

Being on the Periphery:
Graduate English for Academic Purposes Students'
Lived Experience of Language Socialization

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Abstract

This thesis describes an investigation of international master's students' early stages of language socialization in an EAP bridging program. The study primarily addressed perspectives of membership within the bridging program community. Characteristics of language socialization within an online asynchronous discussion forum were also identified. These concepts were addressed through the collection and discourse analysis of discussion forum transcripts, stimulated recalls, and interviews. Multiple data sources were utilized to form a more holistic perspective and highlight participant interactions. The findings revealed that participants perceived themselves as members but only peripherally, highlighting the marginalized position of international students. Barriers of linguistic, social, and cultural inaccessibility contributed to participants' collective status as edge members, prompting further reliance on connections with other international students. Within the forums, participants were engaged in co-construction and peer socialization through strategic positioning and posting efforts, blurring the traditional roles of novice and expert. The findings have implications for EAP classrooms and institutional changes within universities through intentional and structured peer interaction.

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Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Alyson, for her unending support through this project. Her backing has truly enabled and extended my academic success.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Rationale

Research into language socialization in Canadian academic contexts has been growing over the last few decades (Duff et al., 2019). However, there is a significant lack of such research in the EAP context (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). This research gap exists across English-speaking academic contexts, especially in Canadian university settings. International students arriving in Canada for education are often subjected to an English language proficiency test such as the IELTS. If students complete the IELTS test with a high enough score for the specific university they plan to attend; they are granted direct entry into their program. However, if the student does not achieve a high enough score for their chosen institution, they are often granted conditional admission and must take an EAP program or course before beginning their program of study (Keefe & Shi, 2017). The absence of research combining language socialization with EAP programs can be addressed using language socialization data from the EAP course, which may be many international students' first exposure to Canadian academic life. When addressing graduate-level students, the existing lack of research on language socialization in EAP situations becomes more pronounced. Language socialization looks at how individuals integrate into communities and, in this study, how international students integrate into a Canadian academic community. A review by Duff et al. (2019) exhibits that most language socialization research in Canadian academic settings is focused on undergraduate participants, with far fewer studies looking at graduate students. Some studies examine language socialization among PhD-level students in Canada, such as Anderson (2017) or Kim (2018). Very little research has been done in Canada on master's level students from a language socialization perspective. Studies that do include master's students only do so minimally, such as one student being master's-level within

Okuda and Anderson (2018). None of the available studies combine the three factors of graduate-level students, EAP setting, and language socialization perspective. Although minimal, some Canadian research into student experiences in EAP contexts exists, such as the impact study by Fox et al. (2014). Therefore, EAP programs are a worthwhile context for researching the process of language socialization among graduate students. Many universities are criticized due to the perception that EAP programs are primarily cash cows for university revenue (Hyland, 2018). Research has shown that many non-native English speakers have difficulties adjusting to academic studies when pursuing education at English medium universities (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018; Wang, 2016; Xing & Bolden, 2019). Despite this reality, there has been limited research at the graduate level of study. Few studies address student perspectives of language socialization within pre-study English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs. Studying how and what language socialization occurs in EAP programs will better equip universities to strategically onboard international students and use EAP programs to prepare newcomers for academia.

Purpose

This study examines and explores the linguistic evidence of discourse socialization among international students engaged in a pre-sessional EAP program and captures the perspectives of multiple students' negotiated socialization identities in a small Atlantic Canadian university. This study also contributes to and expands upon the growing literature on language socialization among international students in Canada.

By examining the lived experiences of international students and observing how students participate, this study elicited features of language socialization and individual perspectives as the students integrated into an academic community. One task was utilized and contextualized to understand socialization among graduate students better. The text examined exhibited features of

language socialization revealed through peer-to-peer writing interaction and socialization features discovered through instructor feedback.

This was completed as an ethnographic exploratory study, using multiple forms of data to triangulate for convergence. Data was collected from a think-aloud, discourse analysis of student writing, and interviews with the participants. These multiple data sources contribute to a holistic perspective of participants and the language socialization process occurring among participants. The data were analyzed with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Forum data was initially analyzed through the lens of discourse analysis (Eggins & Slade, 2006). These data analysis methods unearthed linguistic features and markers of language socialization within the examined activities, as well as the membership perspectives of participants. This study provides insight into the language socialization process of international graduate students.

Research Questions

This study asked the following two questions:

- What are student perceptions of membership within the various communities of practice in the university?
- What features of language socialization emerge from engaging in peer-to-peer writing?
(And what are the learners' perspectives of the interaction?)

These questions are posed in tandem to elicit both emic and etic perspectives. Language socialization research emphasizes holistic perspectives, so these questions aim to reveal the features of language socialization through the analysis of linguistic data and the individual views of participants through inquiry of membership perceptions. Language socialization primarily occurs through interactions; therefore, these questions are positioned to examine peer-to-peer interactions.

Literature Review

The proceeding literature review will outline relevant points of context, including the state of international post-secondary education in Canada and critical concepts used in this study, such as communities of practice. This review will also detail the language socialization framework used alongside a brief overview of recent applicable or similar research studies.

International Students in Canada

Statistics Canada (2011) defines international students as students who are in Canada on a student visa or have obtained refugee status but are not permanent residents. These individuals have either relocated to Canada for education, enrolled in a Canadian institution abroad (offshore students), or begun to study online through a Canadian institution. For the purpose of this study, international students will include any students that were born outside of Canada and are primarily in Canada to pursue education or enrolled online at a Canadian college or university.

In 2018/2019, Canada received 344,430 enrolments from international students across colleges and universities (Stats Can, 2020). Of those students, 40,872 were enrolled in master's level studies at Canadian universities (Stats Can, 2020). These numbers continue to rise; international student enrolments have tripled over the last ten years. In the 2018/2019 school year, all growth in university enrolment was attributed to international students in Canada (Stats Can, 2020).

Canadian higher education institutions have been working towards the internationalization of student bodies for several years (Anderson, 2015; King, 2019; Larsen, 2015). These studies show that increasing international student enrolment has been of growing importance and focus for Canadian universities since the early 2000s. Canada's largely decentralized education system has allowed individual universities and colleges to initiate and

strategize internationalization policies within their contexts. This has resulted in many Canadian universities attracting a significant percentage of international students through internal policies while being supported by national policies of education (Viczo, 2016; Government of Canada, 2019)

Pre-sessional EAP programs

Colleges and universities have implemented pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs to recruit and support international students by developing academic language and competence skills. For many international students, these programs are the first point of contact in the country and institution. EAP is defined as "an approach to language education based on identifying the specific language features, discourse practices, and communicative skills of target academic groups, and which recognizes the subject-matter needs and expertise of learners" (Hyland, 2006).

The focus of these programs is to aid students in meeting institutional admission requirements. EAP programs also prepare students not only to have the proficiency required for their degree but to achieve communicative competence in their discipline as they position themselves as growing experts within their fields (Feak, 2016). EAP is a relatively young and growing field, developing and expanding rapidly due to the internationalization of education (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). However, the field of EAP is not without its criticisms. Common criticisms include EAP's hypothetical status as a service activity, a cash cow for universities, or that imposing a particular academic genre and register stifles growth and creativity among students and faculties (Hyland, 2018). Despite these criticisms, the EAP field continues to develop through research and practice, bridging international students into their studies and their desired communities of practice.

Community of Practice

For this study, I used the Community of Practice construct. A Community of Practice (CofP) is defined as a multidimensional community including mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). The concept of CofP revolves around the initial participation and negotiation of members, gradually enabling these peripheral members to gain legitimacy within the community (Tusting, 2005). This construct is closely tied to language socialization as CofP provides a context for language socialization. As individuals are socialized, they are socialized into a specific community. This defined community can be explained through the concept of CofP.

An alternative to CofP is Individual Networks of Practice (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). Individual Networks of Practice focus on individual learners and more broadly accounts for their interactions with other communities and individuals. Although this is an excellent variation on CofP, it focuses primarily on the social support individuals receive and have access to (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). As such, it was beyond the scope of this study to integrate this network theory into this thesis.

A Community of Practice as a concept is a multi-layered approach to the system in which one shares understanding and activities with others. This term does not necessarily imply a concrete or clearly identifiable group but a perceived and experienced community comprised of multiple aspects such as mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Mutual engagement reflects one's expectations of and ability to interact with other community members. As such, part of a participant's identity is tied to and co-constructed by the CofP. Regarding a shared enterprise, as a peripheral member becomes increasingly invested in a community through participation and contribution, they experience accountability and a

perspective shift that shapes how they see the world. Third, participants in a CofP share a negotiable repertoire. In this repertoire, specific language, genres, and actions are negotiated, referred to, and participated in. Wenger (1998) outlines that the boundaries of CofP are the inverse of these three principles of mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. When an individual does not know how to engage, does not understand a community's enterprise, and lacks participants' shared references, that individual is not a member of the CofP. However, as one develops these competencies, one moves from being a peripheral member to a legitimate community member.

Members of a CofP contribute and continuously negotiate identity in two ways: participation and reification. Through participation, individuals are actively involved in a community where they do, talk, think, feel, and belong (Wenger, 1998). Participation is active and integrative; that is, participation requires some degree of interactivity between elements. Essentially, it is the process by which meaning is mutually experienced and made (Tusting, 2005). Through this participation, one's identity is shaped and reinforced through mutuality with others in the community (Davies, 2005). Wenger (1998) makes a distinct note that this participation is not the same as collaboration, as it includes both collaborative and competitive aspects of interaction. This broad participation shapes our own experiences as well as the community itself. A member's participation is so tied to the individual that it is not something that can be shut off. In the study context, this means that master's students continue to be master's students while interacting with service staff or surfing at the beach. One's participation and membership cannot be turned off when completing homework or a class period has finished.

Reification, on the other hand, is held in balance with participation. This is where a community member gives form to their understanding, ultimately expanding the CofP in the

process. Wenger (1998) notes that reification can refer to both the process and its product. In this context, reification can take the shape of externally imposed processes and procedures, which in turn are appropriated into meaningful actions and practices by participants. Here, the participant uses these forms from elsewhere to negotiate to mean and potentially creates new meaning or a new point of reference within the CofP. Reification, in this sense, is symbolic and succinct yet does not capture the fullness of lived experience within a CofP (Wenger, 1998)

These concepts are symbiotic within a CofP, as reification allows for the cementing of meaning, and participation allows for the negotiation of that meaning in practice (Wenger, 1998). Wenger (1998) further suggests in Figure 1 that these are not oppositional terms but rather a conceptual duality.

Figure 1

The Duality of Participation and Reification



From “Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity” by É. Wenger, 1998, Cambridge University Press, p. 63. Copyright 1998 by Cambridge University Press.

Previous Studies

Currently, no published studies have taken into account the language socialization processes of international master's students in an EAP program. This study aims to address this research gap in the field. There have, however, been some studies with certain aspects in common with this proposed scope of research.

