
Negotiating Participation and Identity in Second Language Academic Communities

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This article reports on a qualitative multiple case study that explored the academic discourse socialization experiences of L2 learners in a Canadian university. Grounded in the notion of “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 89), the study examined how L2 learners negotiated their participation and membership in their new L2 classroom communities, particularly in open-ended class discussions. The participants included 6 female graduate students from Japan and 10 of their course instructors. Student self-reports, interviews, and classroom observations were collected over an entire academic year to provide an in-depth, longitudinal analysis of the students’ perspectives about their class participation across the curriculum. Three case studies illustrate that students faced a major challenge in negotiating competence, identities, and power relations, which was necessary for them 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. Implications for classroom practices and future research are also discussed.

Given the growing population of linguistically and culturally diverse students in North American colleges and universities, understanding how these students participate in their new academic communities and acquire academic discourses in their second language (L2) has become critical. Thus, this study closely examines L2 learners’ perspectives about their participation in primarily oral activities in university content courses. As I demonstrate in this article, the issue of L2 participation and socialization is closely related to important issues such as identity, competence, power, access, and agency (Duff, 2002; Norton & Toohey, 2002). By drawing on various sociocultural theories, particularly

a *community-of-practice* (COP) perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), I analyzed how a group of L2 students¹ from Japan negotiated their participation and membership in their new academic communities in a Canadian university. A longitudinal and in-depth investigation of the students' inner voices revealed how they negotiated their identities and exercised their personal agency to take ownership of their learning.

THE STUDY OF ACADEMIC SOCIALIZATION

To examine how L2 learners are socialized into academic discourse, scholars in applied linguistics have taken a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. This area of research has at least two major orientations. One is a product-oriented approach that focuses on identifying what learners need to know to participate competently in a given academic community. A common type of product-oriented research uses a needs-analysis survey to find out what kinds of academic tasks are assigned in various disciplines and what academic and language skills are required to successfully complete those tasks (e.g., Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b). Another product-oriented approach, which has been popular in English for academic purposes, is genre-based research (Swales, 1990). Many studies employing this approach have traditionally attempted to identify the specific linguistic and rhetorical conventions of a disciplinary community that newcomers, including L2 learners, need to master (e.g., Swales & Feak, 1994). These lines of research tend to treat disciplinary socialization, although often implicitly, as a one-way assimilation into a relatively stable academic community with fixed rules and conventions.

The other approach, which is process oriented, asks how students are socialized. Scholars taking this approach investigate the *situated* or socially and temporally constructed process by which newcomers become socialized into academic discourses at various levels of schooling (e.g., Belcher, 1994; Casanave, 1992, 1995; Duff, 2001, 2002; Harklau, 1999, 2000; Morita, 2000; Prior, 1998; Spack, 1997; Toohey, 2000). Using primarily qualitative research, researchers have shown that academic socialization is not simply a matter of acquiring pre-given knowledge and

¹ In this study, I use terms such as *L2 learner/student*, *L2 international student*, and *nonnative English speaker* to refer to individuals who study in a language other than their first in an academic setting. Although I am aware that I risk stigmatizing or essentializing these individuals, I use these labels to highlight the fact that the students are simultaneously learning a second language and academic content/practices. I use the terms also because they are commonly used not only in the literature but also at this study's research site. However, the descriptions of the focal students and their classroom experiences show that they are multidimensional, complex social beings.

sets of skills but involves a complex process of negotiating identities, cultures, or power relations. Some researchers also argue that a given academic community can have multiple, changing, and sometimes competing discourses, which can make newcomers' socialization less predictable and less linear (Canagarajah, 1999; Duff, 2002; Harklau, 2000). Furthermore, some argue that disciplinary socialization needs to be viewed as a two-way negotiation rather than a unidirectional enculturation (e.g., Casanave, 1995; Prior, 1998; Zamel, 1997): Not only do learners from diverse backgrounds negotiate academic discourses, but discourse communities can change as newcomers join them.

Although both product- and process-oriented approaches are important, this study uses the latter approach. It also attempts to address at least two gaps in the existing literature. First, both product- and process-oriented research have tended to focus on written genres or traditional literacy skills and activities such as academic writing (e.g., Belcher & Braine, 1995; Silva & Matsuda, 2001; Swales & Feak, 1994; Zamel & Spack, 1998). In contrast, L2 learners' socialization through primarily oral activities such as discussions and presentations has received relatively limited attention. An emergent line of qualitative research, however, has documented a variety of challenges, conflicts, and tensions that L2 learners may experience when participating in such activities in mainstream content classrooms (Duff, 2001, 2002; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2000; Toohey, 2000). Second, L2 research has not reflected learners' voices. In particular, classroom interaction analysis (e.g., Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) has traditionally relied on observable classroom behavior, which the researcher often analyzes based on a predefined coding scheme, while neglecting participants' views and intentions (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). Therefore, such analysis yields limited knowledge about L2 learners' perspectives, especially those learners who may have little observable verbal behavior in the classroom. In the meantime, the relative silence of L2 minority students in the mainstream classroom has started to receive some attention in the literature (Duff, 2001, 2002; Goldstein, Schecter, & Pon, 2002; Losey, 1997). These studies have revealed the socially constructed nature of silence as well as its significance, suggesting the need to further explore this issue.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is situated broadly following a recent trend in the applied linguistics literature that views language learning as a fundamentally social, cultural, and temporal activity. It draws variously from three research approaches within this trend, namely, language socialization (Duff, 1995; Ochs, 1988), activity theory and neo-Vygotskian research

(Lantolf, 2000), and critical discourse research (Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 2001). It is also informed by theoretical perspectives that use community-based metaphors to describe language-mediated social practices, including academic practices (e.g., Bizzell, 1992; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Prior, 1998). These perspectives assume that learning and socialization entail a process of gaining competence and membership in a discourse community. Although different assumptions exist about the notions of *discourse* and *discourse community*, I follow the perspectives that consider a discourse community as open, conflictual, and dynamic rather than autonomous, coherent, or static (Prior, 1998). Central to this study's theoretical and analytical framework is the concept of COP (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Lave and Wenger's model has been useful for interpreting a wide range of L2 learning situations such as group projects in university courses (Leki, 2001), Grade 1 classroom practices (Toohey, 1998), academic writing for scholarly publication (Casanave, 1998; Flowerdew, 2000), relationships between graduate student and adviser (Belcher, 1994), and immigrant women's language learning practices (Norton, 2001). Lave and Wenger view learning as a socially situated process by which newcomers gradually move toward fuller participation in a given community's activities by interacting with more experienced community 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 students, become increasingly competent in academic ways of knowing, speaking, and writing as they participate peripherally and legitimately in academic practices.

