The doctoral gaze: Foreign PhD students' internal and external academic discourse socialization

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the internal and external academic discourse socialization of seven Chinese PhD students at a large Canadian university. Through the use of interviews, participant-generated written narratives, and discussion of written feedback, this longitudinal multiple case study uncovered multiple and complex factors facilitating students' socialization into local practices, discourses, and communities during their doctoral study. This article highlights the disciplinary role of internal and external socialization in mediating behaviours, affective stances, and (in)action, a process referred to as the doctoral gaze, conceptually drawn from Foucault's (1995) notion of panopticism. Students' self- and other-mediated and directed forms of socialization comprised a recursive process where they learned to *do* being PhD students through the use of internal and external sources and resources. Their relative abilities to become active agents in the process, and effectively self- and other-socialize into practices, behaviours, and positionalities conducive to success, were key aspects in the broader socialization process.

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1. Introduction

A growing body of research continues to investigate the role of language socialization (LS) in postsecondary English-as-a-second- or additional-language (AL hereafter) students' opportunities, abilities, and desires to integrate into their preferred academic discourses and communities (e.g., Bronson, 2004; Kobayashi, 2003; Morita, 2000; Séror, 2008; Vickers, 2007; Zappa-Hollman, 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). In this article, I focus on the internal and external sources of this academic discourse socialization involving seven Chinese foreign[1] PhD students at a Canadian university. Through the use of interviews and participant-generated narratives and an examination of feedback students had received on their writing, this longitudinal multiple-case study uncovered numerous factors facilitating students' success (or lack thereof) adapting to local practices and discourses during their doctoral study. In addition to the more-frequently discussed external sources of socialization that affect students, I also examine the

lesser-researched notion of internal or self-socialization (Duff & Doherty, 2015; Lee & Bucholtz, 2015) in the broader additional language socialization process, informed by Foucault's (1995) panopticism and the disciplinary control that being surveilled has on individuals' self-regulation of their own thoughts and behaviours. In so doing, I highlight the complementary theoretical role of panopticism in additional language socialization research in the context of these seven students' stories. Although recent work has discussed the role of self-socialization in the lives of additional language students from both conceptual (Duff & Doherty, 2015; Lee & Bucholtz, 2015) and empirical (Newman & Newman, 2009) perspectives, none thus far has studied the impact of both internal and external socialization on the academic lives of foreign graduate students and their abilities, desires, and opportunities to navigate their sought after discourses and communities. This article addresses this under-researched and yet critically important area amidst the ongoing internationalization of higher education both in Canada and globally and the prominent role of Chinese students in driving such growth (Anderson, 2015).

2. Language socialization and community

Language socialization is a theoretical and methodological framework that provides insights into the various, contested, and shifting processes involving less and more established members of

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[1] The term "foreign students" is used in this paper to refer to the postsecondary students in this study who were not Canadian citizens (including both international students and permanent residents); "International students" more specifically refers to the students who were in Canada on student visas. The use and differentiation of these terms follow OECD's (2014) operationalizations.

cultures and communities and their socialization into and through language (Duff, 2007, 2010a; Ochs, 1986; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 2012). More specifically, language socialization research uses ethnographic methods to longitudinally explore both the linguistic development of language learners and users as well as the learning of other kinds of socially-mediated knowledge co-constructed through the use of language, including culture, ideologies, epistemologies, identities, and affect (Duff & Talmy, 2011; Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004). Socialization processes therefore involve both micro-level interactions between members of communities and the broader macro-level narratives and grand metanarratives of (and across) different cultural groups (Duff & Anderson, 2015; Lee & Bucholtz, 2015). Second or additional language socialization can be differentiated from first language (L1) socialization due to the significant and sometimes multiple linguistic, discursive, and cultural repertoires that people already possess when learning or using an additional language and negotiating membership into new communities (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Research on English-language academic socialization seeks to account for these interactions and intersections in ways that go beyond those in traditional linguistic or second language acquisition approaches to language learning and use, and recognizes (as with L1 approaches) that "[a]ll interactions are potentially socializing contexts" (Schieffelin, 1990, p. 19).