For example, Soltani (2018) examined undergraduate social space in a New Zealand university. This study used the language socialization framework and looked at an EAP course as a social space. Soltani found that the principal participant lived through different stages of membership in the various contexts he was subjected. In the EAP context, the participant was engaged and an active participant. However, when attending his mainstream classes, this student was a marginal participant and often silent. This gradually progressed to more active participation in the second academic semester. Still, this principal participant did not achieve the levels of involvement he had acted out in the EAP setting. Interestingly, Facebook proved a valuable tool for this student to regain his membership in the second semester of his studies (Soltani, 2018). However, this study did not include graduate students and therefore must not be directly compared with this research.

Additionally, Okuda & Anderson (2018) worked with the language socialization framework to determine the role of a university writing center as international graduate students were enculturated into academia. These researchers found that participants had to negotiate and express agency through actively pursuing academic socialization in the writing center. The writing center assistance was often misaligned with the needs of the students seeking help, impacting their process of academic socialization and forcing participants into positions where learners had to express individual agency to meet their academic needs. Okuda & Anderson

(2018) found that these writing center interactions impeded access to academic communities and harmed the participants' academic identities. Despite using language socialization and looking at graduate students, this study differs from the work presented here because no data was gathered from an EAP environment. Furthermore, despite one of the participants being a master's level student, the others were Ph.D. students.

Another two studies used the LS framework among international graduate Ph.D. students. Kim (2018) looked at feedback participants at an American university received and how said feedback was negotiated by the students. Kim found that multiple sources of feedback were influential in the language socialization process of the participants. Participants recognized that it takes time to integrate into academic communities, and these feedback sources were internalized and practiced throughout the study. Kim (2018) noted the agency exercised by students, as students perceived some feedback to be more relevant and thus were more likely to integrate such feedback. An interesting finding was that 74% of the feedback was focused on academic writing, thinking, constructing, or arguing. Kim (2018) found that this was strong evidence that feedback mediated the knowledge and culture of the academic community. Despite the similarities with the current study, this study did not include any EAP data. Anderson's 2017 study also used language socialization and explored the agency of international Ph.D. students as they socialized into the role of a Ph.D. student at a Canadian university. This study highlighted the varied experiences that can occur while being mentored in an academic setting. Anderson also highlighted both internal and external sources of socialization among participants. He found that students perceived specific experiences as negatively impacting their goal of becoming members of an academic community but were valuable and critical agency-building encounters in the long-term socialization of the student (Anderson, 2017).

Yim (2011) and Beckett et al. (2010) used the language socialization framework to explore online asynchronous discussion forums. Yim (2011) contrasted the experiences of L1 and L2 master's students in two different courses and detailed how students co-construct online discourse and exercise agency in various roles within a Canadian university context. Yim found that instructor expectations differed significantly between the two courses, creating different sets of expectations and divergent writing registers for each class. Participants were also nearly equal in posting quantity regardless of whether they were L1 or L2 students. Yim (2011) found that non-face-to-face communication eased the linguistic pressure on L2 students in this study. Beckett et al. (2010) examined the online discussions in terms of perception and actual usage at an American university. This study corroborates Yim's 2011 study, which found that online forums provided a more equal environment for L1 and L2 students to engage. They found an overall positive perception from the master's and Ph.D. students, along with community building usage and specific disappointment with instructor conduct. Both of these studies utilized LS among master's level students but did not gather data in an EAP-type setting.

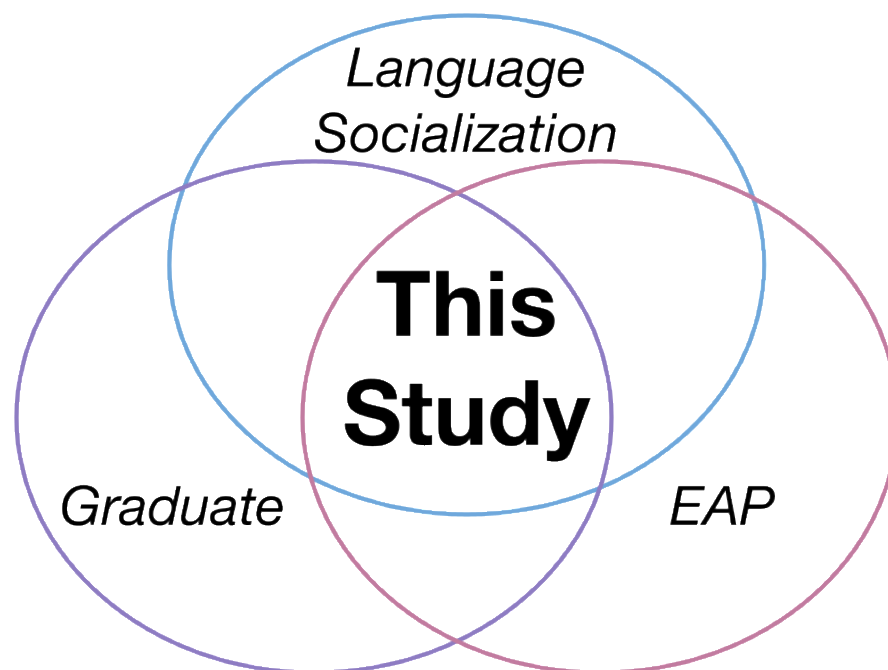
One can find more research on EAP studies embedded in English-dominant countries that consider graduate students. Many studies have found EAP courses to positively impact English academic writing skills and academic engagement (Floyd, 2015; Fox et al., 2014; Terraschke and Wahid, 2011). Dyson (2014) found that students perceived themselves as more confident in their academic skills when entering their programs. These academic gains and skills studies are balanced with EAP studies focused on student culture and identity. Studies such as Bond (2019) detail key aspects of international student identity issues while participating in a pre-sessional EAP program. This study found that these graduate students "struggle to gain cultural access to the academic and linguistic context they were attempting to move into" (Bond, 2019). This led to

a recognition of diverse identities that were under constant negotiation. This understanding is corroborated by Garska and O'Brien (2019), who found that graduate students in their study had conflicting views toward the academic writing style they were learning. Students in this study struggled with losing their identity while integrating into an academic context they desired to be a part of. Although these studies do not explicitly use the language socialization framework, they provide insight for doing similar research in the context of graduate EAP programs.

Despite the presence of research connecting language socialization to master's students and EAP contexts, none of this research explicitly combines all three of these aspects. This study is situated at the center of these three contexts, as exhibited in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Converging Elements of this Study



The Framework of Language Socialization

Language socialization (LS) is a broad framework that goes beyond the linguistic aspects of language acquisition and includes important concepts such as cultural and communicative

competence that are developed as individuals are socialized into identities, ideologies, and communities (Duff, 2010). Language socialization is used in tandem with Communities of Practice, which aid the definition of target communities that individuals are socialized into. Language socialization is rooted in linguistic anthropology and was first developed by Ochs & Schieffelin in 1986. However, this study will utilize a more modern conceptualization of LS.

Second Language Socialization

LS was initially conceptualized as a multidisciplinary theory of L1 acquisition. Children (novices) are socialized by adults (experts) through knowledge, practices, etc., to yield communicative competence and full participation in the community (Garrett, 2017). This understanding was broadened to encompass novices and experts of any age or linguistic proficiency. Adults entering a new linguistic community of practice undergo the socialization procedure of acquiring that linguistic and social knowledge to better participate in the life of the community. For this study, I will be using a definition of second language socialization as discussed by Duff (2010) and later in Duff & Talmy (2011) and Duff & Anderson (2015).

Duff and Talmy (2011) assert that language socialization aims to “account for and explain learning in much broader terms, examining not only linguistic development but also the other forms of knowledge that are learned in and through language” (p.95). The other forms of knowledge referred to here include culture, social understanding, ideologies, epistemologies, identities, subjectivities, and affect. Together, these forms of knowledge comprise what it means to know a language and participate in the ever-changing, dynamic communities of practice where language is used. Language is not conceived of as mere morphemes and syntax but is intrinsically tied to usage scenarios and social practices. Central to this framework is the context

of language learning and the concept of membership and participation, as social practices within contexts are often contested and malleable.

Relationships in Language Socialization

Duff and Anderson (2015) note that this second language acquisition theory emphasizes the transfer that happens between individuals engaged in social interactions. Primarily, this occurs within the roles of mentors/experts and newcomers/novices. Despite the significant role mentors play in the socialization of newcomers, this relationship is bi-directional and constantly being negotiated. Notably, perceived experts are not always successful at socializing newcomers, as mentors are also socialized into communities.

Furthermore, individuals can be socialized through peer socialization, circumventing the expert-novice relationship while providing legitimate socialization (Kobayashi et al., 2017).

Anderson (2017) also notes the self-socialization that can occur as newcomers integrate into a new community of practice. As one can see, the expert-novice relationship is an essential aspect of language socialization, but it has limitations that need to be expressed as the framework is implemented.

Membership

All these methods of socialization have the commonality of desired and actual membership. This aspect of membership is crucial within the LS framework because language socialization targets participation within specific communities. Newcomers desire to participate in and become full members of these communities. Meanwhile, experts or mentors socialize individuals into the community by creating opportunities for participation and guiding newcomers in how to participate. Individuals are socialized through engagement in community interactions, events, and practices (Duff & Anderson, 2011).

This access to participation and membership is mediated by power relations, as noted when describing expert and novice roles. The ability of newcomers to be socialized into a CofP is not just a case of effort but a complex situation that must consider the various systems, relationships, strategies, opportunities, and encouragement that newcomers access.

Agency & Identity

Furthermore, novices are recognized as having agency within the language socialization framework. Newcomers can exercise that agency to accept or resist the practices that are commonplace in the target community of practice (Duff & Anderson, 2015). This allows for dynamic integration and contributes to the ever-changing circumstances of CofP. Novices are free to independently engage with or resist social practices and discourse that, in turn, mitigates or facilitates their socialization into the community. As novices attain membership in these CofP, they can continue using their agency to negotiate meaning and refine practices within the community. This is part of the co-construction that occurs in a CofP. Ultimately, these changes in an individual as they socialize and exercise their agency in a CofP lead to changes in personal identity.