According to Wenger (1998), peripherality and legitimacy are necessary to make newcomers' actual participation possible. *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). The term also indicates that individuals can belong in a COP in multiple ways, not just at the core or the margin, and that individuals' positions within a COP can change over time. Wenger (1998) has discussed the concept of *legitimacy*:

In order to be on an inbound trajectory, newcomers must be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members. . . . Only with legitimacy can all their inevitable stumblings and violations become opportunities for learning rather than cause for dismissal, neglect, or exclusion. (p. 101)

Thus, a certain level of legitimacy is essential for learning. However, as I report in this article, different learners may be granted different degrees

of legitimacy depending on how a given COP organizes social relations of power (see Leki, 2001).

Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that LPP is never a matter of peaceful transmission and assimilation but a conflictual process of negotiation and transformation because legitimate peripherality is always implicated in social structures involving power relations: “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” (p. 42). In other words, although having access to a wide range of resources is crucial for newcomers, power relations in COPs can organize access in a way either to promote or prevent their LPP. Lave and Wenger also stress the transformative nature of COPs: Change is inherent in COPs and their activities because “activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives are mutually constitutive” (p. 117).

Seen in this light, newcomer’s socialization into academic discourse is far more complex than their unproblematically appropriating established knowledge and skills. 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 a given academic community’s practices as well as of the participants’ identities. Based on this dynamic view, this study examined the discourse socialization experiences of a group of international graduate students. These students were socialized into many overlapping communities simultaneously (e.g., the larger speech community, general academic community, disciplinary community, institutional community), but this study focused on the classroom communities to which the students belonged locally and treated those communities as a particular kind of COP because the students, who were new to Canadian graduate school, were primarily concerned with their course work and everyday classroom experiences. I also believe that academic discourse socialization is a locally situated interactional process rather than an autonomous assimilation to broader disciplinary cultures (Casanave, 1995; Prior, 1998). This does not mean that I consider the classroom as a discrete entity that is independent of larger communities. Rather, by closely examining the students’ views and experiences within the classroom, this study shows how the classroom can be an important locus where learners negotiate their roles and positions in various levels of the academic communities that surround them.

The central purpose of this study was to better understand how L2 students participate and negotiate membership in their new L2 classroom communities. The data analysis and interpretation were guided by the following sets of questions that were developed from the theoretical

framework outlined earlier as well as the ongoing data collection and analysis:

- How do L2 students negotiate competence and identities in their new L2 classroom communities as they participate in primarily oral activities such as open-ended discussions?
- 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?
- What kinds of roles or positionalities do L2 students negotiate in the classroom? What are the relationships between their agency, positionality, classroom participation, and personal transformation?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative (or ethnographic) multiple case study approach to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of learners' lived experiences and perspectives (Duff, in press; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). In keeping with a tradition in qualitative research, I aimed 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. Achieving this goal required triangulation of multiple methods, data sources, and viewpoints. The study documented the participants' changing thoughts and feelings about everyday classroom practices across the curriculum over an extended period of time, revealing their varying struggles as well as personally significant transformations.

Context and Participants

This study was undertaken at a large research-oriented university in western Canada. The primary participants were six female, first-year master's degree students from Japan in three different departments (language education, educational studies, and Asian studies). All had agreed to participate by responding to a letter sent to all incoming graduate students from Japan in eight departments. They were all born in Japan, considered Japanese their first language (the language they were most comfortable with), and therefore could all be characterized as *international students from Japan* or *Asian female students* in the Canadian classroom. However, they in fact came from a variety of backgrounds that affected how they participated in the classroom. The group can be

divided into three subgroups based on age and educational/professional background: (a) three students in their early 20s who had recently completed their bachelor's degree in Japan and had very limited or no professional experience; (b) two students in their late 20s who came with a master's degree from a Japanese university and some teaching experience; (c) 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. Table 1 provides a more detailed overview of the six students.² Another group of participants included 10 university instructors who taught the focal students and agreed to be interviewed.

Data Collection

Data were collected concerning the students' participation in open-ended discussions such as whole-class and small-group discussions commonly used in graduate seminars during an entire academic year (1999–2000). To allow data to be triangulated, multiple collection methods were used (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). First, the focal students reported every week about the classes they were attending and their participation in them. They reported data about one to three courses each per term through e-mail, face-to-face, or telephone communication. In total, 283 reports were collected about 16 courses (14 graduate seminars; 2 senior-level undergraduate courses). Second, three sets of formal interviews were conducted with the students (18 interviews; average 1.7 hours each). Whereas weekly reports tended to provide the students' immediate reactions to their classes, formal interviews conducted at the end of each term provided more retrospective accounts. Third, I observed some of the courses the students were taking on a weekly basis for the entire academic year (59 lessons in 5 courses; 151 hours of observation in total). I took a "peripheral membership role" (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 380) as a participant observer; that is, I established membership in the classroom by attending every week and observing and interacting with others, but I did not participate in class activities. Observation provided valuable insights regarding not only the overall nature and interactional patterns of a given class, but also the focal students' verbal and nonverbal behavior and informal interactions with peers and instructors, which they might not have described in their reports. Fourth, I interviewed the course instructors once about their courses, the focal students' participation, and their views on issues surrounding (international) graduate

² Pseudonyms are used for all the names of research participants and locations.

