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Academic Discourse Socialization:

A Case Study on Chinese Graduate Students' Oral Presentations

A dissertation submitted to the
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By

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Abstract

In recent years, researchers have started to address the under-researched issues of academic oral language development. However, up to now, there is still little research exploring the longitudinal oral academic language development of Chinese graduate students who pursue their studies at the post-secondary level in the Unites States. Representing the largest number of international students who learn English as a foreign language, Chinese students find themselves facing a significant challenge when English becomes the medium of instruction in their new academic community, not only for written but also for spoken tasks, the performance of which decides their academic success.

By focusing on one particular oral activity—oral presentations—this study explores how Chinese graduate students are socialized into the academic community of which they are to become members, what language difficulties these students have, and how these students improve their language use during this discourse socialization process. This study is framed in language socialization theory, according to which, novices and children learn the culture of a community through its language, and they also learn to use the language appropriately in this process.

Following a qualitative case study design, data were obtained on 9 students from multiple sources including interviews, documents, and presentation video samples over a course of a year to explore this continuous and dynamic process.

Results indicated that Chinese graduate students' prior academic experience did not prepare them for this particular activity of oral presentations; and participants were socialized into the

academic community through observations, peer support, expert assistance and practice. However, the socialization process for individual participants varied greatly depending on both their individual agency and assistance available to them. Oral presentations, as a complex activity, require the participants to learn the relevant culture embedded within it and to learn the appropriate language to perform the task.

The study contributes to the language socialization theory by focusing on the Chinese graduate students in the United States context and contributes to the language socialization research methodology by employing systemic functional linguistics approach (SFL) as an analysis tool for longitudinal linguistic development. The findings will inform second language curriculum and instruction, particularly oral language instruction.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

An increasing number of international students are pursuing their studies at universities in the United States. According to Open Doors (2006), approximately 386,000 international students were enrolled in U.S. universities during the 1989-1990 academic year. This number rose to over 560,000 during the 2005-2006 academic year. International students contribute to the diversity of the student population and bring economic benefits to the community as well (Chandler, 2004). In 2005-2006, for instance, international students and their families contributed over $13 billion to the U.S. economy (Open Doors, 2006). Chinese students comprise a large part of the steadily increasing international student body. During the 1995-1996 academic year there were 39,613 Chinese students enrolled in U.S. universities and the number increased to 62,582 during the 2005-2006 academic year, making Chinese students after Indian students the second largest population.

The existing literature on English-as-a-second-language (ESL) of international college students indicates that language problems is one of their top concerns, even though most receive satisfactory scores on TOEFL, GRE and oral English proficiency tests (Lee, 1997; Pae, 2001; Trice, 2001). Consistent with these findings, a substantial number of Asian students reported feelings of inadequacy and frustrations with their English proficiency, particularly when participating in oral classroom activities (e. g., Kim, 2006; Liu, 2001). This may be related to the fact that Chinese students who come to a U. S. institution to pursue graduate studies have learned

English as a required course and seldom have the chance to use it in real-life situations (Lam, 2005). For them, language proficiency has been reported as one of their major obstacles to academic success. Wan (1999) conducted a case study of two Chinese graduate students at a U.S. university, and found language proficiency to be one of the major challenges in their academic life. The participants had more difficulty in speaking than in reading and writing. Using a case study approach, Lin (2002) explored the learning experience of three Chinese graduate students in social science programs at a U.S. university. Again, the study revealed that language proficiency particularly in classroom discussions was listed as one of the major challenges for these Chinese participants.

This finding is of particular concern given the interactive approaches used by U.S. instructors. Ferris and Tagg (1996a, 1996b) have suggested that instructors use more interactive ways of teaching in U.S. universities, which require ESL students, including Asian students who come from very different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers for speaking up in class, to ask and answer questions, to participate in class discussions and to complete assignments with other native speakers of English. In particular, "Business and engineering instructors were also concerned with formal presentation skills and suggested that students be given many opportunities to practice their speaking skills…" (Ferris & Tagg, 1996b, p. 309). Kobayashi (2005) and Morita (2000) identified other academic situations that require ESL international students to perform all types of academic speaking tasks, such as lab meetings, participation in large or small-group class discussions, formal presentations at conferences and oral thesis defenses. Some researchers focused their research on general oral

academic activities (e.g., Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Kim, 2006) while others on a specific oral activity: academic oral presentations (e.g., Kobayashi, 2003; 2005; Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

Since international Asian students have reported making academic oral presentations as one of the most important skills for academic success in North America, it is of great importance to study this particular oral academic activity (e.g., Kim, 2006). Academic oral presentations require ESL students to acquire the rules for organizing and delivering good presentations while mastering the appropriate language to achieve this goal. Studies by Kobayashi (2003), Morita (2000) and Zappa-Hollman (2007) have provided valuable information about the participants' socialization into this academic oral activity from a language socialization perspective.