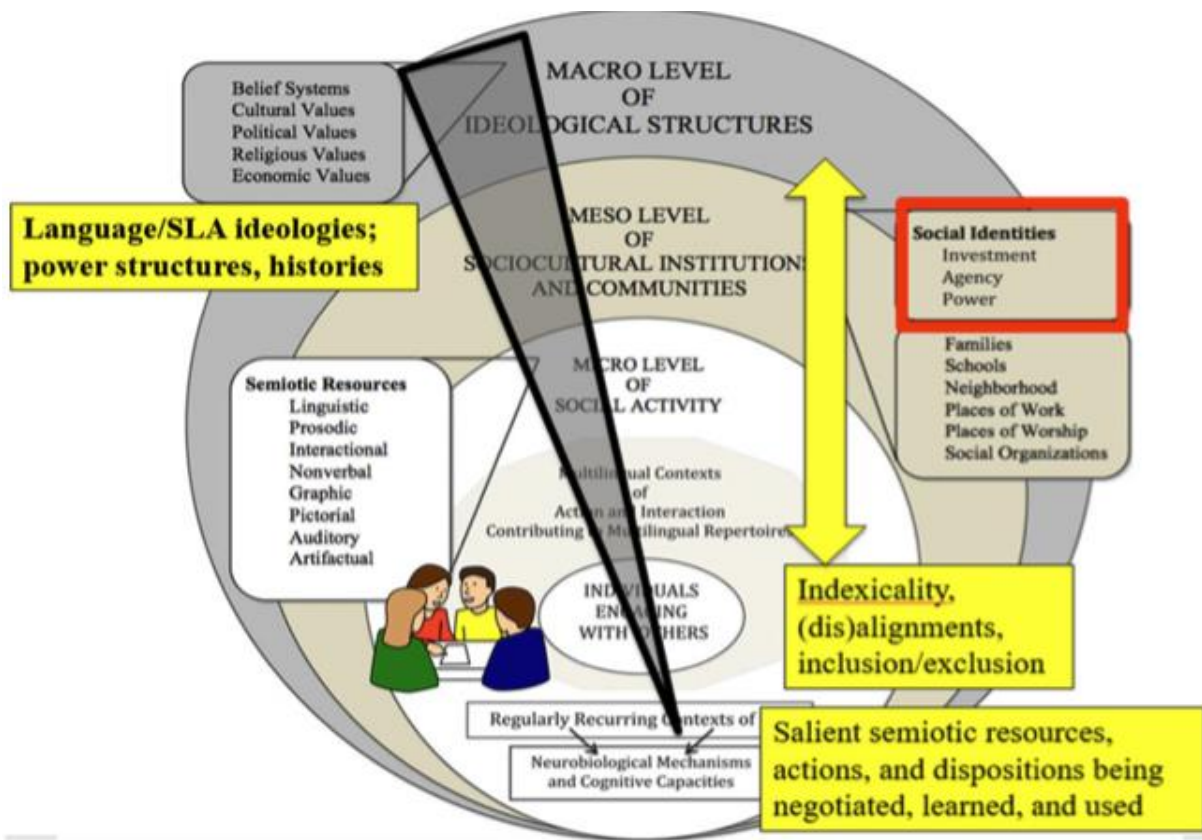
Characteristics of Language Socialization Research

According to Duff & Anderson (2011), LS research “ought (ideally) to be ethnographic, document changes in language and other social practices, explain development in terms of socialization, and involve close analysis of a rich primary data.” This thesis followed the outlined requirements where possible and examined the socialization of international graduate students within a pre-sessional EAP program. Within Canadian universities, previous research has looked at LS in the context of Undergraduates (Kobayashi et al., 2017; Yang, 2010; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), Ph.D. students (Anderson, 2017; Kim, 2018), and, to a lesser extent, master’s level

students (Yim, 2011). However, some Canadian studies combine Ph.D. level students with master's level students (Okuda & Anderson, 2018; Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013). Despite this combination, master's level students have different linguistic needs and integrate into different CofP than Ph.D. students. This research addresses the lack of studies focusing exclusively on master's level graduate students.

LS has also been included in the recent transdisciplinary framework by the Douglas Fir Group (DFG, 2016). Referring to the original framework, Duff uses Figure 3 to situate LS within a particular slice of the DFG Framework (Duff, 2019). The piece includes all framework levels but draws explicitly on the social aspects of language learning that contribute to identities and membership within a specific language community. Despite maintaining some presence in all these concentric circles, language socialization holds a more significant position in the larger, more macro-oriented process. However, it is essential to note that a critical concept in language socialization is indexicality, whereby language is the vehicle that indexes and carries sociocultural information between these concentric circles.

Figure 3

Language Socialization Within the DFG Framework

From "Social Dimensions and Processes in Second Language Acquisition: Multilingual Socialization in Transnational Contexts" by P. Duff, 2019, *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(S1), p. 9. Copyright 2019 by the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations.

Although the language socialization framework is theoretical, the framework aims to explain real-life indications and phenomena of growth, access, participation, and identity when entering into new communities and contexts. As such, this study will aim to practically anchor LS within the lived experiences of international students engaged in an EAP course.

Chapter 2: Current Study

Introduction

As international students enter new and unfamiliar academic contexts through English-medium universities, many encounter unanticipated challenges and difficulties such as low intercultural communicative competence, minimal oral conversation capacity, or increased time required to complete assignments while pursuing their education (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018; Wang, 2016; Xing & Bolden, 2019). These challenges primarily center around ideas of access and participation within an academic community. The language socialization framework describes the complex integration process into new linguistic communities by including multiple forms of knowledge and learning as individuals endeavour to fully participate in these new communities (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Recently, research into the language socialization of students entering English-medium universities has grown, but minimally within the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) bridging programs (Duff et al., 2019; Hyland & Jiang, 2021). This research into language socialization is of growing importance as Canadian universities have been increasing international student enrollment in recent years, changing the student populations of many academic institutions (Anderson, 2017; King, 2019; Larsen, 2015).

Research on this phenomenon is limited at the graduate stage. Few studies address master's level students or the EAP bridging programs students are often subjected to before degree programs begin (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). Many studies that observe graduate students do not differentiate between Ph.D. students and master's students, despite these distinct groups experiencing different program requirements and environments. None of the current research incorporated language socialization among master's students within EAP settings. These EAP contexts are a valuable site for language socialization for international students as pupils

typically have their first encounter with English-medium instruction in such classrooms.

Furthermore, master's level students often have different life circumstances and responsibilities and may encounter various challenges as they are integrated into academic communities.

This study aimed to examine master's level students within an EAP context to identify features of language socialization occurring while participating in online discussion forums. Participant perspectives were also sought to elicit thick and rich descriptions of firsthand language socialization processes and perceptions of membership in university communities. This combination of language socialization features and accompanying membership perspectives was utilized to highlight opportunities for improving how EAP programs and universities can holistically integrate international master's students.

Literature Review

Language Socialization

Language socialization (LS) is a broad framework that goes beyond the linguistic aspects of language acquisition and includes important concepts such as cultural and communicative competence that are developed as individuals are socialized into identities, ideologies, and communities (Duff, 2010). Language socialization is rooted in linguistic anthropology and was first developed by Ochs and Schieffelin in 1986. Duff and Talmy (2011) assert that language socialization aims to “account for and explain learning in much broader terms, examining not only linguistic development but also the other forms of knowledge that are learned in and through language” (p.95). The other forms of knowledge referred to include culture, social understanding, ideologies, epistemologies, identities, subjectivities, and affect. Together, these forms of knowledge comprise what it means to know a language and participate in the ever-changing, dynamic communities of practice where language is used.

LS occurs in many ways, primarily through various interactions such as peer-to-peer, novice-expert, and sometimes self-socialization (Anderson, 2017; Duff & Anderson, 2015; Kobayashi et al., 2017). As this knowledge transfer and formation occurs, individuals increase their participation in a community and their sense of membership (Duff & Anderson, 2011). As members are socialized, they exercise agency to accept or resist norms and standard practices of the target community, negotiating the terms of membership and participation within the community and within an individual's identity (Duff & Anderson, 2015). LS is used in tandem with Communities of Practice (CofP), which is an approach to describe participation and identity formation in a community through mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

Previous Research

Within Canadian universities, previous research has looked at LS among international students in the contexts of Undergraduates (Kobayashi et al., 2017; Yang, 2010; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015), Ph.D. students (Anderson, 2017; Kim, 2018), and, to a lesser extent, master's level students (Yim, 2011). However, some Canadian studies combine Ph.D. level students with master's level students (Okuda & Anderson, 2018; Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013). Despite this combination, master's level students have different linguistic needs and integrate into different CofP than Ph.D. students. According to Polson (2003), some master's level students are recent recipients of undergraduate degrees, while others have taken significant time between previous degrees and graduate study. The diverse demographics of master's students include aspirant academics as well as practitioners seeking more hands-on application of what they learn (Aspenlieder, 2014). This research addresses the lack of studies by focusing exclusively on master's level graduate students.

There is limited to no research examining the language socialization processes of international master's students in an EAP program. This study aims to address this research gap in the field. There have, however, been some studies which address key features of language socialization, such as the negotiation of feedback, identities, practices, and membership within regular semester courses and programs.

At the undergraduate and graduate levels, previous research has identified the various stages of membership and the academic and social spaces that can shape students' language socialization at university. For example, Soltani (2018) examined undergraduate social construction of practices and norms in various spaces within a New Zealand university. Soltani found that the principal participant lived through different stages of membership in multiple contexts (e.g. an EAP course, a mainstream course, and online communities). Okuda and Anderson (2018) found that participants had to negotiate and express agency by actively pursuing academic socialization through a writing center.

At the graduate level, Kim (2018) looked at the feedback participants received and how the students negotiated feedback. Kim found that multiple sources of feedback, such as written or oral feedback from instructors or peers, were each influential in the language socialization process of the participants, compounding when many sources of relevant feedback were available. Participants recognized that it takes time to integrate into academic communities, and these feedback sources were internalized and practiced throughout the study. Kim (2018) indicated that this was strong evidence that feedback mediated the knowledge and culture of the academic community.

Within academic socialization through computer-mediated learning, Yim (2011) and Beckett et al. (2010) explored online asynchronous discussion forums. Yim (2011) found that

instructor expectations differed significantly between two courses, creating divergent writing registers for each class. Beckett et al. (2010) examined the perceptions of both instructors and students as well as the actual usage of the online discussion forums. Beckett et al. (2010) corroborate Yim's 2011 study, which found that online forums provided a more equitable environment for L1 and L2 students to engage. The authors described an overall positive perception from the master's and Ph.D. students, along with community building forum usage and specific disappointment with instructor forum involvement.

When looking at EAP studies with graduate student participants, many have found these courses to positively impact English academic writing skills and academic engagement (Floyd, 2015; Fox et al., 2014; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). When considering a cohort of predominantly graduate students, Dyson (2014) observed that students perceived themselves as more confident in their academic skills, such as using sources, structure, academic styles, or grammar when entering their programs. EAP studies focused on student culture and identity complement these explorations into academic gains and skills. Studies such as Bond (2019) detail key aspects of international student identity issues while participating in a pre-sessional EAP program. The study found that these graduate students "struggle to gain cultural access to the academic and linguistic context they were attempting to move into" (Bond, 2019). The reported lack of access led to a recognition of diverse identities among participants that were under constant negotiation. This understanding is corroborated by Garska and O'Brien (2019), who found that graduate students in their study had conflicting views toward the academic writing style graduate students were learning. Students in Garska and O'Brien's (2019) research struggled with losing their identity while integrating into an academic context they desired to be a part of. These studies

provide insight for similar research in the context of graduate EAP programs that can identify related experiences of participation, negotiation of identity, and use of feedback.