TABLE 1
Overview of Case Study Participants

	LISA	JUN	RIE	NANAKO	EMIKO	SHIHO
Program	MEd in TESL	MEd in TESL	MA in educational studies	MA in educational studies	MA in Japanese linguistics	MA in Japanese linguistics
Age	29	42	27	23	24	23
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
First language	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Previous degrees	BA, MA	BA	BA, MA	BA	BA	BA
Professional experience	High school teacher of EFL in Japan (3 years)	High school teacher of EFL in Japan (16 years)	High school teacher of Japanese history in Japan (1 year)	None	High school teacher of EFL in Japan (1.5 years)	None
Experience outside Japan	Intensive ESL program in United States (3 weeks)	Took students to Canada as an escort teacher (many times)	Studied Italian in Italy (4 weeks)	Lived and went to school in Canada (age 6-7)	Intensive ESL program in England (8 weeks)	Lived in Korea (age 2-6); lived and went to school in England (age 10-14)
Plan after graduating	Teach at college level in Japan; study at doctoral level in North America	Go back to current teaching job in Japan	Teach at secondary or college level in Japan	Study at doctoral level in North America	Teach Japanese outside Japan	Teach Japanese outside Japan
Other		Took 1 year leave from current teaching job	Korean citizen born and raised in Japan			Went to a Japanese high school for returnees

students' academic socialization (10 interviews; average 1.2 hours each). Relevant documents, such as course syllabi, were also collected. Table 2 shows the data collection methods and the database.

Analysis

Following a tradition in qualitative research, data analysis was primarily inductive: Categories and themes emerged mainly from the collected data, and preliminary hypotheses about the settings and participants were grounded in direct experience at the research site (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). 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 participants' own language, concepts, and classification scheme (e.g., class atmosphere, lack of confidence, nervousness, not wanting to make

TABLE 2
Summary of Database

Methods	Data collection period (September 1999–April 2000)	Data
Weekly self-reports by students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • 1-3 times per week, per student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email messages • Audiotaped face-to-face or telephone conversations • Written journals • 283 reports total, about 16 different courses
Interviews with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview 1: Beginning of academic year • Interview 2: End of Term 1 • Interview 3: End of Term 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiotaped and transcribed interviews • 18 interviews total • Average 1.7 hours each
Classroom observations	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field notes on 59 lessons in 5 courses (151 hours of observation)
Interviews with instructors	Once with each instructor toward the end of the courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiotaped and transcribed interviews • 10 interviews total • Average 1.2 hours each
Documents	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outlines • Handouts for presentations • Self-evaluations of class participation

mistakes, obligation to speak). After the data collection was completed and certain recurring themes were identified, more theoretical categories and constructs were generated both from the data and relevant literature, and patterns and relations between the categories were explored. Such categories included competent participation, classroom membership, legitimacy, identity negotiation, power negotiation, personal agency, and so on. Once the data were coded according to salient themes and categories, tentative hypotheses were developed 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 (i.e., *within-case analysis*: Merriam, 1998). Comparing a given student's experiences in different courses was particularly informative. Emergent hypotheses were also tested across the individual students (i.e., *cross-case analysis*). In particular, I gained interesting insights by comparing and contrasting the experiences of a given pair of students who took the same course.³ The analysis also benefited greatly from the triangulation of multiple perspectives and viewpoints: I was able to incorporate three or more different viewpoints—the focal student(s), instructor(s), and the researcher—for the courses I observed.

The Researcher and the Researched

The focal students and I shared a similar background as well as the same gender. In many ways, I was an insider to them: We all spoke Japanese, were studying in Canada as female foreign students, and even shared similar academic interests (language and education). This helped me to better understand their needs and perspectives, develop rapport, and create opportunities for reciprocity as well as for highly interactive and dialogic research. At the same time, we occupied slightly different social (e.g., age) and institutional positions (e.g., master's versus doctoral student), which also shaped our relationships. For instance, to most of the students, I was a friendly *senpai*⁴ or someone slightly senior to them with more academic experience. This status difference seemed to help the students to talk candidly about their problems and difficulties with me. However, they may also have constructed themselves as less knowledgeable or less experienced than I was, which might have had implications for their class participation (when I was present) as well as for the kinds of data collected.

³ The six students belonged to three departments, two in each department, and each pair was taking at least one course together.

⁴ A Japanese term that is normally translated as "senior" in English.

FINDINGS

To address each of the questions, I first summarize the overall findings regarding all six students, and then highlight one student's experience as a particularly telling case. All six students' experiences in multiple courses were analyzed extensively and described in full detail in a narrative form, showing both the commonality and variability that existed among the participants. Because space is limited, however, I present only three case study examples here.

Negotiating Competence and Identity in the Classroom

Analysis suggested that a major challenge for the students was negotiating discourses, competence, identities, and power relations so that they could participate and be recognized as a legitimate and competent member of a given classroom community. The ways in which the students engaged in such negotiations varied widely, depending on the local classroom context as well as on the individual student's personal history, values, and goals. Although I found interesting examples and intriguing issues regarding the negotiation of discourses and power (see Morita, 2002), in this article I focus on the negotiation of competence and identity, which appeared to be central to the students' classroom experiences across the curriculum. COP understands *competence* as situated abilities—abilities that a given COP values (Wenger, 1998). By the same token, COP recognizes *identity* as situated and constructed within a COP.