However, while findings of these studies have shed light on the cultural aspects of academic oral presentations and how students were socialized into the academic community they had just joined, there are still some gaps. First of all, it is still not clear whether Chinese graduate students in the U.S universities experience a similar academic discourse socialization process compared to the studies in the Canadian context (Kobayashi, 2005; Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Secondly, little is known about how Chinese graduate students, as a group, are socialized into the academic discourse of which they are required to be part in the context of higher institution and why Chinese graduate students have difficulties with academic discourse socialization. In particular, none of the second language socialization studies so far have addressed the specific language difficulties that ESL students find challenging in their academic discourse socialization

and how their L2 progressed during this discourse socialization process. This study is conducted to address these gaps in the literature.

Prior to this dissertation, a pilot study was conducted to examine the role of an ESL oral presentation class in the oral academic discourse socialization of Chinese graduate students. The findings and implications of this pilot study are briefly discussed in Chapter III. The current dissertation continues to address the oral academic discourse socialization of Chinese graduate students in a broader context. In the following sections several frequently used terms in this dissertation such as oral presentations, context, and Chinese education culture are defined. Then the objectives, significance and the theoretical framework for this study are discussed.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Academic Oral Presentations

In this dissertation, oral presentations refer to the formal oral activities/tasks that students are expected to perform as part of their academic life. By formal I mean that the speaker will stand up in front and deliver his or her speech in front of an audience for a certain length of time. These oral activities or tasks are usually prepared in advance but often require that the speaker have the ability to improvise on the spot and be flexible because usually there are questions from the audience either at the end of the speech or during it. Therefore, the speaker needs to be ready for impromptu participation from the audience.

The academic oral presentations discussed in this dissertation include samples from several situations. The first were the participants' oral presentations for the academic courses in their academic field. The second were lab reports in which science students would meet with their

advisor and other fellow students to report their work in progress on a biweekly or monthly basis. The third comes from students' presentations in teaching situation, namely, where the students worked as teaching assistants and gave lectures in classroom settings. It was a kind of presentation for instructional purpose. The fourth kind of oral speeches were video clips from testing situations where students made presentations on some specific academic terms in their academic field. Other oral presentation samples collected included videos that the participants made in ESL classes or other professional seminars offered by their individual department.

Arguably, only the first kind of presentations may be considered as the academic oral presentations in the narrowest sense of the term. However, all these oral presentation samples were collected because the focus of the study was on the academic discourse socialization of Chinese students and all these oral tasks fit into this definition of oral discourse. First, they were all oral activities. Second, they all allowed the presenter time to prepare before they started to perform the task and third, there was an audience present—depending on each situation the audience might be slightly different, where the presenter had to be able to adjust when necessary. Fourth, there was an interaction between the speaker and the audience—although, again the interaction might vary depending on each individual situation.

In the North American academic community, oral presentations are part of the curriculum across disciplines. However, it might not be part of the academic experience for many English-as-a-second-language speakers. If ESL students are not familiar with doing presentations, then these ESL students need to be socialized into the specific ways of performing this activity. At the same time, it is also necessary to examine the linguistic productions of the ESL students to

determine whether they are making progress in acquiring the necessary linguistic constructions to accomplish this task, which is part of the language socialization (see the following section). All these issues must be investigated within its rich environment because context is part of what is happening and therefore cannot be left unexamined.