Situating the Current Study

This current study explored the lived experiences of international master's students engaged in a pre-sessional EAP program to identify features of language socialization. The focal activity examined was the online asynchronous discussion forum, revealing peer-to-peer interactions and participation relating to elements of language socialization. Individual perspectives were later gathered through stimulated recalls and semi-formal interviews.

The two research questions were: (1) What are student perceptions of membership within the various communities of practice in the university?; and (2) What features of language socialization emerge from peer-to-peer writing? These questions target the perspectives of graduate students while revealing connections to language socialization theory.

Methods

This exploratory qualitative study investigates the language socialization process among international graduate students enrolled in a pre-sessional EAP program at a small Atlantic Canadian university. The ethnographic approach highlights the experiences and perspectives of the principal participants. The findings of this study are situated in the context of an EAP course to foster a clearer understanding of how language socialization begins among this group of graduate participants.

EAP Bridging Program

The bridging program is a graduate-level course designed to equip students for their master's level study. If prospective students do not meet the specific language test requirements, they must complete the bridging program for entry into their program. Students must also take a

companion undergraduate course alongside the bridging course. Bridging program students are recommended to have an IELTS score of 6.5 or above but can be admitted with a score as low as 6.0. The bridging program focuses on research, critical thinking, and language skills deemed necessary for graduate-level study.

Participants

This study's participants were international students enrolled in a graduate EAP bridging program at a small Atlantic Canadian university. Each participant was given a pseudonym. These participants were relatively new to Canada, having lived in Canada for only a few months before attending this EAP program. Four participants were included in this study's forum post collection, three consented to be interviewed, and two participated in stimulated recalls. The three focal participants are described below.

Hoa. Hoa moved to Canada in August 2021 with her two boys to begin her Master of Education degree in TESOL. She is from South Korea and has completed two bachelor's degrees and one master's degree in Korean. Hoa is enrolled in a library research course alongside the bridging program. Hoa will return to South Korea to resume teaching at her school after completing her degree.

Ying. Ying arrived in Canada in August 2021 with his wife and baby. He came to Canada to complete a Master of Education degree in Lifelong Learning. He previously completed a bachelor's degree in Chinese and began a master's degree in German. Ying is taking a public speaking course in addition to the bridging program. He hopes to stay in the university area, planning on finding work and starting new community initiatives after graduation.

Jin. Jin came to Canada in September 2021 with her husband. She arrived to undertake a Master of Education degree in TESOL. Jin is from Mainland China and has previously

completed a bachelor's degree in Chinese. After her current degree, she hopes to find a teaching job locally. If she is unsuccessful in finding work, she will return to China to teach.

Instruments

This study used multiple instruments to elicit rich linguistic data and data about the lived experiences of international graduate students. These instruments were used to identify student perceptions of socialization and membership and determine the critical features of their language socialization.

Discussion Forums. The discussion forums were a required component of the bridging program. The instructor indicated that the purpose of these online forums was to promote critical thinking on course topics and pertinent issues within academia. Students were required to participate in four distinct forums over the semester, two of which were collected for this study. Students completed the discussion forum in two parts. Part one consisted of three responses to questions posed by the instructor (See Appendix A for Sample Forum Questions). The instructor indicated that comments and opinions were to be supported by examples or justifications and be written in complete sentences. For part two, students were required to reply to two of their classmates' posts. The emphasis for this component was on respect and critical thinking, once again with the inclusion of reasons, examples, or suggestions. Students were also required to respond to alternating classmates. Discussion forums were marked as either complete or incomplete, with three points given to question responses and two points given to peer responses.

Stimulated Recall Protocol. The stimulated recall is a form of a retrospective verbal report that provides insight into what participants were thinking when completing a task (Mackey & Gass, 2016). Often, they are conducted with the support of a video recording, audio clip, or in this case, a script of the online discussion forum. This instrument was designed to

collect participant perspectives of their writing and interactions within the forum. Participants also had access to instructor feedback and could reflect on such comments in addition to their forum contributions (See Appendix B for the Stimulated Recall Prompts).

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol. An additional instrument was a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to elicit participant perspectives about socialization into communities of practice. The protocol included several questions about academic and social participation, community membership, and exercising agency. These are prominent themes of language socialization and are essential to understanding student lived experiences of academic integration. Interviews added detail to the learner's perception of group participation, membership, and agency within learner socialization experiences (See Appendix C for the Interview Protocol).

Data Collection

After receiving clearance from the university research ethics board, three data collection components were completed: Discussion forums, stimulated recalls, and semi-structured interviews.

Discussion Forums. Participant posts from two assigned online discussion forums were collected in January and February 2022. Participants engaged with various questions about the course content in this discussion forum. The first discussion forum consisted of 57 replies split between seven questions posed to students by the instructor. The second discussion forum followed the same format, with 52 responses split between seven new questions posed by the instructor. Of these 109 total postings, permission to use 67 of these replies was obtained from four participants. Two students included bonus replies in the first forum assignment, but no extra responses were recorded in the following assignment. The participant with the most responses

had submitted eleven posts, and the participant with the fewest responses had submitted nine posts. The remaining posts were end-of-forum feedback replies from the instructor, totalling 26 posts. The transcripts of the discussion forums were collected through accessing the examined course with an account holding specific permissions restricted to viewing the forum posts.

Stimulated Recalls. The data collection for stimulated recalls was conducted 7-10 days after participants had received feedback from the instructor. Stimulated recall activities should be undertaken as soon as possible after the event (Mackey & Gass, 2016). As such, scheduling a meeting for the stimulated recall took place shortly after the participants had received the feedback, which was the final piece of the forum activity. For this study, Ying and Jin consented to the stimulated recalls. This data was collected and recorded through Microsoft Teams lasting 45 minutes. The recording was stored on an encrypted Canadian data server.

Semi-Structured Interviews. The semi-structured interviews occurred 7-10 days after the stimulated recall. Three individuals from the bridging program participated in this form of data collection. Individual interviews were conducted and recorded through Microsoft Teams, lasting 60 minutes each.

Data Analysis

The stimulated recalls and semi-structured interviews were transcribed in two stages. First transcripts were automatically created using the built-in dictation feature of Microsoft Teams and then manually reviewed and edited. The transcripts were then sent to participants for member-checking. Transcripts were verbatim, but filler words such as ums and ahs were removed when participants were quoted in this study. The final transcripts were entered into MAXQDA.

The interviews were analyzed first, followed by the stimulated recalls. Within MAXQDA, the interview transcripts were coded using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a multi-step process of coding and theming the data, beginning with familiarization of the data. The initial codes were then developed and arranged into themes. After potential themes were identified, the themes were reviewed and revised.

The first codes were produced inductively to ensure student perceptions were explored. After the initial round of coding, codes were considered using the perspective of language socialization. The stimulated recall transcripts were then analyzed using the same coding framework. Table 1 displays the categories and codes used for the thematic analysis of all three data sources. The codes were categorized as similarities arose, first dividing positive perceptions from negative perceptions of membership. Common codes alluding to positive perceptions included comments about following individual interests within the course or identified evidence of improvement. Common negative comments included academic challenges or negative social experiences. Changes and sacrifices were also coded in the data, targeting elements needed to participate more in university life. Comments related to master's programs or life beyond the university were isolated, tracking perspectives of future orientation. In a similar vein, references to previous academic experiences as well as cultural backgrounds were noted for cross reference. Reference to the native English population at the university was coded to determine the perspectives of native speakers within the community. The final category encompassed different types of interactions participants discussed. This involved coding academic participation within the bridging program's requirements and social participation in and out of class. Specific ideas and perspectives of interactions with instructors, international students, and domestic students were also noted, including when international students resisted interaction.

Table 1

Coding Framework: Part 1

Themes & Codes	Number of Observances
Theme 1: New Academic Community	
Previous Experience	43
Strategy Usage	25
Feedback	21
Future Program	18
Cultural Comparison	13
Stress	7
Native Speaker Comparison	4
Theme 2: Participation and Social Preferences	
Academic Participation	35
Social Engagement	20
Instructor	9
International Student	8
Support	8
Future Suggestions	5
Domestic Student	4
Resistance to Interaction	2
Theme 3: Peripheral Membership	
Interests	46
Challenges	37
Progress/Improvement	27
Future Plans	20
Positive Change	18
Negative Experience	11
Sacrifice	8
Understanding	7

The discussion forum transcripts were then imported to MAXQDA, where discourse analysis was utilized to consider the sociocultural contexts & aspects of language use and function (Paltridge, 2012). Eggins and Slade's (2006) moves framework provided the basis for coding the forum post transcripts in conjunction with categories suggested by Yim (2011). This framework is based on casual conversation but can offer significant insight into the online

discussion forum setting (Yim, 2011). See Table 2 for an outline of the categories and codes used.

The discussion forum posts were categorized first by the function of participants' utterances. Eggins and Slade (2006) provide helpful and clear function categories such as expressing knowledge/opinion, making requests, and social formulas. These posts were then subcategorized. Expressing knowledge/opinion was further divided into participant reactions and initiations. The category of social formulas was broken into acknowledgements/evaluations and pleasantries such as greetings or thanks. Making requests was split into direct commands and requests for assistance.

Next, each forum post's message and purpose were determined by evaluating the content of the post. The most common message content was individual opinions or student explanations of personal experiences. This code most closely reflects the requirements of the assignment. Many posts also included elaborations in the form of in-depth explanations or described examples. Positive remarks included content that praised the efforts or opinions of other classmates in the forum, such as expressing strong agreement. There were no expressed disagreements within the analyzed posts. Questions, suggestions, and one offer to provide a resource were also marked in this phase.

Finally, the utterance function and the message content were combined to code for forum roles. Students exhibited markers of five roles: Information provider, information seeker, evaluator, socializer, and motivator. Participants acting as information providers were the result of expressing knowledge with opinion/personal experience or example/elaboration. Evaluators paired social formula with positive remarks, questions, or suggestions. Participants acting as motivators often expressed knowledge in combination with questions or offers. Information

seekers made requests for elaboration or assistance by asking questions. Finally, the one event of a socializer paired a social formula with positive remarks focusing on the other person beyond the forum rather than the content shared in the forum. Due to the nature of the long-form posts in the examined discussion forums, many posts incorporated role switching. For example, a post may provide as well as seek further information on a given topic.

Table 2

Discourse Analysis Code System

Categories & Codes		Number of Observances
Utterance Function		
	Expressing Knowledge	41
	Social Formula	17
	Making Requests	6
Message Content		
	Opinion/Personal Experience	39
	Example/Elaboration	15
	Positive Remarks	11
	Question	6
	Suggestion	2
	Offer	1
Forum Role		
	Information Provider	38
	Evaluator	12
	Motivator	4
	Information Seeker	2
	Socializer	1

After examining the forum threads through discourse analysis, the secondary analysis took place with new codes and themes following the thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis method was reflexive, initially with inductive codes from the forum posts followed by a more robust set of codes from the other forms of analysis and frameworks outlined in this study.