The focal students constructed various identities that were often based on their changing sense of competence as a member of a given classroom community. A common identity described by many of them was being less competent than others. Students seemed to develop this type of identity based on the difficulties they were experiencing in the classroom, such as not fully understanding reading materials, lectures, or class discussions, and not being able to contribute to discussions as much as others (including their native-English-speaking and nonnative-English-speaking classmates). At the same time, students often constructed such an identity based on their sense of how others might perceive them; Lisa, Jun, Nanako, and Emiko were all concerned to varying degrees about being viewed as less competent by their peers and instructors because they perceived their proficiency in English as limited or because they did not speak often in class. Nanako, for instance, feared that her classmates might think of her as “not very intelligent” because she felt that she “often sounded stupid or not very logical” in English. In some classrooms, however, students were able to develop an identity as a relatively

competent classroom member. For example, Shiho reported that she was able to contribute effectively in one of her courses and received positive feedback, which helped her to construct an identity as a competent and valued member. This in turn seemed to enhance her participation: In her weekly reports, she often commented how she enjoyed “being really involved in the discussion and being part of the class” (Shiho, weekly report, October 19, 1999). But one notable finding was that these identities could change: The same students could participate differently and negotiate different identities in different classroom contexts or in similar contexts over time. Rie, for example, played two contrasting roles in two different courses (see Example 3), and Lisa’s subjectivity changed gradually over the course of the academic year (see Example 1).

Example 1. Lisa’s Negotiation of Competence and Membership

Lisa was 29 years old and had a background in teaching EFL at a Japanese high school. She came to Canada with a strong motivation to learn about language education and gain access to the research community in that field. A major challenge she faced in her courses was not being able to contribute to class discussions as much as she desired:

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, December 10, 1999; original in English)

Over the course of the academic year, Lisa mentioned multiple reasons it was difficult for her to speak in class, including her limited English listening comprehension, limited content knowledge, fear of making English mistakes, and feeling inferior to her classmates. From a traditional psycholinguistic perspective on SLA, Lisa’s challenge is linguistic problems accompanied by psychological issues such as anxiety and insecurity. From a COP perspective, however, her challenge is negotiating competence and membership in the classroom. On one hand, she had a strong desire to participate as a competent and responsible member:

I always feel that I have to say something in class to contribute to the class. . . . A small thing is okay. . . . It’s not just about my own participation, it’s about cooperation. . . . I have to play some role in the classroom. (Lisa, Interview 1, September 30, 1999; original in English)

On the other hand, she often hesitated to speak because she was afraid of making English mistakes and being judged as a less competent participant by her peers and instructors:

I didn't want to make English mistakes in front of other students. I wanted to say something but at the same time I didn't want to say because I didn't want to let them know my English wasn't perfect. So I really hesitated to speak in class. (Lisa, Interview 2, December 10, 1999)

Thus, Lisa was primarily afraid that she would not meet her classroom communities' expectations regarding competence, especially linguistic competence. Because most of her courses were about language education, and most of the students, including herself, were English teachers, speaking imperfect English was particularly face-threatening for her.

The following excerpt also clearly shows Lisa's concern about her classroom membership. She describes 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. (Lisa, Interview 1, September 30, 1999)

Lisa seems to be negotiating not only her competence but also her identities: On one hand, she does not want to be constructed as less competent by not performing the task or performing it "terribly," but on the other, she is somewhat relieved to be recognized as someone with limited English who might receive help from others.

Faced with this challenge, Lisa seemed determined to improve her oral skills and participation because she had a strong sense of personal investment in her overseas studies. She employed a variety of strategies, including speaking in less face-threatening situations, such as small group discussions; preparing a few things to say before each class; telling her classmates and instructors that she wanted to speak in class, which in turn elicited their scaffolding for her to speak; asking questions to instructors individually after class when possible; and maximizing her opportunities to speak academic English outside the classroom (e.g., presenting a paper at a student conference). As she continued to confront her challenges, she also experienced significant personal transformations. She felt increasingly able to contribute to class discussions and gradually gained more confidence, even though it was a "slow

progress with many moments of self-doubt.” She also became more tolerant of her own perceived limited English and oral performance; reflecting on her participation in one class toward the end of the year, she said, “Even though my comment wasn’t very rich, I didn’t care at all. I just wanted to say my opinion” (Lisa, weekly report, February 17, 2000; author’s translation from Japanese). Her profound transformation, however, occurred around her identity as a nonnative speaker. Although before the study she understood nonnative speakers—herself included—largely in terms of their limitations or deficiency, she gradually began to see such a notion as negative and problematic and started to see herself as an English speaker in a more positive light. The following excerpt from her final report illustrates her transformation:

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. . . . 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, weekly report, March 30, 2000; original in English)

In sum, analyzing Lisa’s perspectives indicated that negotiating her sense of competence and identity presented a significant challenge, and that this negotiation influenced and was influenced by her class participation. Her commitment to improvements, however, allowed her to employ various strategies, and as a result, she experienced some positive personal transformations.

Voices Behind the Silence in the Classroom

As was readily apparent from observations and from student reports and interviews, most of the focal students tended to be reticent in many of their courses. The apparently passive participation of L2 learners, especially learners from certain Asian cultures, is often explained by language learning anxiety (Hilleson, 1996; Tsui, 1996) or cultural tendencies (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Jones, 1999; Turner & Hiraga, 1996). Gender- or race-related biases and stereotypes also contribute to the silence of certain learners in some contexts (Losey, 1997; Norton, 2000). Given that the students in this study were all Asian women, one might assume that their silence resulted largely from their gender or cultural roles, whether they played such roles willingly or others imposed such roles on them. However, the students themselves mentioned a wide variety of reasons for their relative silence: In addition to linguistic and cultural reasons, they included limited content knowledge, personal tendency and preference, learning goals, identity as a less competent

member, outsider or marginal status, role as a relative newcomer, role as someone with limited English imposed by others, and instructor's pedagogical style.⁵ These reasons were often context-specific; that is, one student's silence might have different causes or meanings across classroom contexts or in the same context over time. In other words, analyzing the students' perspectives indicated that gender, culture, or language alone did not explain their relative silence in all contexts. Another important finding was that the students were actively negotiating their multiple roles and identities in the classroom even when they appeared passive or withdrawn. Nanako's experience in three courses offers a particularly clear example of these findings.

