, and to consent to the use of their anonymized data for research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using two instruments: semi-structured interviews and an online survey. Interviews were focused on participants' past and current language learning and L2 socialization experiences. Each interview, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, was audio-recorded and transcribed. Analysis of interview data was conducted using Boyatzis' (1998) thematic analysis and was guided by the use of prior-research driven lenses — namely, Norton's (1995) notion of investment, Miller's (2003) audibility, and Bourdieu's (1986) social capital.

Subsequent to each interview, participants were invited to take a two-part online survey. Part one presented a 20-item

discourse completion test (DCT), eliciting short written responses from participants to a number of situational prompts (Barron, 2003). Specifically, prompts were designed to model participants' daily interactions in academic and social contexts. The second part of the online survey sought to obtain information on participants' interactional routines in English revolving around the nature and extent of their communicative engagement with native and non-native English speakers.

The DCT was constructed to elicit performance of speech acts in response to sociolinguistically challenging speech events likely to arise in academic and social settings. For instance, some anticipated speech acts included issuing an *apology* for late arrival in a student group work meeting, a *request* to an instructor for extra time in assignment completion, and a *refusal* to take on a role assigned by group members. In such instances, the performance of speech acts is generally associated with a learner's ability not only to retrieve and use linguistic resources but also to consider contextual variables and situational constraints salient to the conversation such as social distance, age, politeness, and formality (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995). For instance, in the case of apologies, contextual variables such as social distance and/or age difference between speakers typically necessitates a series of speech acts (i.e., speech act sets), such as expressing an apology used in combination with other situation-specific speech acts including offering an explanation and/or promising non-recurrence (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1995, p. 21). Similarly, a refusal speech act set may involve multiple components, such as an expression of regret accompanied by a direct refusal (e.g., *Sorry, but I can't*), followed by a request (*Can we find another time to meet?*). As illustrated through such examples, performance of speech acts often involves speech act sets as opposed to a discrete speech act (Tanck, 2004). Thus, learners' ability to achieve such interactional patterns and sequences is closely tied to their awareness of the intricate relationship between linguistic and cultural knowledge. Accordingly, for the DCT in the current study, participants were asked to respond to a series of complex communicative situations, and their performance of speech act sets revealed insights into the degree to which they attend to the situation's salient socio-cultural variables.

Performance of speech acts elicited through the DCT was analyzed using a holistic approach to the identification of

problematic areas as well as patterns of language use reflecting students' developing sociolinguistic competence. To that end, Tanck's (2004) study, which focuses on native and non-native English speakers' speech act set production, guided the data analysis with respect to the typical language forms present in certain speech act sets, including an excuse, an expression of regret, and an offer of alternative. Drawing upon established rubrics in L2 pragmatics (Chen & Liu, 2016; Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1995), the holistic approach also involved assessing whether participants used speech acts sets based on socio-pragmatic considerations (e.g., relevance, directness, formality, or politeness) reflective of their developing sociolinguistic competence.

Findings and Discussion

Performance of Speech Act Sets

Participants' performance of speech act sets revealed insights into their developing sociolinguistic competence. In general, while some participants were able to produce speech act sets that would be considered authentic and appropriate, a majority produced responses marked by the absence of certain speech acts which may indicate a lack of socio-pragmatic awareness. To illustrate, a subset of DCT responses[1] collected from six different participants is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Selected Participant Responses (DCT# 1)

Situation: You are still working on your writing assignment and you need more time to complete it. Your professor asks about the assignment during class.
Professor: Did you hand in your essay to me yet?
You: ……

[1] The responses provided in each table are specifically selected to illustrate a wide range of speech act sets elicited from the study participants. As such, responses annotated with letters are not consistently linked to the same participants in subsequent tables.

Response A: Sorry, I may need more time to finish my work, could you please give me more time to let me complete it? Thank you very much.
Response B: Not yet, I am still working on it. Is it possible for you to extend the deadline till tonight?
Response C: No, cause I got some trouble about that, and I need more time. Don't worry, I'll hand in it before the deadline, trust me.
Response D: Not yet. Could you please give us more time to do it?
Response E: Sorry, it hasn't been finished yet.
Response F: No, I didn't, because I didn't complete it.