1.2.2 Context

Language socialization, as well as other theories with a sociocultural orientation, stresses the importance of sociocultural factors in language learning. It considers that context is part of the language learning. This is consistent with Halliday's (1999) notion of context of culture and context of situation. According to him, there are two traditions in the study of language in context: the context of situation and the context of culture. The former was founded by British anthropologist Malinowski and linguist Firth, and the latter by their American contemporaries, anthropologists Sapir and Whorf. Halliday pointed out that these two perspectives "are in an important way complementary to each other" (p.6). The former stresses "the *situation* as the context for language as *text*, and language is seen as a form of action, as the enactment of social relationships and social processes". The latter stresses "the culture as the context for language as system, and language is seen as a form of reflection, as the construal of experiences into a theory or model of reality". (ibid)

In a further discussion of the relations between context of situation and context of culture, Halliday (1999) used an analogy of climate and weather. The difference between "culture" and "situation" is like the relationship of climate and weather. The context of situation is examined at a much closer perspective and the context of culture is examined from a more distant perspective.

Just like the every day weather together will constitute climate of a certain area, the situations in total will constitute the culture of a certain practice (of a community). Halliday also further argued that context of culture considers language as a system and the context of situation as instances of language as texts.

When it comes to oral presentations as discussed in this dissertation, the context refers to both the context of culture and the context of situation. The most general socio-cultural background, for instance, L1 and L2 language learning environment, is considered context of culture. Context of situation is the context that is more immediate to the presentation itself where the presenters need to think about aspects that are more directly related with a certain situation. By focusing on one specific activity and discussing the activity with related background information, it can lead to a richer understanding of the complexity of the activity under study. Context of culture considers language as a system, which means there are certain expectations about what should be done both for presenters and the audience. What should be covered in a presentation and how a presentation should be delivered, although there might be discipline differences, there are a number of rules all presenters are expected to follow. These invisible rules can be culturally specific. This means that to study oral presentations, both the context of culture and context of situation should be examined.

1.2.3 Chinese Educational Culture

In this study, Chinese educational culture refers to the traditional Chinese way of viewing education. In contrast with western educational culture, where values such as independence and self-discovery are emphasized, Chinese educational culture emphasizes more on knowledge

learning, the knowledge that one should take in as much as possible (Beckett, 1999). For instance, one should recite many poems before attempting to produce his own. It is part of the Chinese educational culture to emphasize that the quantity accumulation will eventually lead to the quality change as illustrated in the poem example. Therefore, students are often asked to recite and memorize the learning materials as models even they do not understand the meaning exactly. In Chinese educational culture, the teachers, as well as the well-known classic books, are considered as the knowledge source, which strongly influenced what should be learned. This is addressed further in Chapter IV.

1.3 Research Problems

As discussed previously, literature has indicated that the academic oral discourse for ESL students has been identified as a problem. However, there are not enough studies focusing on this topic, except for four studies that were conducted in Canada on the oral academic discourse socialization (Kobayashi, 2003, 2005; Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). Chinese students have also reported difficulties with their oral academic discourse, yet we still do not know much about this populations' academic discourse socialization. In order to address these gaps in the literature, the following research questions were formulated:

1. In what ways does prior academic experience with oral presentations impact the ways in which Chinese graduate students are socialized into the discourses appropriate for oral presentations?
2. How are the Chinese graduate students socialized into the academic discourse related with oral presentations as required in the academic community they have joined?

3. What language difficulties, if any, do Chinese graduate students have in making oral presentations as required in their academic life?
4. How over time does language socialization result in student progress, if any, in their L2 during their socialization into the academic discourse communities that they wish to be part of?

1.4 The Purposes and Objectives of the Study

The purposes of this study were to explore Chinese graduate students' academic discourse socialization process by focusing on one specific activity: oral presentations. More specifically, it aimed to examine how the Chinese graduate students were being socialized into this academic community in terms of oral presentations. This study also explored the reasons why Chinese students had these difficulties, so that their challenges and needs could be addressed at a more fundamental level. In addition, it attempted to examine the linguistic productions of Chinese graduate students' oral presentation texts from an SFL approach (Halliday, 1989, 1994; Schleppegrell, 2004). By examining how Chinese students improved their language use in this language socialization process, faculty both in the ESL field and academic disciplines might be able to help these students better adapt to the new academic community and increase their chances for academic success.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

The study is significant in a number of ways. First, it contributes to second language socialization theory by adding to the academic discourse socialization of Chinese graduate students as a participant population. By exploring the reasons behind students' difficulties and

challenges, this study expands our understanding of language socialization theory. The oral presentation discourse analysis part of the study is particularly significant because the findings contribute to the existing studies on oral academic discourse, shedding particular light on why oral academic activities are challenging for ESL students from an SFL perspective. Although L2 socialization studies have examined the socialization process of ESL learners in various situations with various population, few of the studies to the best of my knowledge have touched upon the language development part of ESL learners except one (Kobayashi, 2005). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature of second language socialization in general, particularly in terms of language development during the socialization process.