Example 2. Nanako's Silences

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. . . . I just sat there like an ornament. (Nanako, Interview 3, May 12, 2000; author's translation from Japanese)

Nanako, a 23-year-old, came to Canada soon after graduating from university and was pursuing her first master's degree. She tended to be quiet in all her courses throughout the academic year, but, as she mentioned, she felt that she was reticent for different reasons in different courses. Here I summarize her experiences in Courses E, F, and G, all of which were on topics related to educational research and issues. Courses E and F were graduate seminars each taught by a female instructor, and both had about 15 students, a mixture of master's and doctoral students. Course G was a senior-level undergraduate course also taught by a female instructor with about 40 students.

In Course E, Nanako had difficulty following the fast-paced 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." Not

⁵ The students less commonly attributed their silence to gender or race/ethnicity. Some contextual aspects of the courses they were taking may account for this finding: Female students were often the overwhelming majority and many of them were active, vocal participants; the majority of the instructors were females; and the student groups often included many individuals with Asian backgrounds. In other words, the focal students did not seem to feel marginalized or silenced as minorities in terms of gender or race/ethnicity in most of their courses. One exception was Nanako's experience in Course G, which will be discussed later.

understanding the jokes or playful comments people often made also frustrated her. She described her feelings in a journal entry:

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 . . . ? Why can I not speak up in class? . . . 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, October, 12, 1999; original in English)

She also mentioned her challenge of constructing a viable identity:

I hesitate to speak not only because I'm the only non-native speaker in the class but I'm also the youngest. . . . My classmates have more experience in teaching and research or in life and society in general. I feel like a baby in that class. (Nanako, Interview 1, September 29, 1999; author's translation from Japanese)

Thus, her sense of being a less experienced or less knowledgeable member contributed to her silence, which also served as a face-saving strategy for her.

It is interesting that Nanako's view about her own silence changed after she asked the instructor for advice. Nanako was surprised to learn that the instructor did not seem to consider her silence as a problem. Instead, she assured Nanako that international students often need time to get used to "North American interactional styles," and that Nanako was entitled to keep her cultural style of participation if she wanted to. Another eye-opening insight she gained from the instructor was that as an outsider, she might have an advantage:

What she told me was, I may be disadvantaged by things like English abilities . . . 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, December 15, 1999; author's translation from Japanese)

These insights had a significant impact on the way Nanako felt in the classroom and, in her words, "changed the way [she] adjusted to academic life in Canada." Even though her visible classroom behavior did not change, she now felt that she could stay legitimately silent and that her outsider status and perspective could be a strength rather than a weakness.

In Course F, Nanako also found participating in classroom interactions challenging. As in Course E, her identity as a less experienced member and the "very theoretical" course content contributed to her

silence. In Course F, however, she felt that international students—who all happened to be master’s students—were largely “ignored” and marginalized:

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. (Nanako, Interview 2, December 15, 1999)

The division was also apparent in small-group discussions. Nanako was shocked when a native-English-speaking doctoral student told the class that she had “nothing to learn from small-group discussions.” Nanako was also unable to obtain support from the Course F instructor, another reason she felt silenced. Perhaps encouraged her experience in Course E, she consulted the instructor about her difficulty following discussions. To her disappointment, however, the instructor “did not seem to care” about her problems and “offered no constructive advice.”

In Course G, Nanako fell almost completely silent. She noted two major reasons for her silence, aside from her perceived limited English abilities. First, although she was interested in the course’s core issue, gender and education, Nanako had little background knowledge about a major topic of the course, North American popular culture. Consequently, she had limited understanding of the discussions and the videos. Second, she believed that her ethnicity or race and her institutional role contributed to her sense of isolation and marginalization. From her viewpoint, her classmates were mostly “young undergraduate Caucasian women,” and she did not know “how to relate to them.” At the same time, neither her classmates nor the instructor invited her into discussions or encouraged her to share her perspectives. It is interesting that Nanako felt marginalized in a course with all female participants that examined gender-related issues from a critical feminist perspective. From Nanako’s perspective, her language, culture, course content, ethnicity, institutional status, and other issues still alienated her from her classmates.

To summarize, Nanako’s silences in the three courses had different meanings, causes, and outcomes as she positioned herself or was positioned variously in them. In Course E, she felt that the instructor legitimized her silence, which helped her 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 Course G, her silence was closely connected to her strong sense of alienation, which was created by many contextual aspects of the course.

Agency, Positionality, Participation, and Transformation

The third major finding was that the students attempted to shape their own learning and participation by exercising their personal agency and actively negotiating their roles or positionalities in their classroom communities. My view of agency is based on two theoretical perspectives: neo-Vygotskian approaches and critical discourse perspectives. The former emphasizes that agency arises out of individuals' engagement in the social world. 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). Within critical approaches, particularly the models based on what Canagarajah (1999) calls "resistance theories" (p. 22), individuals are accorded agency to resist being positioned marginally in dominant discourses and to fashion alternative subject positions that fulfill their goals and purposes (Canagarajah, 1999; McKay & Wong, 1996; Rampton, 1995).

As noted earlier, many of the students tended to participate minimally and seemed to occupy a relatively peripheral or marginal position in many (not all) of their courses. The data showed that they responded to such positioning in different ways and with various outcomes. First, in some cases, the students tried to gain fuller membership and participate more actively by employing various strategies (see, e.g., Example 1). Shiho tried to participate in a course where she was constructed as a relatively inexperienced member; in addition to using certain interactional strategies (e.g., speaking in earlier stages of a discussion), she foregrounded a positive role that newcomers could play (e.g., introducing fresh perspectives) and attempted to behave accordingly. She felt that these strategies worked well and reported that they enabled her "make adequate contributions as a newcomer who potentially had an important role to play in an academic setting" (Shiho, Interview 3, April 26, 2000; author's translation from Japanese).