Findings

Each participant in this study portrayed experiences of an academic community with significant overlaps. Within this study, multiple communities became apparent. First, participants were situated within the smaller community of their EAP course. Second, participants were being socialized into the wider academic community of this specific university. Participants were keenly aware of the aspects where these new communities diverged from their previous experiences. This awareness led to changes in how individuals could participate in various parts of the bridging program. This understanding and change in behaviour culminated in each participant asserting that they were peripheral members of this new community. These three themes work together to unveil social and academic language socialization challenges as new students enter a fresh academic context.

New Academic Community

First, the data indicated that students recognized that the type of academic environment significantly differed from their previous undergraduate experiences. This theme primarily rose from the stimulated recall data and discussion forums. The interviews supported and corroborated what was found in the other forms of data collection.

Transitioning to a New Academic Community. Participants quickly pointed out that “university life is very different in Canada” (Jin, interview) compared to previous academic communities. Each student seemed aware that this academic community was significantly different from their previous experiences, emphasizing things like critical thinking and higher expectations of students. The differences noted here are likely a combination of the higher level of study and the English medium of instruction within a new context. Participants indicate through their responses that their previous academic experiences shaped their expectations of

what graduate study would be like within this bridging program and at this university.

Interestingly, participants were far more concerned with their membership in the wider academic community than the EAP community.

Jin's experience with the bridging program is that it facilitates closing the gap between what she has learned in textbooks and what she learns and needs in real life while using English. Her interview and posts within the discussion forum included frequent comparisons to her previous academic experience and the differences she noticed between the two divergent academic communities. For example, view Figure 1, where Jin replies to a peer in the discussion forum.

Figure 1

Jin's Cultural Comparison of Feedback

In reply to [Student]
by Jin - Friday, 4 February 2022, 2:56 PM
...You mentioned Chinese style feedback and Canadian style feedback are different, I agree with this. In China, we [were] always be educated we should be respect[ful] and [have] modesty so we seldom give others direct advice especially when others are our seniors and elders. In my opinion, if we can help others do better, using a polite way to give direct feedback is great, and I would like to accept others' direct feedback.

This quote exhibits a recognition of a distinct difference in the new community and a slight reservation about uncritically adopting the new practices. Jin blends what she knows from previous experience with what she is learning in this new academic community.

The stimulated recall activity revealed that this was Jin's first online discussion forum assignment. In contrast, Ying had engaged in this type of assignment during his previous academic experience, showing the potentially diverse educational backgrounds of students entering this bridging course. Despite having prior exposure to this type of assignment, when asked about this assignment, Ying said, "of course, if it's my mother language, it would be much better, but I'm meeting this challenge to improve my English." Ying indicated his awareness of

the new academic community by identifying both language barriers and academic genre and style considerations.

Forum Post Habits. Both Jin and Ying indicated that their usual procedure within the discussion forums was to answer the questions they found the most interesting or felt they could contribute the most information from their own experience. Within these forums, students are writing for their instructor's approval and requirements as well as their peers' approval. These forums are on display for all classmates, and individuals cannot control who reads the posts within the class. Jin found both forum assignments of equal challenge and enjoyment. Still, Ying described the second forum assignment as going more smoothly because students "are more comfortable to talk and write with one another." The first forum week was quite early in the semester, and Ying asserts that the class was still getting to know each other, making giving feedback more challenging. This could indicate that students are building awareness of each other and refining group expectations for engagement within the discussion forums and the course in general.

Hoa generally posted a few hours or days after some of her peers. This appears to be a potential strategy on her part, as she had to opportunity to gauge what her peers were doing and implement modifications to her posting habits. One example was her choice to replicate the opinion, elaboration, and question formula found in Jin's post. A day after Jin's example, Hoa used her opinion, elaboration, and question to mirror this precise post format in the same forum thread. The two posts can be seen in Figure 2. Hoa could be observing the patterns of her peers and cognitively choosing to integrate practices she sees as beneficial into her forum responses.

Figure 2

Hoa's replication of Jin's post formula (Divided for clarity)

<p>In reply to [student] by Jin - Wednesday, 19 January 2022, 12:18 PM I think mind maps can help language learners set a systematic knowledge network, and students who summarize mind maps by themselves can help them improve their critical thinking ability.</p>	<p>Opinion</p>
<p>You mentioned that you are thinking about the help of a mind map for teaching Chinese as a foreign language.</p>	<p>Elaboration</p>
<p>I wonder if you have considered whether a mind map can be equally helpful for students whose native language is not English to learn English or study abroad? And can you give me some advice on how to make great mind maps? Jin</p>	<p>Question</p>
<p>--- In reply to [student] by Hoa - Thursday, 20 January 2022, 11:24 PM I think mind maps are a suitable learning method that enables critical and divergent thinking and can structure information to memorize.</p>	<p>Opinion</p>
<p>In addition, I believe it can be applied in various fields of study.</p>	<p>Elaboration</p>
<p>Is there any reason you say mind mapping plays an auxiliary role in teaching Chinese for international students?</p>	<p>Question</p>

Jin indicated she employed a similar strategy elsewhere and commented, "after I answered, I will [check] frequently to see the old questions to see what other students post their answers." Later in the stimulated recall activity, Jin mentioned that she checked all the questions, even if she had not answered that particular thread. However, it's likely that not all students shared this dedication or had the time to do this throughout the assignments. Jin & Ying both went back to answer direct questions, one in a very straightforward manner and the other in a more thorough response. Other questions posed by students in these forums went unanswered. This is likely due to students already having fulfilled the assignment requirements and being unwilling to submit more posts or unaware peers had asked questions.

Forum Identity Positioning & Strategies. Participants asserted their academic identities within the forum by utilizing varying approaches to editing, timing, and tagging posts. Writing in

the forum can be a particularly laborious process. Jin indicated that she “needed to read her answer again and again. Maybe three times or two times to check whether I have some grammar mistakes.” Jin appreciated that this assignment didn’t have stringent academic formatting and style requirements, saying, “I feel it's easy to participate [in] this task. Yeah, because I know it's not academic. I do not need to pay more attention about APA. I do not need to add a reliable reference, so it's easier for me.” This allowed Jin to exhibit her writing skills in a more leisurely environment. Ying expressed similar feelings but still felt pressure to write academically and wished for even fewer restrictions on forum posts. The marks on this assignment were completion-based and were granted provided students had fulfilled the requirements. Grammar was valued, but critically thought-out responses were prioritized.

Even so, Jin felt strongly that she ought to self-edit thoroughly to avoid errors. Ying also carefully utilized his editing abilities and software editing programs to ensure his posts were free from error. He said this was “good practice for us to train our writing skills.” This could indicate that Ying & Jin are positioning themselves as grammatically & linguistically capable members by holding themselves to perceptions of academic membership rather than assignment requirements. Participants here show signs of wrestling with current expectations of the assignment and their previous academic experience, all while trying to engage in this new community.

Regarding post timing, Ying indicated he preferred to get things done early and free up more time for other homework. As described previously, Jin expressed the opposite, stating she liked to read others' responses before writing her own. These differing approaches to assignment completion could indicate these individuals' perceived expert or novice status. Jin said she had not done an assignment like this before, whereas Ying had experienced a similar forum in a

previous course. When asked if he considered himself very experienced, Ying denied this but said he did have a lot of prior experience in “co-learning activities” similar to this. He was reluctant to identify himself as an expert.

In one of Ying’s posts, he used the forum’s built-in tagging system. This was the only post that used the tags from the collected responses. The instructor gave specific feedback indicating approval, but Ying did not use tags in future posts. When asked about this in the stimulated recall, Ying said he had not read that feedback from the instructor and was too busy to add tags in future posts. For Ying, the workload of the bridging program was a constant consideration.

Feedback as Socialization. The three participants varied in their approaches to negotiating feedback. Jin and Hoa both stated they had read the feedback portions of the forums, whereas Ying indicated he did not have time to go back and read what the instructor had written. Feedback is a potentially rich source of language socialization, as an instructor can validate or invalidate a student's actions through public appraisal of forum writing. Within the forum, explicit feedback was included by the instructor at the end of each thread.

Ying indicated he valued feedback when it is done “with effort” or when students are “serious to do it.” Ying also stated that his effort in crafting quality feedback has not always been reciprocal in his experience, especially in the early stages of getting to know a classmate. Ying explained in the interview that he has had to learn how to give specific feedback in this academic setting, diverging from his previous academic experience. Despite this stance, he also indicated he had not gone back to read the feedback in the forum assignment. His reasoning for this was that he did not have time. However, other factors such as unfamiliarity with the reception of regular feedback could have contributed to his lack of engagement with the provided comments.

Jin explained that in China, she was used to minimal feedback and indirect suggestions that didn't help her grow, so learning to provide and receive feedback posed a challenge for her. Since starting to study in Canada, she has shifted to "more direct suggestions...[that] will help you a lot." In the bridging program, she found instructor feedback helpful and influential, especially the direct elements of the instructor's comments that improved her ability to convey desired meaning through her writing. She stated that the instructor gives meaning and idea-related feedback from her perspective, whereas her peers are more likely to provide grammar-related feedback. She looked forward to receiving feedback that helped her write her thoughts in a "Canadian style," which generally coincided with comments from her instructor.

Hoa's previous experience was similar to the other two participants, indicating that she used to receive just a numerical or letter grade. Now, when given the opportunity, Hoa eagerly absorbs available feedback. Hoa stated that she had read through the feedback comments of the instructor as well, sharing that she found this very helpful and essential. She explained that the instructor "gives specific feedback and...meticulous and very specific rubrics," which helped her feel confident she knew what to do on an assignment. Hoa and Jin described the contrast between minimal to no feedback in their previous academic experiences and specific and impactful feedback in their current experience. Hoa said, "In my country, instructors didn't give any feedback, they just give me a grade, bad grade or good. I didn't know the reason." Hoa valued both instructor and peer feedback, saying, "at the [university], it was very specific, and I can understand the feedback so it's very helpful, yes. I think it's very essential." Her feedback perspective tended to be future-oriented, prompting her to think ahead to the next opportunity.

Another form of feedback within this assignment was the silence of peers when they were asked questions. This non-participation indicated a question or an engagement that was rejected

by peers, ultimately shaping the practice and conduct of students within the forum, resulting in fewer questions being asked, as described below.

Transitions in Forum Expectations. Multiple participants encountered circumstances resulting in a change of expectation and behaviour within the forums. In these examples, participants stopped doing a particular activity due to the perceived rejection of their peers.

Ying's posting habits represented a striking transition. In the first week of the forum, Ying's responses to his peers included a question prompting for more information or an extension of opinion. In the stimulated recall, Ying asserted that he is a curious person, and in this assignment, he was looking forward to interacting with his classmates. When describing his methodology in selecting questions to discuss, he indicated that "the forum is for my classmates." He looked forward to sharing new ideas and discovering a new perspective. Ying's two questions from forum one can be seen in Figure 3, representing Ying's role as a motivator while making requests through questioning. In Ying's reply to Hoa, he is taking on the additional role of the information provider. Despite this curiosity, when Ying responded to his peers in the second forum assignment, he did not ask any questions. Ying elaborated more on this during the stimulated recall by explaining, "in the first assignment, I may ask questions, but later on, I did not do so because I don't want to add extra workload to my classmates." Ying also indicated that the answers he received from his questions in the first assignment were briefer than he was hoping for, disheartening his perception of how much his peers wanted to engage while completing this specific assignment and made him "not want to ask too many questions anymore." For the second forum assignment, Ying focused on highlighting shared opinions and experiences between himself and other peers to exhibit how he is linked to his peers.