Besides the contribution to the second language socialization theory, the findings of this study also inform ESL curriculum related with speaking and listening, particularly the importance of considering oral presentations as part of the curriculum. Speaking and listening has been a traditional part of ESL curriculum. How to design the curriculum so that it could benefit the learners most has been a great concern in the ESL field. For students at different levels, different kinds of curriculum are required. This study helps us understand the challenges and needs of Chinese graduate students with respect to one specific oral activity—oral presentations. Thus we could serve this population better by providing guidelines and teaching strategies for ESL professionals. It also provides information for other parties who work with the ESL population in similar situations, for instance, other groups of Asian students who might share similar characteristics. In addition, the findings of this study also benefit the whole academic community of which these students seek to become members.

In terms of methodology, the use of SFL approach as a data analysis tool contributes to the methodology in second language socialization studies. The previous language socialization studies have focused mostly on how the newcomers are being socialized to learn the culture of a particular community or society--- particularly for the second language studies that use LS as their theoretical framework. Ethnographic methods have been adopted for most of these studies which will be discussed in more detail in the literature review section. However, most studies did not analyze the development of linguistic structures in this discourse socialization process. In this study, SFL approach (Schleppegrell, 2004) is adapted as an analysis tool because it provides new perspective that is appropriate for analyzing oral presentation discourse.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted with language socialization as its theoretical framework though it also informed by other relevant sociocultural theories such as communities of practice. Language socialization refers to the process through which novices of a society or community acquire culture through language and learn how to use the appropriate language codes in various social contexts (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b), and it is frequently quoted in its original terms: “socialization through language and socialization to use the language” (p. 163). Not limited to children who are learning their native language or a second language, language socialization is a lifelong process (Ochs, 1988).

Closely connected with language socialization is the concept of communities of practice (COP), a theory first put forth by Lave and Wenger (1991) and further elaborated by Wenger (1998). According to this theory, learning is essentially socially situated participation. When

newcomers or novices come to a community, they participate through on-going practice, acquire competence through interaction with the more experienced members, and try to achieve fuller membership and this process is called legitimate peripheral participation. Legitimate peripheral participation describes the relationship between the more experienced and the relatively novice members of a COP. Initially novices are located at the peripheral position where they can participate but not as fully as old-timers. Gradually, they participate more and gain fuller membership into the community.

Chinese students who pursue their graduate studies in an American institution can be defined as novices in a new COP. Coming from a different linguistic and cultural background, Chinese students are faced with a number of challenges (Lin, 2002; Wan, 1999). It takes time to become a member of this new academic community where the medium of instruction and learning is English, because different COPs have different values, norms or cultures.

To summarize this section, as mentioned above, research has shown in general that language is a barrier for Chinese students (Lin, 2002; Wan, 1999). However, no research has examined *how* language has become a barrier in the academic life of Chinese students. A study on the academic discourse socialization of Chinese graduate students may reveal some specific and detailed issues involved in this dynamic process, which would ultimately contribute to our growing understanding of the language socialization theory. Examining how Chinese students acquire or fail to acquire academic discourse may result in understanding the specific problems or difficulties that this population has and thus provide pedagogical suggestions for faculty, programs and other stakeholders at the college level.

1.7 Overview of Other Chapters

Chapter II is a critical overview of the literature on language socialization. It begins with a review on the language socialization studies that focused on the first language development followed by a discussion on the second language socialization literature. After that, the studies on oral presentations found in the literature are discussed. Finally, several important language socialization studies on oral presentations are examined at a more detailed level. The chapter concludes with the gaps that still exist in literature and thus set the stage for the current study.

Chapter III discusses the methodology for this study including the dissertation design, data collection and analyses procedures as well as my reflections on this research project and process. In this chapter a brief overview of a pilot study is also included because of its relevance to the rationale for the current dissertation design.