Second, many of the students sought support from instructors by talking to them one-on-one outside the classroom. Notably, in addition to seeking advice, some students asked their instructor to accommodate their needs as an L2 speaker or an international student. For example, Emiko, who felt extremely nervous about speaking in class, asked her instructor not to call on her during whole-class discussions. The instructor accepted her request with the condition that she would start participating more actively when she felt ready to do so. This negotiation had interesting consequences: Although Emiko was able to "relax and learn better," she felt increasingly "isolated" as she eventually became the only person not participating orally. Furthermore, somewhat ironically,

her prolonged silence became difficult to break and made speaking again even more difficult. In other cases, instructors rejected the students' request (see Example 3).

Third, although some students desired to fully adjust to the new academic culture, others seemed to be more selective and remained at the periphery. Jun, for instance, did not appreciate certain aspects of what she saw as "the Canadian classroom culture" (e.g., "free-flow discussions," "confrontational interactions") and avoided participating in some of the discussions. As a result, she often felt "like an outsider" (Jun, Interview 3, May 5, 2000; author's translation from Japanese). Fourth, the students resisted in various ways when they felt that others were marginalizing, silencing, or imposing certain roles or identities on them (see Example 3). Less overt forms of resistance included withdrawing completely from class discussions (Nanako in Course G), avoiding speaking in front of the instructor who seemed to assign the student a negative role (Lisa, Jun, Emiko), and internally (i.e., in one's mind) rejecting the negative role assigned by others and developing a more positive identity (e.g., Lisa: "someone with a potential to improve" rather than "someone with limitations"; weekly report, February 3, 2000; original in English). These attempts at resistance, whether overt or covert, did not seem to change the ways that the students were treated in the classroom; nevertheless, they reflected the students' ongoing struggles to negotiate their multiple identities and to take control of their academic life.

As the students enacted their personal agency in various ways in response to the classroom's social, cultural, or pedagogical contexts, some of them experienced significant personal transformations related to their identity, values about learning and teaching, or approaches to their academic socialization. As discussed in Example 1, Lisa achieved her transformations through ongoing inner struggles and continuous efforts. Example 2 illustrates how Nanako's view about her participation and socialization in the Canadian classroom changed when she sought support from her instructor. Example 3 will show how Rie had to modify her learning approach in one course when she felt that her marginal position did not improve despite her resistance.

Example 3. Rie's Positionalities and Resistance

Rie, a 27-year-old third-generation Korean, was born and raised in Japan. Although she felt most comfortable speaking Japanese and was educated in Japanese schools, she strongly held her identity as a Korean. Her main goal in Canada was to study multicultural education; she chose

this topic not simply because it was one of her academic interests, but because it reflected her personal struggle as a minority student in Japanese schools.⁶ As the following example illustrates, Rie's personal history as a minority and dealing with issues of inequality greatly influenced the way she negotiated her power and identity in the Canadian classroom.

Rie was taking two graduate seminars in Term 1, Courses J and F, which were both on educational issues and taught by a female instructor. It is interesting that Rie had very different experiences in these courses despite their apparent similarities in content, format, class size, and student members: In Course J, she could participate actively and meaningfully, but in Course F she could not. This difference was closely related to the contrasting positionalities she occupied in the courses. In Course J, she seemed to have been constructed as a valued member; her personal experiences, knowledge, and unique perspectives as a minority student in Japan had currency, and the class seemed to appreciate her contributions. The instructor once told Rie that her contributions were "very thoughtful and added a great deal to the experience of the students" (Rie, weekly report, December 1, 1999; author's translation from Japanese), and she often helped the international students by providing background information about the local educational systems, which in turn helped Rie to understand and participate in discussions. Rie summarized her experience in Course J as follows:

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 they gave me positive feedback. . . . 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, weekly report, December 1, 1999; author's translation from Japanese, italics added)

The last sentence above is important because it reveals that her (inter)subjectivity, in this case a positive one, was central to her experience in the course.

In contrast, Rie seemed to have a marginal status in Course F, as did Nanako in the same course (see Example 2). Although she had a strong interest in the subject matter, she had difficulty with the course readings, class discussions, and videos shown in class because they included topics,

⁶ Koreans, the largest minority group in Japan, are a well-known target for discrimination. Although many Koreans are born in Japan, speak Japanese, and sometimes even adopt Japanese names, they often face biases and prejudice against them in educational and other institutions (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

theories, and discourses that were mostly foreign to her. Like Nanako, she also felt that international students tended to be ignored, while doctoral students and the instructor dominated the discussions. What makes Rie's story compelling, however, is that she actively resisted her marginality and attempted to reposition herself. As someone who had always questioned and struggled with the issue of educational equity, Rie felt that it was "not only natural but also important to claim [her] right to learn" (Rie, Interview 2, December 11, 1999; author's translation from Japanese). First, she expressed her needs as an L2 speaker vocally during classes: "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, weekly report, October 4, 1999; original in English). She also wrote an email message to the instructor and appealed for help. In the message, she not only described the problems and her ongoing efforts to overcome them, but also asked the instructor to make certain adjustments in her teaching (e.g., speaking more slowly with "shorter sentences," providing background information to international students). In addition, her message conveyed a sense of resistance, as the following excerpt shows:

In spite of the development of the media, *I, from the opposite half of the earth*, am not so familiar with such western issues. . . . 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, e-mail communication, October 7, 1999; original in English, italics added)

Her use of the term *voiceless* is notable because she borrowed it from the instructor, who emphasized the notion in connection with educational equity. From Rie's perspective, however, the instructor was not adequately dealing with the issue of voiceless learners in her own classroom.