In the case of DCT# 1, a request speech act set typically consists of a direct response (e.g., *no, not yet,* etc.) or indirect response in the form of an apology (e.g., *sorry*) to the interrogative speech act performed by the professor, an excuse (e.g., *I am still working on it*), and a request (e.g., *Could you please give us more time to do it?*). As seen in Table 1, responses varied in terms of the presence of such speech act components. In comparison to participants A, B, and C who produced a typical speech act set, D, E, and F issued neither an excuse nor request. In addition, while C produced an excuse and an indirect request, the response provided is marked by socio-pragmatic issues related to formality and politeness given the social distance between professor and student. Similarly, responses provided by participants E and F can be considered less authentic due to the lack of a request speech act, and issues with directness and politeness. Another DCT item is illustrated in Table 2, for which participants were asked to negotiate a refusal or a request speech act set by indicating their preference to serve as a presenter instead of a recorder in a group work.

Table 2
Selected Participant Responses (DCT# 2)

Situation: You missed your first group meeting where group roles were negotiated and assigned to each group member. You want to be a presenter (presenting the final work to the class); however, you were assigned the role of "recorder."
Group leader: We assigned you the recorder role in our first meeting John, so your task is to take notes on important items we discuss during our group meetings.
You: ……

Response A: Oh, sorry, I have missed our first meeting as I was sick that day. Instead of recorder role, would you mind to give me a role of presenter?
Response B: Fair enough, I missed the first meeting. Just in case guys, if the person who got the presenter role would like to switch with my role, I would not mind it.
Response C: Ok, I can do well in recorder, but if the presenter is unsatisfied the job to present the final work, you can think about me!
Response D: Could I maybe suggest to take the role of the presenter? I believe I'm better qualified for that role.
Response E: Is there any chances that I can become a presenter?
Response F: Oh thanks but what is the task for every member in our group?

Prior studies on refusals reported three components typically present in refusal speech act sets: 1) an expression of regret, 2) an excuse, and 3) an offer of alternative (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). As can be seen from Table 2, participants used some of these components and relied mostly on indirect strategies to communicate their intention to change group roles. While A, B, and C used multiple components such as expressions of regret/apologies, excuses/acknowledgements of responsibility, and offers of alternative in the form of indirect requests, D and E only used one speech act, indirectly requesting to serve as presenter. Participant F, while acknowledging the role assignment by the group, issued an interrogative speech act (arguably as a precursor to a request speech act) which may be interpreted as confrontational. The specific speech act components such as apologies and excuses lacking in some of these responses may be indicative of potential gaps in learners' socio-pragmatic awareness and may lead to communication issues where learners "might appear inappropriate (i.e., confrontational, presumptuous, vague) when making a refusal" (Tanck, 2004, p. 15). A situation involving another refusal speech act set is provided below.

Table 3

Selected Participant Responses (DCT# 3)

Situation: You have a question for your professor but cannot make it to the meeting date/time your professor suggests.
You: Excuse me, Professor Brown...I wanted to ask you about our homework assignment.
Professor: Sure. Can you come to my office tomorrow at 2

p.m.?
You: ……

Response A:	Sorry Professor, I have another class at 2 pm. But, I am available at 2:30 pm, is it possible for you?
Response B:	I'm sorry, I have something to do at that time, can you change another time?
Response C:	Oh no, I have some work tomorrow. Can you change the date please?
Response D:	Oh, no, sorry, I can't come tomorrow, do you have a time to discuss it today?
Response E:	Sorry, but I can't. Can we find another time better for us?
Response F:	It is a really quick question. Can I ask it now?

In this communicative situation between professor and student, a refusal speech act set may typically include 1) an expression of regret (e.g., I'm sorry), 2) an excuse (e.g., I have a class at that time), and 3) an offer of alternative or request (e.g., can you change the date please?) (Beebe, et al., 1990; Chen, 1996). As Table 3 indicates, while all three components were present in participants A, B, and C's responses, D and E used a direct refusal choosing not to provide an excuse. Participant F, on the other hand, issued a request with no expression of regret. As reported in Tanck (2004) and Chen (1996), an expression of regret or apology, while used frequently by native English speakers in the case of refusals, may be absent in the speech act sets performed by non-native English speakers. In addition, the performance of refusal without providing an excuse, especially in the context of a professor-student conversation, might be construed as vague or lacking in specificity, therefore leading to the issues regarding appropriate politeness strategies (Tanck, 2004).