Chapters IV and V spell out the findings of the dissertation. Chapter IV focuses on the macro-level of the language socialization, namely, learning the culture of a certain community through the language used. That is, how the participants learned to make oral presentations appropriately through a second language. This chapter discusses the impact of the participants' L1 academic socialization on their L2 academic socialization and how the participants are socialized into the North American academic community as part of their L2 discourse socialization process. Chapter V explores the more micro-level aspect of language socialization, namely, learning to use the language appropriately. By examining the oral presentation texts of the participants produced over a period of time, this chapter documents the language progress

that the participants made along with their language socialization process from an SFL perspective.

Chapter VI concludes the dissertation by summarizing the major findings. The implications of the study, future directions and the limitations of the study are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, language socialization has been advocated to be an alternative research paradigm for the study of second language acquisition (SLA) (Watson-Gegeo & Nielsen, 2003). This chapter provides a literature review on language socialization. First there will be a review of the studies focusing on the first language (L1) socialization and then on second language (L2) socialization. After that, the studies on oral presentations in general and those using language socialization as their theoretical perspective in particular are examined. Finally, relevant literature on SFL as a vigorous research tool is presented. The chapter concludes with the gaps that still exist in literature.

2.2 Studies on (first) Language (L1) Socialization

Language socialization as a research paradigm was first formulated in the late 1960s and 1970s as an alternative model to explain language acquisition (Watson-Gegeo & Nielsen, 2003). Originating from anthropology, language socialization was very much influenced by scholars such as Hymes (1972), Gumperz (1982), and Heath (1983), among others. The theoretical background of language socialization was particularly elaborated by a series of works by Ochs and Schieffelin (Ochs, 1988, 1990, 1993; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 1995; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b, 1996). According to Schieffelin & Ochs (1986a), language socialization is the process through which children or other novices of a society acquire the culture through language and learn to use language appropriately in various social contexts. Through a process of

observation and gradually increased participation, novices are expected to become more competent members of a certain community with expert assistance.

Throughout the past two decades, the theory of language socialization as an explanation of first language acquisition has been carried forward by many researchers who have contributed to it through theoretical elaboration or empirical studies (Clancy, 1999; Cook-Gumperz, Corsaro, & Streeck, 1986; Heath, 1983, 1986; Jacobs-Huey, 2003; Ochs, 1988; Philips, 1983, 2001; Schieffelin, 1990; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b; Watson-Gegeo, 2004; Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1986a, 1986b; Watson-Gegeo & Nielsen, 2003).

Schieffelin and Ochs (1986a, 1986b) and Ochs (1988) were among the first to explicitly construct a language socialization theory for children language development. Since then, the compatibility and flexibility of the theory has attracted many followers. Sixteen years after the publication of the first review on language socialization by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986b), Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez (2002) presented another comprehensive review. These authors summarized the development of language socialization research, which had extended its focus from monolingual societies to "sociolinguistically and culturally heterogeneous settings" (p. 340). The authors also suggested directions for future language socialization studies. For instance, the employment of narrative as a tool of socialization and ideologies of language could become some of the topics for future studies.

Besides these two reviews, two additional recent theoretical articles have shown that language socialization is continuing to expand its scope and is becoming more crafted as a theory. The first review is by Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003), who argue that language socialization

has important implications for SLA. The second is by Watson-Gegeo (2004), who suggested establishing a language socialization paradigm for SLA.

From its status as a theory grounded mainly in anthropology to its current status as a research paradigm for SLA, language socialization has evolved and developed as illustrated by these theoretical works. The fruitfulness of early language socialization studies on the language development of children led to its further use in studies involving adolescent and adult language development. L2 studies have consistently borrowed theories and methodologies from L1 research. This is no exception with language socialization. These theoretical articles have provided and will continue to provide important theoretical support for language socialization studies in SLA.

Besides these theoretical reviews, a number of empirical studies have adopted language socialization as a theoretical framework. Studies vary from small-scaled societies to heterogeneous ones, extending from focusing on the interaction between children and their caregivers to interaction at school and later in the workplace. As Ochs (1988) has rightly argued, language socialization is a lifelong process. Language socialization research has covered different stages in life from early childhood to adulthood (Baquedano-Lopez, 1998; Rymes, 1996). Not only do children experience language socialization, so do adults as they enter new sociocultural contexts and assume new roles in a new community or society (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002).