Key in the socialization process is the notion of community. To account for the role of community in language socialization, this research draws on *communities of practice* (CoP), a situated learning theory that explores the socialization of learners based on shared interests in particular domains, the co-construction of meaning, and the social (and linguistic) impact of guided participation in culturally important activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). A CoP theoretical frame posits that legitimate membership into various groups means better opportunities to learn (and use language) because members feel like they belong and are valued and therefore share a deeper sense of connection with one another based on interpersonal relationships, common goals, activities, and community practices. From an additional language perspective, the socialization of language learners into the various communities around them can have a considerable impact on providing legitimate opportunities to use language, thereby increasing investment in learning and participation (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton Pierce, 1995). If a person has been positioned as a legitimate group member (either in the centre or on the periphery), he or she will feel more confident to use the language in both academic and social situations, which can result in increased proficiency and acceptance by participating in the community and its routine activities (Duff, 2012). If "newcomers" are accepted as legitimate members of the group by "oldtimers," then their language use will not be judged, critiqued, or misunderstood in the way that an outsider (or non-group member) might be. While new members are socialized into these groups, co-members are also engaged in forms of continuous (re)socialization which causes groups to be in a constant state of flux (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This bidirectional enculturation—"socialization between and among CoP members" (Duff et al., 2013)—that can occur in communities of practice affirms that socialization of group members is not always a linear, unidirectional, uncontested, or indeed positive process of newcomers being changed to fit into prescribed linguistic or behavioural patterns, but that oldtimers might also encounter change due to different customs or practices being introduced by new members (Morita, 2004; Zamel, 1997; Zamel & Spack, 1998).

2.1. Internal-socialization

The role of internal socialization—the self-directed and self-mediated role of an individual's socialization into behaviours, identities, discourses, and communities—has been a rarely discussed phenomenon in the literature, and that which exists has come primarily from the field of psychology (cf. Duff & Doherty, 2015). For example, Arnett (2007), a developmental psychologist, discusses the role of socialization during emerging adulthood in Western societies from ages 18 to 25 where people can experience profound shifts in personal freedoms, life trajectories, sexuality, cohabitation, and career development (for example), all of which "lay the foundation for their adult lives" (p. 208). These formative years of emerging adulthood typically involve increased periods of self-reflection and introspection, framed as instances of self-socialization, which take a more prevalent role over the external sources of socialization that children and adolescents primarily experience up to that point. In additional-language contexts specifically, only one empirical study to date, from social psychologists Newman and Newman (2009), has explicitly studied the self-socialization of a single additional-language learner (in both home and academic contexts) based on interviews reconstructing the period of time since the student's initial arrival in the US. Their participant, a Taiwanese "parachute child" (Lilly)—a US-based undergraduate student at the time of the study—recalled her childhood and early adulthood spent away from her parents since the age of 10 in order to study in the US. Lilly's enactment of a strong sense of personal agency, the authors argue, resulted in her initial decision to stay in the US in the first place and the ensuing self-socialization into English language communities which allowed her to eventually become a relatively successful language learner and student, although not without experiencing some considerable struggles and many unsuccessful attempts at integrating into local peer groups. While Arnett (2007) and Newman and Newman (2009) both provide informative indicators that the construct of self-socialization is worth attention, this "original conceptualization of self-socialization has theoretical limitations" (Lee & Bucholtz, 2015, p. 323) due to its origins in traditional psychology, its focus on mental or cognitive processes, and the lack of explicit attention directed towards social and cultural factors that mediate language learning and use. Both studies are similarly limited in how they can specifically inform the research discussed in this article. Arnett (2007), in concentrating on emerging adulthood in "Western societies," presents a very normative application of the experiences of *some* (but certainly not all) young adults in Western contexts, and Newman and Newman's (2009) discussion of Lilly shows a retrospective trajectory (and socialization) of a single, and much younger, subject as she navigated her academic and social spaces, largely on her own. While neither can be unequivocally generalized to this current study, they both serve to highlight the importance and existence of the self-socialization phenomenon, further discussed below.

Considering the role of self-socialization from a contemporary LS perspective, which highlights the role of agency and the occurrence of bidirectional enculturation in the language socialization process, better enables consideration of the omnipresent sociocultural factors influencing and mediating newcomers' integration and negotiation into their language practices and communities. According to Ahearn (2001), agency refers broadly to the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). As it pertains to language and literacy development and its role in the socialization process, Duff and Doherty (2015) add that "Agentive stances and actions can potentially *facilitate* or *impede* the development of greater normative communicative and cultural competence in new communities" (p. 61; italics in original). Lee and Bucholtz (2015) more specifically note the implicit role of agency in the self-socialization process, defining the latter as: "individual agentive action to enter a community of practice" (p. 323). Agency therefore becomes a crucial component to better understand and explain the self-socialization process in additional language students' transitions