Issues regarding performance of speech act sets might be attributed to learners' lack of exposure to specific language uses and conventional routines characterizing communicative practices in the target speech community (Coulmas, 1981). Speech act sets, especially requests, often rely on formulaic expressions such as speech formulas (e.g., "would you mind?", "could I ask…?", and "I was wondering if…"), which play a central role in language acquisition and production (Jucker, 2017; Kecskes, 2007; Wood, 2002). These expressions are reported to help speakers "cope with the complexity of many social situations, help structure

orderly and unambiguous communication, and help with a sense of group identity" (Wood, 2010, p. 52).

In summary, the findings, in addition to informing the academic language support curriculum, point toward the significance of engaging students in authentic, socio-culturally situated interactions so as to promote their awareness on the sociolinguistic conventions of the target speech community, including characteristics and patterns of speech act sets and formulaic expressions used to perform them. The acquisition of such sociolinguistic devices can help learners enrich their L2 socialization practices and promote their multifaceted engagement with the university life.

L2 Socialization Experiences

Findings from the semi-structured interviews are grouped under lenses of investment, audibility, and social capital. Extracts reproduced here are done so in the students' own words, without revision to grammar or sentence structure.

Investment

Norton's (1995) notion of investment refers to the fluid and complex nature of learner identity as expressed through desires and goals relative to the sociocultural context. Participants tightly linked the learning of English to the possibility of a better education, and perceived high-quality education, cultural diversity, and affordability as key reasons for investment in Canada. Joselyn[2] (Venezuela), for example, mentioned the opportunities afforded to immigrants in Canada, and voiced a perception that Canadian education was better than that offered in other countries. Perceived quality of education in Canada was a theme also expressed by Annie (China) and Charles (Russia). Other participants noted the quality of life: Samantha (Pakistan) described Canada as a "more peaceful country to live", while Jane (China) - reflecting the reality that parents are often a key part of the investment process as well - remarked, "We (parents and student) think Canada is more friendly country and they [parents] think maybe the economy".

Participants also indicated that while they were invested in English language learning outside of classroom instruction, they reported learning activities of a solitary nature, such as

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

downloading and reading articles and watching TED talks and Youtube videos. Although likely common to all students, these are noteworthy in their limitations for directly supporting development of sociolinguistic competence. This lack of social learning context indicates little opportunity for learners to practice negotiation of identity by engaging in complex communicative situations. Participants indicated the main resources for improvement in English were the institution's library and writing support center. Especially noteworthy is the fact that they seemed unaware of the many other resources available to support international students in their L2 socialization and academic work.

Audibility

Audibility refers to the legitimization of L2 learners relative to the target speech community (Miller, 2003). Participants expressed feelings of delegitimization in both on- and off-campus experiences as they faced interactive challenges. For example, Donald reported his experience attending a workshop on using Linked-In, a social media tool focusing on employment and business networking: "I stressed out. I couldn't answer. I couldn't understand anything. I just sit like a vegetable." Jane, an international student from China, described her sense of embarrassment at her inability to participate in dormitory conversations: "It is embarrassed sometimes. Most of time when the local girl and my roommate come from England, they communicate with fluent English; it is hard for me to listen. I just listen as they talk about."

While participation in PRE-ELS programming provided opportunities for interaction with instructors and other English Language Learners (ELLs), some study participants reported communicative challenges here as well. Kayla (China), for example, noted the difficulties of understanding the accents of international students from other countries, as did Kate (Mexico) who noted, "Many of them [her classmates] English is not their first language so trying to communicate with them is a little bit hard because of the pronunciation."

Off-campus experiences presented additional difficulties. Emma (India) described how she was known as a person who laughed a lot, but in her part-time job was scolded by a supervisor for laughing. Eve (Cuba) felt local people were "angry" at her for not understanding them.

Overall, the findings document students' preferences for what they perceive to be "Canadian English" models, as evidenced in two ways. First, having English native-speaking friends is a goal some want to achieve, though difficult to realize in practice. Participants agreed it is challenging to interact with locals, that there are limited opportunities to do so, and that they seldom do; those who did documented great difficulty. Second, participants expressed awareness of different accents, and how this can lead to communication problems. However, they agreed that since Canada is, at least in theory, open to diversity, everyone should be accountable for honouring others' languages, and participants felt they should be open and seek opportunities to learn.