Among the empirical studies on language socialization, Heath (1983) and Cook (1999) stand out as landmark studies generating results that are particularly important to the current

study. Following ethnographic tradition, Heath described how children in three communities learned to use language at home and at school in South-eastern America. Heath documented how Roadville, a white, working class community, and Trackton, a black, working-class community, socialized their children at home through language. Unfortunately, their use of language was very different from that of the townspeople, those who were the mainstream blacks and whites. As a result, their children encountered great difficulties when they went to school because the school's way of using language was consistent with that of the townspeople but were in conflict with both Roadville and Trackton's discourse style. The result was that both Roadville and Trackton children did not perform well at school.

Heath (1983) extends the research from primary socialization which typically happens at home to secondary socialization which typically happens at school. She illustrates clearly that conflicts between primary and secondary socialization can create problems. In situations where home language socialization conflicts with school language socialization, children have difficulty achieving success in academic settings.

Although it was conducted within the U. S. context, Heath's study (1983) has implications for ESL students. Just as Roadville and Trackton children encounter difficulties at school because of the different ways of socialization at home and at school, ESL students in U.S. academic contexts may encounter the similar difficulties for the similar reasons. More specifically, when Chinese students come to the United States to pursue their studies, they might find different academic discourses from those in their native culture. We do not have much empirical evidence to suggest a discontinuity between the language socialization of Chinese students in their home

country and in a new academic community in the United States. However, it is possible that such discontinuity does exist and possibly contributes to the difficulties that Chinese graduate students encounter as they try to make their way through the U.S. educational system. Future studies could investigate whether such a discontinuity does exist and its potential problems for Chinese graduate students.

Heath (1983) offered a macro theoretical perspective on the studies of language socialization. Other studies such as Cook (1999) approached language socialization through a more micro perspective. By examining the participation structure of Japanese elementary school classroom interaction, Cook documented how Japanese children acquired the skills of listening in classroom interaction. Fifteen hours of audio-taped classroom interactions from 5 classes in 4 schools were analyzed in terms of the participation structure and the role of the teacher and of the peers. The outcomes suggested that Japanese teacher-student classroom interaction was very different from that of traditional American classrooms. A multiparty, rather than dyadic, participation structure helped to socialize the children into listening-oriented communication appropriate for Japanese culture. This kind of interactional pattern minimized the teacher's role but emphasized that the peers' role served as the primary socialization resource for Japanese children. This study provides us with insight about classroom interaction, especially for ESL students who have difficulties in American classrooms perhaps due to interaction pattern differences. Future studies should take the interaction patterns of students into consideration.

Summary of the studies. Most of the early language socialization studies focused on the language socialization process in monolingual societies. Despite the narrow focus of these

studies, they have tested the flexibility of language socialization and have enriched the theory. Particularly, Heath (1983) offered a framework for macro-level analysis of discontinuity between home and school socialization while Cook (1999) offered an approach for micro-level analysis. What is more, Cook's study on Japanese also offered some valuable insights for studies on language socialization of Chinese population since Japanese culture is closely related to Chinese culture. Ochs (1988) argued that language socialization is a life-long process. Together with the other studies supporting this statement, it provides theoretical support for L2 socialization research.

2.3 Studies on Second Language (L2) Socialization

For L2 learners, it is important that they learn to communicate, both through written and oral communication, with people from two or more cultural backgrounds including native and non-native speakers of English. As Lave and Wenger (1991) have argued, learning is essentially a social activity. L2 students, especially those enrolled in U.S. universities, theoretically benefit from having interactions with both faculty and peers, since these interactions provide meaningful contexts for learning to occur. The reality is that these L2 students frequently encounter great difficulties in adapting to new academic communities as documented by Trice (2001) and Yeh and Yang (2003).

Starting the last decade, several L2 studies that foreground language socialization as their theoretical framework have been published (Atkinson, 2003; Bayley & Schecter, 2003; Duff, 1995, 2002; Duff, Wong, & Early, 2000; Harklau, 2003; A.W. He, 2000, 2003; Kanagy, 1999; Li, 2000; Morita, 2000; Poole, 1992; Schecter & Bayley, 1997; Watson-Gegeo, 1992; Willett, 1995).