Figure 3

Ying's Forum One Questions

In reply to Hoa
by Ying - Tuesday, 18 January 2022, 2:56 PM
Hoa,
My best experience of active learning is reflective journal writing.

What is your best experience in active learning?

In reply to [student]
by Ying - Tuesday, 18 January 2022, 3:09 PM
[student],
What is your mission in education? What are the deep-seated values you treasure in education?

Opinion
Motivator
Question

Question
Motivator

Jin had a similar experience in the first forum, where she had asked two questions and only received one response. In the following forum assignment, she decided not to ask any questions to her peers. This decision could indicate some internal struggle between her efforts and desires within the forum and the reactions of her peers as she constructs norms and practices within this context.

The fourth participant, Yubi, had a distinct experience that shaped further interaction. Yubi asked one question in the forum, but this too went without response. Unique to Yubi was an offer to supply a peer with a new academic resource. Despite the offer, no reply was submitted after Yubi's post. Yubi did not make further requests or offer resources outside of this one instance. Yubi may have been trying to situate herself as a competent and contributing member of this small community, but the lack of follow-up from her peers could have reduced her attempt.

Through the collective decisions made by the students in this course, the implied use of the forum was to complete the assigned requirements and not go beyond those requirements to interact or foster a community. Ying attributed this to a potential misunderstanding or the

possibility of a heavy course workload, as this bridging program has numerous assignments due with little time in between.

Participation & Social Preferences

The second theme from the data was the participants' desire for more access and opportunity to social language and practice. This concept was primarily derived from the individual interviews with participants. Within this theme, participants often preferred interacting with international students rather than domestic students when possible. However, all participants still desired generally increased interaction and social opportunity.

Social Inclinations. The participants' social engagement followed a trajectory in which they valued the opportunities they were given but believed they were insufficient to socially integrate into the university community. All three participants faced distinct challenges when considering social opportunities within the university community.

Jin experienced a significant change in approach in her first months of the bridging program. At the outset, she intended to focus solely on her academic success at the university. However, when interviewed, she said that “social skills [are] also important because when you graduate from school, you need to work too...you need to communicate with others.” She recognized the transferability of skills she had the opportunity to learn and engage in during her program. Her current hope is to balance her social and academic pursuits as she works on her master's degree. Despite this eager attitude, she still indicated difficulty with oral English and conversing with native speakers.

Hoa also indicated a desire to engage more fully in university life through both academic opportunities and social opportunities. She wants to do this to grow her skills in casual conversation and enjoy her time as a student at this university. Currently, she stated that further

engagement in university life is “beyond my ability,” granting a potential glimpse at issues of inaccessibility. However, this is paired with her hope that she will see more progress and become a more engaged member of the university community by further participation after the bridging program.

Ying, who is engaging in the broader university community through a campus toastmasters speech group, wants to continue participating even though he finds it quite challenging. He also endeavours to start his own book club within the university. Despite having experience starting groups like this in previous countries, he comments that he feels a “little lost” when it comes to the next steps of how to begin forming a social group within the university for peripheral members such as himself.

International Interactions. Participants showed a preference for interacting with other international students. Jin notes that international friendships developed within the bridging program have helped her practice and enhance her English ability as a possible indicator of peer-to-peer language socialization within her community. She highlighted that she “prefers to talk more with students who are international students” because “they may have different views about one thing,” broadening her understanding. Ying’s observation was that all international students from various countries can only communicate with each other through shared English and are more likely to “have patience with one another.” He noted that he is also improving his English proficiency when speaking with international students, which he needs for future interactions with Canadian peers.

Participants spent much more time discussing their peers' roles rather than their instructor's roles in the semi-structured interviews, potentially indicating the increased impact of peers (novices) over instructors (experts). However, Jin also revealed that she desires to take her

first program course with a professor from her home country, saying, “I think we [are] both from [the] same country we have [the] same background information, we have [the] same culture, maybe her course is easier to take.” She hopes the professor with a shared background will facilitate her and enable her to understand more clearly. Jin and Hoa both referenced contact with students from their respective countries who were further along in their study at this university, impacting their integration and expectations of the university experience.

Ying participated in group discussions within the bridging course and the companion undergraduate course. He found participation in the bridging discussion groups more approachable due to the patience of other international students. He indicated that the language barrier prevented some participation opportunities in his other class. The native English speakers could answer much more quickly, sometimes resulting in his exclusion from a conversation or point of discussion. He said, “the instructor think[s] we are not responding fast enough because they speak so fast and I couldn't understand and that it seems that the instructor chatting with those native speakers. Then we will just sit there waiting, waiting for something to happen.” In contrast, Ying indicated that he is often one of the first students to answer questions when discussing topics in the bridging course. He has to balance the different classroom conditions of his two courses as he works toward improving his participation in both settings.

Peripheral Membership

The third theme represents the participants' perceptions of feeling on the periphery of the community. This sense of peripherality was primarily observed from the interview answers about the greater university community, but this theme was also found in some aspects of the community forming within the bridging program. The participants wrestled with community practices and expectations through the bridging program and beyond, weakening their sense of

belonging. Within this theme is the concept of inaccessibility – each interview suggested there were barriers to full membership in this academic community that could not be surpassed without support. Participants also indicated that they desired to increase their sense of membership, moving toward being central community members while balancing home life considerations.

Inaccessibility. When Ying articulated his position in the broader university community, he indicated he is aware that all students are members of this academic community, but “some are marginalized...we are not all equal.” He later discussed his self-assertion that he is a peripheral member due to lacking access to aspects of the university community through cultural and linguistic knowledge. He indicated that he has gained more access through the bridging program but asserted that “words are not enough” to fully participate in the EAP program or the university at large. To illustrate this further, Ying described a circumstance where he was an observer to a professor using local sports as a context for an in-class discussion. He explained that the class discussion resulted in the professor only chatting with the native English speakers in the class for a while. He did not have the cultural and social information to participate, so he “just sits there and waits” until the conversation moved on to something more accessible. This occurrence was within an undergraduate course, which would not necessarily be Ying’s target community as he enters his master’s program. He also described the short timeline of his bridging program. He indicates it is unlikely he will become a full member by the end of the bridging program, possibly not becoming a full member by the end of his degree. However, Ying’s desire is still to move toward central participation, as he wants to stay in the locality of the university after graduation. He values that these connections have benefits now and beyond his degree.

Hoa also described herself as a peripheral member, asserting that full participation in the wider academic and university community is “beyond my ability” right now. She also described the EAP course in the same way as being “beyond her ability.” This theme of inaccessibility continued through the interview, but Hoa included glimpses of hope by describing the graduate bridging program as “challenging, yes. On the other hand, I feel achievement.” She perceives that the bridging program is building a community for her that is comprised of both academic and social components but still feels that her sense of membership is “a little weak.” Her perception of membership in the university community increased when she used campus services such as document delivery or presented herself as a university member when showing a student card at the grocery store for a discount. These acts of participation outside the classroom allude to the many sources individuals can draw on when integrating into a community.

Jin’s perspective on her position within the university community is that she, too, is at the periphery. She believes she is at the beginning stages of her time at this university with a limited sense of membership and participation. When asked about involvement in the university community outside of the bridging program, Jin shared that she didn’t “know too much about this; I think if I’m back to [the university city] in September, I will have a chance to learn more about our school community. Maybe [at] that time I will I want to join another group.” Indicating that Jin didn’t feel a strong sense of participation beyond the bridging program. Within the EAP course, Jin’s sense of membership was peripheral due to the short time frame and expectation of the course as a stepping stone toward her target community. Jin indicated her eagerness for September was mainly due to the in-person classes in her field as opposed to currently engaging in the online EAP course and an in-person required course that happened to be outside of her interests and major.

Membership Desires. When considering the membership desires of the participants, multiple stories emerged. Jin seemed to have the most distinct view of the bridging program as a precursor to her studies, not necessarily a part of her academic experience at this university. She anticipated any greater involvement would start when she began her program courses, indicating she would have more access to university community opportunities at that point. On the other hand, Hoa believed the bridging program is more intertwined with her master's program. She desired a deeper involvement with the university community at this stage and in the coming semesters. Hoa explained that she would like "to be [in a] study group...I think it's better to adjust or to catch up with the study, but there is no study group...so I just study alone." Later, she indicated her primary social interaction was through the bridging program, but she desired more opportunities.

Ying also viewed the bridging program as a part of his greater experience at this university, considering it a tailormade component of his degree. He desired deeper connections with his peers and community members but was uncertain if he would be able to obtain what he considered to be full membership by the time he finished his degree. In this manner, his desire to remain in the city of the university was helpful, extending his perspective of membership value and potential. He described his view on community building: "I [am] always looking for long-term engagement and relationship building. Making friends in the long term, so in this aspect, I think it's something I need to do myself rather than through the [bridging] course." At this point in the participants' academic journey, they had limited interaction outside the bridging program and companion course, reducing potential engagement and socializing opportunities.

Balancing Home Life. Common between the three interviewed participants was the inclusion of family members as crucial elements of their lives, requiring a balancing between

investment in the academic community forming at the university and domestic life continuing at home. Hoa states, “I came here with my two sons, so I can’t focus all my time...it is essential to balance.” From her perspective, this limits participation in the academic community. Despite this indication, she desires to participate more in the fall. Ying’s stance was similar, indicating that much of his homework and supplemental English study occurred when his baby was asleep for a nap or late into the evening after the child’s bedtime. He works hard to “balance [his] life and school and family.” Jin shared this sentiment of balance and future engagement at the university, as her husband is also a student at a different institution in the same city. She indicated her husband has been very supportive; “He helps me a lot. He encouraged me when I’m under pressure, [and] when I feel worried.” Implying there is more to her life than only the university as well.

Through these three unique perspectives of membership within a new university community, specific elements are shared and explained by each participant. Each of these participants situated themselves as members of the university but always as peripheral members when discussing the spectrum of membership. The reasons for this position varied between the three, but elements of inaccessibility and cultural exclusion were woven between the accounts. The participants of this study expressed a clear desire to become more central members of the university despite their current peripheral standing. Additionally, the life circumstances of master’s students often include other considerations, such as spouses and children, in addition to focusing on academic success. This increased responsibility impacted participants’ ability to engage within the university community due to time constraints.

Discussion

This study explored student perceptions of university community membership & identified features of language socialization within online discussion forums. Students at this stage in their study are engaging in early-stage academic socialization type scenarios where they are beginning to learn the standard practices and functions of a specific university community, recognizing the heavily negotiated nature of entering a master's program as an international student. Participants wrestled with membership within the bridging program and the university at large.