In response, the instructor told Rie by email that she had already made most of the adjustments Rie had requested and that the issue was a "language barrier." Rie did not agree with this (she told me later) because she felt that she was learning and participating well in Course J in spite of her language limitations. The instructor 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" (Rie, e-mail communication, October 7, 1999). What is important about this exchange is that they were implicitly negotiating each other's roles, statuses, or power. Although Rie projected herself as a legitimate but marginalized participant, the instructor constructed Rie essentially as someone with a deficit. Also, though the instructor characterized the issue ultimately as Rie's personal problem (which should be solved by Rie herself), Rie felt that it was part of the instructor's responsibility to meet

the needs of learners like her. In other words, they were negotiating who should accommodate whom and to what extent.

Despite her various efforts, Rie's marginal position did not seem to change, and she continued to have problems following and contributing to class discussions. She then coped with this situation by modifying her approach to the course: Instead of trying to gain fuller membership, she decided to place her own academic interests at the center of her learning efforts and pay attention more selectively. It was a form of nonparticipation (Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998) but was nevertheless a way of coping and exercising her personal agency. In the following excerpt from a self-report, Rie summarized the transformation of her participation in Course F:

(1) Stage of hope: . . . 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. . . . 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 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 big gap between what went on in class and in my head. . . . It was unfortunate that my presence was not respected, but I nevertheless learned various lessons in this course. (Rie, weekly report, November 30, 1999; author's translation from Japanese)

To summarize, Rie's differing experiences in the two courses reflected the two very different roles she played in them. When she found herself in a marginal position, she actively resisted, though it did not seem to help change the power dynamics of the class in any obvious way. It is important to interpret Rie's resistance contextually, especially in relation to her previous experience of coping with educational inequality.

Table 3 presents a summary of the three case study examples detailed in this section, including the students' class participation patterns, main challenges, positionalities or roles/statuses, identity/power negotiations, coping strategies, and personal transformations.

TABLE 3
Summary of Case Study Examples

Student	LISA	NANA KO	RIE
Participation (observed by researcher; reported by students)	<p>All courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative silence in whole class discussions Increasingly active participation in small group discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses E and F: relative silence in both whole-class and small group discussions Course G: almost complete silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course J: active and meaningful participation Course F: not being able to participate actively or meaningfully
Main challenges (mainly reported by students)	<p>Not being able to contribute to discussions (particularly whole class discussions) as much as she desired, for a variety of reasons</p>	<p>All courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfamiliar or theoretical course content Not fully following class discussions Coping with outsider/marginal status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course J: no major challenges Course F: unfamiliar and theoretical content; being “mostly ignored” in class discussions
Positionalities, roles, statuses (real or perceived by students; interpreted by researcher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively peripheral status because of minimal participation Perceived role as less competent member, particularly in terms of linguistic competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course E: peripheral status; identity as “the least experienced member”; role as “cultural outsider” Course F: marginal status; member of “the silence group” Course G: outsider/marginal status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course J: relatively competent, valued member Course F: marginal status; member of “the silent group” Course F: role imposed as “non-English speaker”
Negotiations, strategies, personal transformation (reported by students; sometimes observed by researcher; interpreted by researcher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong desire to contribute to discussions as competent and responsible participant Fear of being constructed as less competent by making English mistakes Use of various strategies to improve oral skills and participation Gradually gaining self-confidence Increased tolerance of her perceived limited English or performance Changing identity as an English speaker (from negative to more positive view of nonnative speakers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All courses: fear of being viewed as less competent or “less intelligent” because of limited English or silence; silence as face-saving strategy Course E: seeking support from instructor and gaining new insights into her roles→changing attitude toward her participation and socialization Course F: seeking support from instructor (unsuccessful) Courses F and G: silence and withdrawal as coping strategy and as covert resistance to marginality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course J: being constructed as valued member by contributing unique personal knowledge and experiences and receiving positive feedback Course F: actively resisting marginal position (e.g., expressing her needs as L2 speaker or international student in class; negotiating roles, statuses, and power with instructor by e-mail), but marginal status did not change→coping by changing her learning approach (a form of nonparticipation)

DISCUSSION

In this study, I have explored learners' discourse socialization experiences from a COP perspective by focusing on their participation in new L2 classroom communities, and I have provided an in-depth, longitudinal examination of learners' inner voices regarding their classroom experiences across the curriculum. The focal students' inner voices clearly indicated, first of all, that negotiating roles or identities was an important part of their socialization. The membership and identities that the students constructed in a given classroom simultaneously shaped and were shaped by their class participation. In particular, the data show that the individual student's participation had a reciprocal relationship with her sense of competence produced in the classroom. For instance, in some cases, the students struggled to participate actively in discussions and therefore developed an identity as a less competent member, which in turn made participating even more difficult for them. This dynamic co-construction of identity and participation also suggests that negotiating identity is situated; that is, as Rie's case shows (Example 3), the same learner can negotiate different identities and participate variously in different contexts. In other words, the local classroom context—the social, cultural, historical, curricular, pedagogical, interactional, and interpersonal context—is inseparable from learners' participation. This finding has significant implications for research. The most important implication is that research on learners' participation should seriously consider the classroom context in which they participate. A decontextualized account—for instance, a survey research that inquires about the classroom behavior of a certain group of learners (e.g., Japanese students, female students, etc.) without considering actual classroom contexts—would not reveal the situated nature of participation. In addition, examining the same learner's participation in multiple contexts may be valuable.

A contextual analysis of the student narratives also suggests the complexity, variability, and significance of their relative silence that was socially constructed in the classroom. Behind their reticence were multiple, interrelated issues, including not only language related issues but also issues of culture, identity, curriculum, pedagogy, and power. In addition, as Nanako's case (Example 2) demonstrates, a given student could remain silent for different reasons in different contexts or over time. Furthermore, silence did not necessarily represent the reticent students' inaction or a lack of desire for participation; they were in fact engaged with many cognitive, affective, and social activities. In particular, their self-reports repeatedly documented their profound struggle to (re)construct their identities within the classroom. Their identities extended beyond socially or institutionally defined roles and conven-

tional labels, and included a wide variety of subject positions that were locally constructed by the individual student and the classroom context. For example, Nanako's identities or roles in her courses included being the youngest member with less academic and life 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" (Nanako, Interview 2, December 15, 1999) the only "non-white female student" (Nanako, Interview 3, May 12, 2000), and so on.