Many of these studies are discussed in Zuengler and Cole (2005) or in Bayley and Schecter (2003). The former provides a comprehensive review of language socialization and its applications to L2 research by examining seventeen L2 studies that took language socialization explicitly as their theoretical framework. The latter is particularly important in that it is the first comprehensive collection of language socialization research in bilingual and multilingual societies, including language socialization at home, at school, in communities, in former colony countries, and in multilingual societies. Studies that provide insights for future research involving Chinese students' academic discourse socialization are discussed below.

2.3.1 Studies on Ethnic Chinese Students

Compared to other approaches to the study of L2 learning, L2 socialization is new, but a number of studies have been conducted with different populations in a variety of settings. Participants vary from English-speaking kindergartners learning beginning Japanese (Kanagy, 1999) to a Chinese female learning how to make appropriate requests in the workplace (Li, 2000). The settings vary from elementary schools (A. W. He, 2000) to post-secondary institutes (Poole, 1992), from Canada (Beckett, 1999) to former colonies such as Cameroon (Moore, 1999) and India (Atkinson, 2003) to where English is a foreign language such as Japan (Yoshimi, 1999) and Hungary (Duff, 1995). Among studies with Chinese people as the sole participants or members of the participating population, the populations vary. Some were born in America or Canada or immigrated at an early age; others came as adolescents. Some are only here to pursue higher education and some are here as adults to work. These differences suggest that they will experience very different language socialization processes as the following studies show.

A. W. He (2003) studied a group of 4 to 9 year-old children who were learning Chinese as their heritage language in America. Speech roles were the primary focus of her study. Using a micro-interactional approach, He found that the teachers sometimes controlled the class and the students were put in a passive position that prevented them from fully participating as they might in other situations. The author was not sure whether the socialization she observed is a cultural or classroom phenomenon because of the dearth of similar studies for comparison. He states that too often language socialization research focuses on the more experienced participants who socialize children. Novices, on the other hand, do not receive enough attention. Future studies that focus on novices and their roles in the interaction process would help enrich the research on language socialization. Methodologically, He closely analyzed the discursive interaction between the teachers and the students. Frequently, language socialization studies are weak in data collection and analysis procedures, partially because many focus on broad contexts and fail to narrow to specific details. A study following this micro-interactional analysis would be able to avoid the weaknesses of methods that are too holistic.

Duff (2002) is another study that involves ethnic Chinese participants. The author explored the interactional participation of a class at a Canadian mainstream high school with a diverse student population, especially Chinese. Using ethnography of communication, Duff examined the contexts of communication within one content course both at the macro-level and micro-level. The study put forward two research questions: How did the teacher try to establish respect for cultural diversity through discussions about cultural differences? How did the non-local students position themselves and how were they positioned by others in this socialization process? The

findings revealed that despite the teacher's attempt to increase students' awareness of cultural diversity and respect for differences, local students and non-local students identified themselves as very different groups and did not meet the teacher's expectations. The non-local students had only minimal participation in the oral discussions and remained reticent most of the time, which was viewed unfavorably by their peers. Sometimes the local students spoke for the non-local students who were reluctant or unable to provide information about themselves or about their culture. However, while the local students demonstrated greater power in oral participation, some of the seemingly reticent students were found to be academically outstanding when considering other aspects of learning. These students negotiated a number of different identities, discourses and expectations with the teacher and their peers. They seemed to choose to remain different by neither showing their identity nor aligning themselves to the norms of the "experts." Duff argued that language socialization processes were more complex than what had been generally assumed. She suggested the necessity to interpret the interaction between newcomers and experts and therefore to evaluate competence in the classroom from a new perspective.

This study is very important for several reasons. First, it made methodological contributions to research in classroom discourse, which will be discussed in the methodological issues section of this effort. Second, it offered insights on the classroom dynamics in L2 socialization by arguing that socialization is not a smooth, one-directional interaction. It revealed that L2 socialization is a much more complex process in comparison with L1 socialization. Third, it explored students' agency in the language socialization process. The students might choose to stay in the margin in the socialization process by refusing to assume the role of what was

expected of a competent member of a certain community. Future studies need to consider these implications and whether there would be similar characteristics of the non-Canadian born students and the Chinese graduate students who come to pursue their studies in the new country.