The data indicated that participants acknowledged this was a new and different academic community than they had previously experienced. Various participants engaged in proactive and reactive decision-making with the same result of marginalization. All three students perceived themselves as peripheral members of the university due to the multiple barriers faced by participants in the bridging community and broader university community. This positioning resulted in gravitation and potential reliance on peer socialization by other international students rather than full socialization into the academic community.

Co-construction of meaning was the main identified feature of language socialization in this context. Blurred expert and novice roles were also observed as the discussion forums became an equalized field for students to participate. Within this forum, strategic positioning occurred while participating in academic discourse and deciding what questions to answer and how to respond to peers.

Student Perceptions of Membership

The participant interviews painted a picture of the ideal master's student as someone with full linguistic, grammatical, academic, and cultural access to the university community. For the

participants in this study, this ideal was out of reach. One research question for this study asked: What are student perceptions of membership within the university community? The data revealed that instead of being the central members they desired, each participant indicated they were marginalized members of the community exercising agency but facing barriers to full participation and membership.

A New Community. This sense of peripherality began with repeated remarks contrasting their past academic experience and emphasizing the unique needs of this academic setting, including critical thinking abilities, new academic genres, and other methods of participating within course spaces. Participants did perceive themselves as members of this academic community and were acting in a way they believed members of the university would conduct themselves. From a language socialization perspective, these participants were in the process of situating themselves into the EAP community and the wider university community. In some cases, participants were wrestling with their preferences and what they perceived to be important in the university community. Participants encountered moments that could have harmed their socialization process. These instances occurred with instructors who were perceived experts in the community. Okuda and Anderson (2018) found a similar negative impact emerging from interactions with writing center tutors. Anderson (2017) found that negative experiences created opportunities for students to exercise agency and have a long-term contribution to their socialization. It is possible that negative experiences resulting in long-term socialization occurred among participants in this study. Still, it is too early to determine the effects as students were in the beginning stages of reacting to the negative experiences.

Jin's focus on the future highlighted a shared fixation among participants to become members of the wider community. This was contrasted with participants' desire for membership

within the EAP program, which was seemingly less of a concern. Jin had the most robust sense of separation between the EAP program and her master's studies, which could contribute to her prioritization of one community over the other. Ying showed a more connected perception of the EAP course and his future master's program, alongside an increased desire to engage with his EAP peers and those in the wider community. Despite emphasizing the wider university community, Ying seemed eager to expand his membership in any context. Observations such as these begin to address whether participants have made the connection between their EAP program and their process of socialization into target communities. It seems Ying has internalized this connection, whereas Jin may not have discovered the interactivity between her EAP course and her broader university experience.

Participation and Agency. Sometimes negative experiences of attempted and legitimate participation resulted in reluctant termination of practices, as in the case of Ying ceasing to ask his peers questions. Participants expressed some level of self-socialization through the interviews, positioning themselves against peers within the bridging program and companion course. This aligns with Anderson's (2017) findings amongst Ph.D. students measuring themselves as they are integrated into a new community. Additionally, feedback was a zone of contention. Although these participants universally valued feedback, they were beginning to learn how to give and receive feedback in a new and unfamiliar way. All participants indicated a current peripheral stance but explained that this was not where they wanted to be. Each participant anticipated becoming more integral members of the community, with a potential benefit for the two participants who desired to remain in the local region after completing their degrees due to the opportunity for long-term ties.

Language Socialization Barriers. Factors pushing the participants of this study to the periphery include inaccessibility, unawareness, or overt exclusion by others. Soltani (2018) described different social spaces, such as a pathway program or a university course classroom yielding varying levels of participation from major to marginal, closely resembling the positioning struggles articulated by Ying in the bridging program, companion course, and Toastmasters group. Similar to Bond (2019), Ying and other participants expressed a lack of cultural and social knowledge, limiting their ability to engage with all students within the university. This was most glaring when instructors used references to Canadian pop culture or sports as connections within class sessions, promoting engagement for those who understood the references but further alienating those who did not understand. Participants also described some unawareness of university programs, groups, and opportunities. Jin commented that she wanted to find social opportunities within the university but was unaware of what was available or where to find more information.

Additionally, the unique life circumstances of more mature master's students limit the time investment students at this stage of study can give to their university. The three interviewed participants had immediate family members such as spouses or children that required a balance between investment in university life and investment in home life. The class format also impacted participant perceptions of membership, as students with in-person, face-to-face courses felt more engaged. Those who did not have these opportunities looked forward to engaging in this manner in the fall semester.

International Preference. Participants in this study conceptualized Canadian students as native English speakers, not seeming to leave room for more realistic heterogeneous and diverse domestic student populations. For example, Jones (2017) outlines the diverse nature and needs of

international and domestic population groups, asserting there is little benefit to linguistically distinguishing between these two groups. Therefore, the concepts of “domestic” or “Canadian” students within this study reflect the participants' perspectives and not necessarily views that are promoted by EAP literature and programs.

Due to the disparity between desired membership and current barriers, participants gravitated toward more comfortable and approachable engagements with other peripheral members, in this case, international students within and beyond the bridging program. The interviews also revealed that this sense of membership may have been stronger when considering the international student community within the university, corroborating Bond's (2019) findings. The three interviewed individuals preferred to work with other international students when given the opportunity. Participants indicated that they sought out interactions with other international students due to shared backgrounds and reliance on each other for further integration into the larger community. This is similar to Yang's (2010) findings, where participants relied heavily on shared language to negotiate a group project. The students in Yang's (2010) study and this study expressed the potential that there seemed to be a sub-community forming, primarily catering to the needs and desires of international students and yet subject to membership in the broader university.

Ying, Hoa, and Jin each expressed a desire to become more fully participating members of the university, engaging more with others academically through courses and socially through campus activities and group events.

Language Socialization Features

The examination of the discussion forums and the stimulated recall activity assisted in answering the second question of this study: What features of language socialization emerge

from engaging in peer-to-peer writing? Participants engaged within the discussion forums of this study in many ways that revealed how identities were situated and language socialization was occurring. The prominent feature of the discussion forum was the co-constructed nature of the interaction between participants. Other features such as blurred roles, identity positioning, and peer socialization reinforce the existence of this co-constructed context.

A Co-Constructed Space. Discussion forums are a co-constructed context where posts can significantly impact further interaction among peers. Participants indicated that the forums represented an equalized space with lowered barriers to participation, supporting Yim's (2011) findings of a level playing field between native and non-native English speakers. The comments of inaccessibility documented from interview questions about other aspects of the university community were absent when participants described engaging in the online discussions, further reinforcing the idea of a more equitable space where co-construction of meaning and practice could occur. Within the bridging program forum interactions, students felt more comfortable exercising agency through posting habits and situating individual identities within the forums.

The co-constructive nature of discussion forums was also supported by how the instructor managed the assignment. The instructor began each thread with a question but left students to respond for the duration of the assignment. This emphasis on student-centric discussion forums resulted in primarily peer-to-peer socialization and collaboration to determine standard practices. As a result, the first forum assignment was generally more exploratory. Some students opted to make brief and to-the-point posts, and others attempted to engage peers and facilitate discussion with questions. The second forum assignment tended to be more standardized, with posts increasing in description and length but avoiding asking questions to other peers due to the socially reinforced habits from the first forum. One of the contexts studied by Yim (2011) found

a similar change: students resorted to simply passing on information rather than engaging more deeply with peers. In the case described by Yim (2011), this was due to stringent instructor requirements, which was not the case in this forum. Additionally, the second forum assignment saw increased usage of social formulas such as greetings, thanks, and statements of agreement directed at the previous author. This is likely the result of participant emulation of what they had seen from peers and influence from the instructor feedback posts in the first forum assignment.

Blurred Roles & Identity Positioning. Within the forums, roles of expert and novice were frequently blurred as each participant attempted to situate themselves as capable and contributing members of the course. Rather than these traditional roles, participants engaged in more peer-to-peer socialization. Drawing on Soltani's (2018) findings, this more collaborative environment could have strengthened students' ability to self-position as competent members. As participants interacted within the confines of this discussion forum, they exercised specific strategies to assert themselves as capable and contributing members of this community.

One method participants used to position themselves intentionally was the selection of questions. Students gravitated towards questions they felt able to contribute to answering, strategically selecting opportunities to situate themselves and present themselves as competent community members. Beckett et al. (2010) found that more experienced students socialized more novice students through forum interactions. In contrast, in this study, the roles of expert and novice were less clearly defined, pointing to a more collaborative and co-constructed environment. Another example of this strategic identity assertion was through appraisal of others' ideas within the forum. Students who appraised the opinions of others only wrote positive assessments of peer posts, implying the mutual benefit of the previous post. This could have

been strategic in what posts to reply to or could have been the continuation of cultivating a supportive forum environment.

Post timing was another interesting element of forum engagement, as participants responded at varying speeds. Ying's quick responses to the forum questions helped him shape his identity as an early and valuable contributor in the discussion forum. He wanted to get his ideas into the discussion and see how his peers would respond. On the other hand, Hoa & Jin waited longer to see what their peers were describing in their posts. Ying's fast-paced and completion-oriented attitude also contributed to him skipping reading the forum feedback. This may have been an internal assertion that he had enough information to fully participate in the forum, passing up the instructor's model of acceptable register, style, and content as displayed through the feedback posts.

Peer Socialization. Although the process of writing is individual in nature, a tension existed where participants were still relying on the rules, language use, and practices occurring within their interactions and observations of peers. The autonomy the instructor had given and the willingness for peers to interact led participants to engage more in the discussion forums than they indicated they would have in a comparable class session, paving the way to increased opportunity for peer socialization in this context. Through the collective posting habits, responses, and silence of peers, participants were collaboratively socialized and made aware of the approved interactions within the forum. This is seen through Jin indicating her efforts to read all the posts or through forum interaction as Ying changes his posting habits due to the lack of response to his questions in the first forum. This is somewhat like Zappa-Hollman & Duff (2015), who found that students observed, shared, and engaged with others in their individual networks of practice to facilitate socialization into a new context. Zappa-Hollman & Duff (2015)

also found peers to be of significant impact in supporting each other, which these findings also indicated.

Another indication of peer socialization within this co-constructed context was the change in what students posted. Students stopped asking questions, and the one offer of sharing resources was never attempted again. Two participants indicated this change was due to peers, as one did not want to harm others' grades, and the other participant did not want to ask for more work from peers. Yim (2011) also discovered that students adjusted what they posted to prevent losing marks, but the participants in this study claimed that they changed what they posted to avoid affecting the workload or grades of others.

As described, much of the socialization occurring at this stage is peer socialization, as participants seem to have limited access to individuals they would consider experts or full members of the academic community. There were glimpses of expert-status interactions within the discussion forum, but these did not change the overall role of the participant. This reflects the constant negotiation of membership and identity observed in other language socialization studies (Duff & Anderson, 2015; Kobayashi et al., 2017). This was done through observing the habits of other students, the careful timing of posts, and the deliberate selection of questions that would promote the participant as a contributing community member.