Social capital.

Social capital refers to access to resources availed by social relationships. In this instance, access to native speakers represents opportunity for L2 socialization. Overall, however, participants noted limited social networks, and some expressed reluctance to socialize with Canadian native English-speaking students. They were not active in campus social clubs or social organizations, and few were involved in volunteer activities. The main viewpoint expressed was that they were relatively new to Canada and the university, and consequently needed time to adjust, or that they were simply unaware of opportunities to socialize. As Justin (China) summarized, when asked about his participation in social activities: "No (participation). I am a little bit shy because I am not get more fluency in English so I am shy to talk to them."

However, university residence provided a key source of networking and language interaction. Michael (Switzerland) noted participation in residence events. Justin (China) commented: "My dormitory we will host events like eating cakes and ice cream so we would eat together," and Melany (China) referenced a residence-planned movie night. Going shopping with other international students was mentioned by several participants as a common social activity. Even so, participants identified loneliness as a key adjustment at this phase of their experience as international students. Anthony (China) remarked: "I missed my home, my friends, my parents… all kinds of miss. Living alone." Similarly, Kate (Mexico) mentioned: "It was hard because I had to leave my twin sister and my little sister: this time I am alone."

Participants noted the Canadian penchant for politeness, with a high percentage valuing the politeness and hospitality they observed. Justin (China) noted that "People here are much hospitable" and his compatriot Anthony felt "Canadian people are very friendly to international students." Charles (Russia) described Canada as "immigrant friendly," and Mary, also from Russia, described an incident where she was aided by a stranger: "She was driving me to the store. She was very kind to me."

However, the culture of politeness also garnered some negative ascriptions. Kate (Mexico) commented: "They (Canadians) are really nice people, but for me they are too nice." Reese (China) noted the cultural habit of greeting strangers but asked, "I also feel a little bit tired of greeting people. Why? Why?" These comments demonstrate participants' overall limited and surface interaction with the target speech community, thus suggesting a lack of social capital to facilitate further sociolinguistic competence development.

This section considered participants' comments on their L2 socialization experiences, under the categories of investment, audibility, and social capital. On the whole, the interview data reveals that while the campus residence provides important opportunities for relationships and networking, study participants remain largely unconnected to the host culture and unengaged with the larger campus community. The next section discusses these findings and makes recommendations to further support the L2 socialization of international students.

Implications

The lack of opportunities for international students' L2 socialization with the host culture, thus facilitating the further enhancement of sociolinguistic competence, may well be the "elephant in the room" of many post-secondary language support programs. An exclusive focus on developing students' academic language and literacy overlooks this critical element of sociolinguistic development which would aid in student engagement and success. Events organized by institutions for international students to socialize with one another, while certainly engaging them in meaningful interactions, typically provide limited access to the host culture's sociolinguistic norms.

To be clear, the authors are not implying or suggesting the imposition of dominant linguistic or cultural norms on others, demanding certain linguistic or cultural behaviours in order to "fit in." We are not advocating "native speakers" as models for linguistic features; in an immigrant destination country like Canada such an approach is both unwise and likely impossible. Further, encouraging diversity, linguistically and culturally, is a stated value of the university at which this study takes place, and in Canadian society as a whole.

However, participants indicated a primary reason they chose to study in Canada was to improve their English, and sociolinguistic competence in the target language is a key element of language proficiency. By their own admission, participants recognized low competency in interactions with the host culture was a limiting factor in the language development perceived necessary for academic success, a cause of loneliness, and a reason for an overall lack of engagement in campus life. While not negating the value of linguistic and cultural diversity in aiding the institution's internationalization objectives, student success and engagement, like it or not, is closely tied to language proficiency in the institution's working language and medium of instruction.

Recommendations

The findings of this study point toward a number of recommendations for facilitating international students' sociolinguistic awareness and development, thus strengthening the potential for further academic engagement and success.

First, language support program and syllabus designers may want to consider the inclusion of opportunities for L2 socialization with the target speech community, as part of, not in addition to, language support curriculum. Findings of this study that highlight the importance of sociolinguistic awareness support the assertions of other studies (e.g., Trice, 2004; Cheng, Myles and Curtis, 2004), which advocate intentionality in facilitating meaningful interactions between international students and the host culture. But here we propose that such planned and intentional interactions be made part of language support course curriculum, not simply as "add-on" extracurricular activities.