The situated nature of identity construction is important to recognize, given that instructors and the applied linguistics literature may characterize L2 students monolithically as linguistic or cultural minorities. As I have shown, the focal students—a seemingly homogeneous group in terms of gender and cultural/linguistic background—responded to and participated in their L2 classrooms variously. This offers a number of critical insights into research on gender (or culture) and language learning. First, as I have already argued, the interactional or language learning behavior of women or men (or a cultural group) should be analyzed as it is embedded in the local context of the community practices in which they participate (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1998; Ochs, 1993). Second, gender may interact with other aspects of identity in complex ways and it is therefore often difficult, if not impossible, to determine the extent to which gender alone impacts interaction, participation, or learning (Freeman & McElhinny, 1996). Nanako's silence in Course G illustrates this notion: It was related to many issues including ethnicity, culture, age, language, course content/orientation, and her personal history and interest, as well as gender. Third, researchers and educators should always be aware that *women*, *Asian women*, or *Japanese women* are not static, homogeneous categories. 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 also Cheng, 2000; Takano, 2000); as the case study examples have shown, they were often very creative, proactive, and critical about dealing with the challenges they faced in the classroom.

This study also illustrates that the co-construction of learner agency and positionality is not always a peaceful, collaborative process, but is often a struggle involving a web of power relations and competing agendas. Rie's experience in Course F (Example 3) is a particularly compelling example. On one hand, this case shows that learners can actively participate in the local construction of power relations (Canagarajah, 1999; McKay & Wong, 1996). Learners can also use resources and strategies that they have developed in their lives to position themselves favorably (Leki, 1995). For instance, Rie's sensitivity and resistance to inequality partly came from constantly questioning and

resisting her minority status in Japan. On the other hand, the case also points to the limitations of learner agency; it appeared that Rie could not shake off the role that the instructor imposed, no matter how persistently she resisted it. Lisa, Jun, Nanako, and Emiko all came across others who seemed to define them monolithically and deterministically in terms of their limitations, most commonly as L2 speakers. The students often had difficulty overcoming such roles or *ascribed identities*, especially when they were imposed by more powerful members such as instructors. These identities tended to restrict the students' active participation, which in some cases might have further marginalized them.⁷ On the contrary, some instructors assisted the students in taking on a more empowered role than the one that the students themselves had initially assumed (e.g., Nanako's case in Course E). This case demonstrates the powerful role that experts can play in learners' socialization. It also offers an important theoretical implication: Although many theoretical accounts of socialization tend to assume that experts or peers assist newcomers, such assistance may not always be readily available to all learners.

By analyzing individual learners' actions, intentions, and perspectives within classrooms taken as COPs, this multiple case study has revealed the complex relations among L2 socialization, L2 academic communities and practices, learners' participation, identity and power negotiation, and learner agency.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has implications for pedagogy on both conceptual and practical levels regarding how to foster the participation of students with various needs and how to promote equal opportunity in the classroom for participation and for access to the curriculum. On a conceptual level, first of all, it is important to recognize the socially constructed nature of classroom interaction and (non)participation (Norton, 2001; Wenger, 1998). Instead of assuming that individual students simply behave according to their abilities or cultural/personal preferences, instructors should question what kinds of roles and statuses a given classroom community comprises and how those roles are shaping or being shaped by classroom interactions. Second, the classroom community should treat L2 learners (as well as native-speaking domestic students) as valuable intellectual and cultural resources and give their unique contributions adequate legitimacy. In fact, given the increasingly international

⁷ Morita (2002) provides more examples and discussions of the imposed roles and the students' responses to them.

nature of academic communities, the view of L2 learners simply as linguistic or cultural minorities may no longer be adequate or productive. By the same token, native-speaking students or even instructors are not simply the dominant group, target, or norm, but groups of peripheral participants who also need to be socialized into increasingly heterogeneous communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

On a more practical level, this study offers a number of suggestions for pedagogical intervention. First, instructors can use strategies to assist or scaffold L2 students' comprehension of class discussions, which will in turn help facilitate their participation. Within the LPP framework, using these strategies increases *transparency*—"a way of organizing activities that makes their meaning visible" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 105). Strategies may include clearly explaining the purpose of a given discussion, providing cultural or background information that international students may not be familiar with, and briefly summarizing the discussion from time to time. Second, instructors have "emancipatory authority" (Giroux, 1988, cited by Norton, 2000, p. 145) and they should legitimize learners who struggle to participate or tend to be positioned marginally in discussions (Leki, 2001). For example, instructors might intervene in turn-taking practices and allow students to take turns in a more egalitarian manner. It may also be helpful to inform all members of the classroom community about participation issues and encourage them to achieve equity collaboratively. Instructors can also design discussion topics to incorporate international students' perspectives as legitimate sources of knowledge. Third, employing different types of classroom activities can encourage students with various needs or interactional styles to participate. Small group work is one commonly used activity, although simply employing it does not always ensure that L2 learners will participate; some of the focal students felt that their peers who occupied more powerful positions actively excluded them from small group discussions (see also Leki, 2001). Class presentations can also provide legitimacy for L2 learners to take an active part in class and display their knowledge and competence, as well as opportunities to learn both linguistic and cultural aspects of oral academic discourses (Kobayashi, 2003; Morita, 2000).

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. Future research should also aim for contextualized interpretations of learners' voices and actions by triangulating multiple methods, data sources, and viewpoints, and through longitudinal investigations. Such an inquiry will help to reveal the complexities, richness, tensions, contradictions, and transformations involved in increasingly multicultural and multilingual academic practices.

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