These described elements of language socialization imply that the transmission of knowledge within the EAP program goes far beyond the objectives outlined in a course description. New students who are immersing themselves in a preparatory EAP experience exposure to linguistic, academic, and social learning. Some of these elements are rooted in the program curriculum. Still, the findings of this study indicate there are other forms of knowledge

being transmitted in this context, especially concerning student identity positioning and participation.

Limitations

The short timeframe of data collection limits this study. The findings of this study contribute to the early stages of language socialization but do not track further changes as students participate in university life through their program. Future research could address this by taking a more long-term ethnographic approach, following students from early contact scenarios in an EAP bridging program and possibly extending into the first year of program study. This would more closely reflect the guidelines for language socialization research outlined by Duff & Anderson (2011). In addition, this would bring participants more contact with other master's students, giving a more genuine glimpse of the wider academic community these students may participate in. This study engaged with participants who were enrolled in an undergraduate course which may not reflect the academic community participants desire to be members of.

This study is additionally limited by the smaller than anticipated sample size, initially setting out to accommodate eight participants in each data collection activity. This small sample size resulted in a more in-depth look at the experiences of the focal participants. The findings in this study reflect the actions and perceptions of three East-Asian students, potentially missing out on divergent perspectives of students from the growing South Asian international student body and those from other cultural and academic backgrounds. A further suggestion would be the inclusion of Individual Networks of Practice (Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015) when considering the socialization of master's students in and through a bridging program to full-time study.

Decreased enrollment resulted in fewer participants being informed about this study and ultimately consenting to participate. Furthermore, this smaller class size and course format could impact the results of this study, differentiating the findings from what may occur in larger classes. The results of this study indicate the perceptions of international graduate students enrolled in a bridging program at a small urban university in Atlantic Canada. The experiences, actions, and perceptions of similar international students in universities elsewhere in Canada may differ from what has been found in this study.

Finally, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the EAP program being offered as an online synchronous course instead of an in-person course. This likely impacted student participation and perceptions within the course as well as within the university community due to less time and exposure to the university campus.

Implications

Aside from aiming to grow the research body of language socialization within EAP contexts, the findings of this study contribute to the ongoing curriculum and programming decisions within EAP settings. Participants in this study have indicated a strong desire to socially integrate into the university during this early stage of their program but cannot fully engage. Multiple factors must be considered within and beyond EAP programs to address this need.

EAP programs. Participants perceived their EAP programs to be successfully bridging them into the university academically but not holistically. Not all participants were aware of the opportunities to engage with peers beyond the classroom, further isolating EAP students from the general student body. Instructors can begin to address this by ensuring students are informed of university groups and have access to participate in these events. However, awareness is not enough. Participants implied some reluctance to engage with native English-speaking students at

this stage in their program, prompting an opportunity for future research into what factors are reinforcing this reluctance and how to circumvent this finding.

To further challenge student perceptions of academic English as being beyond one's capability and to enable students to situate themselves as members of the academic community, EAP instructors could integrate principles of discourse analysis into the curriculum. This critical outlook could aid students in examining what specific language is used and prompt reflection on what it is used for in university situations or contexts, empowering students to become confident users of academic language and increasing students' ability to engage in academic discourse. This further engagement and use of academic language could bolster student identities, as the findings indicate some interaction between academic language usage and identity formation.

Additionally, participant perspectives were rarely positive about the required undergraduate course. Individuals recognized these lower-level courses as a divergent academic community from the communities they desired to integrate into. Although the academic rigour of undergraduate courses may be more approachable for individuals learning specific skills through the bridging program, socialization progress made in these contexts is largely artificial. Through the lens of communities of practice, it is not the desired community of the students, and the academic skills may differ from undergraduate to master's level studies.

Universities. An institution-wide approach could include an increased emphasis on the university as a comfortable third space, as McKinley et al. (2019) describe. As native and non-native speakers of English learn new academic language and skills within the university, all are undergoing language socialization into an unfamiliar community. However, in the same vein, caution must be exercised when equalizing non-native English speakers' distinct and nuanced struggles in academic contexts. The co-constructed nature of academic communities, as outlined

through the findings of this paper, prompts more critical engagement with the roles of individuals within such contexts. Expert and novice roles are contested and unreliable in these circumstances, especially when considering status among the negotiated and shared repertoires within these communities of practice. McKinley et al. (2019) suggest interdisciplinary community-building opportunities, among other recommendations for fostering these comfortable third spaces.

Pitts and Brooks (2017) demonstrate that intercultural connections do not simply occur due to more exposure between diverse students. Consequently, the results of marginalization at this early point of participants' academic journeys may continue as they continue their studies beyond the bridging program. Pitts and Brooks (2017) suggest that professors could integrate critical reflection into university courses, prompting students to consider intercultural experiences of student discourse recursively. These activities could encourage cultural awareness of both domestic and international students, challenging preconceived assumptions and promoting third space conceptualization of classrooms and universities.

Structured peer interaction could be further expanded by using the Interaction for Learning Framework principles outlined by Arkoudis et al. (2014). This framework emphasizes creating planned and supported environments for interaction, fostering elements of collaboration and emphasizing the value of peer interaction. To maximize impact, frameworks such as this need to be adopted university-wide. Institutions must value and document instructor efforts to augment strategic peer interaction within courses as a performance review component, offering professors accountability and recognition for their efforts (Arkoudis et al., 2014).

Conclusion

This study addressed a research gap by exploring language socialization within a graduate EAP context. Language socialization was observed in this early stage of exposure to academic communities. The findings identified elements of language socialization such as identity positioning strategies and changes in message content within the discussion forums. Despite indicating themselves as members and taking various approaches to integration into the new community, all participants positioned themselves at the edge of the academic community with the desire to become more central members. Their experiences were defined by peripheral status in the examined interactions. Findings such as these provide evidence that international student programs are still somewhat segregated from the mainstream university community, and full integration has not been achieved. These findings also prompt more research to be undertaken in diverse university contexts, capturing perspectives of students from other parts of the world and in more extensive academic settings. International students participate in the co-construction of values and practices within the university community, enhancing students' sense of belonging at institutions that are becoming increasingly diverse. As universities in Canada and abroad increase international student enrolment, it is crucial to consider questions of how students can be integrated more holistically into the academic community within EAP programs and beyond. The participants' experiences have shown that language is not enough to fully facilitate the integration of international students into university contexts, prompting more responsibility on institutions to focus on socializing individuals in these environments.

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Appendix A

Sample Forum Questions

Online Distance Learning vs. Traditional Learning

How do you think online learning is similar to and/or different from traditional classroom learning in-person? How are you feeling about online learning and the use of technology? Can you offer any helpful advice for online learning?

Active Learning

For your Discussion Forum post, you may answer a, b, OR c (or all if you wish)

- a. In your own words, what is active learning?
- b. Do you agree with the Common International Students' Perspectives of Active Learning provided in this guide? Why or why not?
- c. Choose a previous learning experience (e.g. a class in your undergraduate program), would you describe this as active learning? Why or why not?

Academic Writing and Improvement

Reflect on how you write. Comment on the following:

- a. What role does writing play in your life?
- b. How would you describe yourself as a writer?
- c. What are your strengths as a writer?
- d. Which areas would you like to improve?
- e. What are two specific changes you'd like to see in your writing by the end of this academic term?

(Academic) Integrity and Intellectual Property Beyond Academia

You can respond to question a, b or both:

- a. Prior to this course, what was your understanding of or experience with academic integrity? (e.g. Was this a topic that was taught in your classes before? Was cheating or plagiarism something that was discussed by students?).
- b. 'Integrity' (and intellectual property rights) is not just an academic issue. There have been many cases of fraud, cheating, etc. in popular culture and news media. Can you provide an example? What was the consequence/outcome of the offense?

Appendix B

Stimulated Recall Prompts

Participants will be given a transcript of their forum posts including responses to those posts. Participants will be asked to report all that they can remember thinking during the process of writing the referenced posts and reflections on the forum interactions. If participants fall silent or frequently respond with statements indicating they were not thinking about anything, further prompts such as the following examples may be used.

1. Have you already looked at the instructor feedback?
2. What did you expect of the forum? Was it what you expected? What else did you expect?
3. Did you receive feedback? Was it what you expected? What else would you have expected?
4. How did you think this forum went?
5. Are you satisfied with what you have accomplished?
6. Did you consult anyone while working on this? Why or why not?
7. Did you find anything difficult? What was most difficult?
8. What did you learn through this forum? Do you think this should be an assignment in [BRIDGING PROGRAM]?
9. What helped you decide which posts to respond to?
10. Did you use any sources? Do you consider yourself an expert on any of these topics?
11. What makes a good forum post/poster?
12. Do you feel comfortable writing in English? Does this change how you participate in the forums?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interviews were semi-structured with a few guiding questions while responsively following up with participants. The following is a list of potential questions divided into three categories derived from language socialization research. These were modified based on insight from the participants within the interviews.

Participation

1. Tell me a little bit about your previous academic experience.
2. What program are you in? Courses or thesis program?
3. What did you expect [BRIDGING PROGRAM] to be like? University life?
4. What do you want to be able to do at the end of the [BRIDGING PROGRAM] class?
5. What do you expect courses after [BRIDGING PROGRAM] to be like?
6. What has been difficult for you during university life so far?
7. What changes have you gone through when trying to participate in university life?
8. Are you taking any other courses right now?
9. How do you participate in your [BRIDGING PROGRAM] class? Other classes? How much?
10. Are class online discussion forums valuable for learning? How much do you learn?
11. Do you feel comfortable participating in classes? With international students, with Canadian students? What would make you feel more comfortable?
12. Is anyone else helping you adjust to university life? Groups, networks, friends?

Membership

A community of practice is a group of individuals that have a common shared practice and a sense of responsibility. An example would be something like claims processors at an insurance company (Wenger, 1998). Each claims processor has an individual workload, but they tend to help each other with tips and tricks to make each other's jobs easier. They do individual jobs, but they are important to each other. They work for and against their boss together and share the common responsibility of work. They participate in their community and contribute to their community.

1. What is it like for you in the [BRIDGING PROGRAM]?
2. How do you engage with students?
3. What community do you want to be a part of while attending ACU?
4. What does it mean to be a member of that community? What do members think/say/do?
5. What is different about this community from a previous community?
6. Who do you think is a member of this community? Is your instructor a member? Peers?
7. What do these people think/say/do that make you think they are members?
8. Do you think you are a member? Where would you place yourself on the spectrum of membership?

Agency

1. Do you have to change or give anything up to participate in this community?
2. Thinking back to feedback from your instructor, do you think their feedback is helpful in your journey to become a member?
3. What do you think your instructor(s) value?

4. Do you think feedback from your peers helps you to participate in the university community?
5. Have you done any preparation for university life in Canada?
6. What do you want to do after this degree?