We acknowledge that the above recommendation runs the risk of encountering discourse fault lines, across how

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction is variously "framed" as a disciplinary field, profession, "business" or "service" to other academic interests (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014, pp. 166ff). As an EAP colleague at another Canadian institution protested, "I'm not students' social convenor!" (Personal communication, 2017). However, we argue that an exclusive curricular focus on "academic" language, without considerations of sociolinguistic competence in the target language, ignores a key component necessary for engagement and success.

The authors believe there are ways to help facilitate L2 socialization without taking the role of "social convenor". Canadian students, for example, could be offered opportunities to volunteer in language support classrooms in a number of capacities. Closer coordination between language support programs and university faculties they are intended to support would provide multiple affordances for meaningful interaction between international students and the host culture within course content: attendance at guest lectures or special events, student-organized debates and presentations, and the like. Indeed, it could be argued that as hosts for large numbers of international students, institutions have an obligation to actively encourage such interface. Perhaps internationalization courses (ideally for credit, and even leading to minors or certificate programs) could be developed which offer Canadian students not only instruction on matters related to internationalization, cross-cultural competencies and the like, but also the incorporation of practical opportunities for meaningful interaction with international students. The tendency for institutions to focus on encouraging international students to socialize with each other, while well-intentioned, in our view ultimately limits the very levels of engagement such initiatives are intended to foster.

Second, findings of this study point toward the benefits of POST-ELS academic language support delivered alongside, rather than as a precursor to, discipline courses. We delineate between two models of language support with the terms PRE-ELS and POST-ELS. PRE-ELS models are typically characterized by sheltered instruction (classes consist only of other international students receiving English language tuition); may be of a gatekeeping nature (successful course completion is required for university admission); offer generalized content not focused on any one academic

discipline; and cease language support upon commencement of the degree program. Lack of social acculturation to the target speech community in university life has been identified as a shortcoming of traditional PRE-ELS programming (Tweedie & Kim, 2015). Distinguishing features of POST-ELS models include language support concurrent with degree programming; a less sheltered delivery mode, as international students attend mainstream classes alongside language support ones; and a focus on the integration of academic discipline content with language instruction.

Research on content-based instruction (CBI) reports that the pedagogical approach used in POST-ELS delivery brings relevance and authenticity to the language classroom, promoting student engagement, and mediates learners' acculturation into disciplinary discourses (Stoller, 2004). From an L2 development perspective, POST-ELS models also provide increased opportunities for learners to be exposed to and participate in L2-mediated social and academic interactions within the larger campus community. Unlike PRE-ELS students and the peripheral nature of their learning setting, learners in POST-ELS programs are a part of mainstream university life, which generally provides direct engagement with sociolinguistic conventions in the target language speech community.

Finally, results indicate the need for deepened coordination among the many stakeholders providing institutional support systems for international students. As with any large organization, communication across departments presents a challenge, and all too often the left hand does not know what the right is doing. This article's authors, for example, are aware of multiple learning supports offered to international students, some through individual faculties, and some offered centrally through campus-wide initiatives of which study participants seemed largely unaware. While expressing personal challenges of adjustment to being alone, and of relating to native speakers, none of the participants were, for example, aware of a free English support program, staffed by local volunteer students, intended to help international students build confidence in conversation and a campus relational network. This gap in awareness between programs and their intended beneficiaries speaks to the need for heightened coordination and communication across campus departments.

Conclusion

This study considered the nature of sociolinguistic engagement among post-secondary international students in English language support programming. Data were collected through discourse completion tasks eliciting a set of speech acts from learners, as well as semi-structured interviews on students' L2 socialization experiences. Findings indicated that while grammatically correct, some student responses were specifically marked by the absence of authentic speech acts, and at times the performed speech acts did not appropriately match the underlying socio-cultural features of the conversation including formality, politeness, and directness. Findings suggest that present models of language support, which focus almost exclusively on development of academic language and literacy, largely overlook the importance of direct engagement with the target speech community and its sociolinguistic characteristics. We recommend that such engagement be delivered deliberately and intentionally as part of the language support curriculum, in an effort to further facilitate the sociolinguistic competence which is an important element in student experience as engaged and successful learners. In this regard, the authors foreground the potential of POST-ELS language support as a salient way of providing meaningful interactions between international students and the target speech community.

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