Pon, Goldstein and Schecter (2003) provide another similar study on Chinese students. Through a three-month ethnographic observation in a Grade 12 Advanced English class, the authors examined the issue of silence in an urban high school where Chinese-Canadians made up the majority of the student population. The findings showed that the Canadian-born students (including the ethnic Chinese) considered the silence of the immigrant Chinese as incompetence and thus might lead to negative consequences to the education of the Canadian-born students. The immigrant Chinese students themselves had different reasons for their silence in class such as to avoid losing face or to show their solidarity with their Chinese peers. Along the same line with Duff (2002), this study offers insights into some characteristics of Chinese students. Again since the population of this study was high school students in Canada, it might also apply to other Chinese students elsewhere as well, since these students come from a similar cultural background.

Mohan and Smith (1992) conducted a case study of eight Chinese students in a graduate adult education course in Canada. The purpose of the study was to find out how and why the students succeeded despite the fact that the students had little background knowledge about adult education and their English proficiency was quite limited. Data were collected through extensive field notes from participant observations, interviews with professors and students, and related documents. The results indicated that some “take-for-granted” course features such as the course

plan, course assignments, and the way to conduct the courses guaranteed the success of the students. All the elements of the course, from the overall organization of the course, to the day-to-day course process to the design of assignments, were organized cohesively to support and ensure the success of the students. During the course, the students/novices gradually increased their participation in the course with the scaffolding of the instructor/the expert.

Although Mohan and Smith (1992) found that the socialization was a smooth and very successful process, this is contradicted by other research. For instance, Li (2000) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic case study to explore the language socialization process in the workplace. The study focused on how Ming, a Chinese woman working in a U. S. company learned to make target-like requests. Data sources included observations, interviews both with the participant and the people around her, self-reports and narratives of speech acts. The findings revealed that novices in L2 socialization are not passive receptors but they actively reshape the socialization process and even sometimes can assume the role of "expert." In other words, novices can exercise their "agency" in the socialization process. In addition, the participant shifted from Chinese communicative styles to American communicative styles as part of the socialization process. It is interesting to note that Ming learned to shift between different communication styles without losing her own communicative style. That is, transformation occurred in an additive manner. Ming gained new communicative competence in English without losing her former communicative competence in her first language. This insight has important implications for situations other than the workplace. To explain this phenomenon, Li (2000) put forward the idea of "double socialization" (p. 58) by which she meant the participant not only

went through socialization in a new working environment but also in a new language and cultural environment. This could be also applied to Chinese graduate students who are not only here to continue their studies and assume new student roles but are also being socialized in a new language and cultural environment.

Summary of the studies These studies indicate that language socialization is a dynamic process and the novice's agency plays an important role. Ethnic Chinese immigrants might have a very different socialization process compared with their native-language speaking peers. Some researchers argued that the differences in their socialization process might be caused by cultural differences as illustrated by Pon, Goldstein and Schecter (2003) in their study of silence. However, these studies are conducted either at primary or secondary schools or in the workplace except for Mohan and Smith (1992). The question remains: Would similar situations occur for Chinese graduate students who come to English-speaking countries to pursue their studies as adults? This study might help to answer this question by focusing on this particular group.

2.3.2 Prior (L1) Socialization Effects on L2 Socialization

Although some studies (Kanagy, 1999; Mohan & Smith, 1992) suggested that L2 socialization could be quite simple and smooth, most studies indicated the potentially problematic nature of L2 socialization (Duff, 2002; Moore, 1999; Poole, 1992; Watson-Gegeo, 1992; Willett, 1995).

Some studies explored the negative effects of prior socialization for L2 use. For example, Moore (1999) explored L2 French primary classrooms in Cameroon. The author tried to determine why French education in Cameroon was in crisis and why so many children left

school after attending for only a few years. This ethnographic study explored communication styles in the community and what kinds of communication knowledge students brought into the classroom. The findings revealed a discontinuity of the communication styles between the community and the classroom seriously impeded the L2 socialization process. While multilingualism and code switching was part of the school children's life outside of school, they were only allowed to use French within the classroom. This discontinuity between the language practices in the community and the classroom led the students to confusion and frustration. One consequence of this practice was a high dropout rate.

Atkinson (2003) presented an extreme case concerning the tension between L1 socialization and L2 socialization. In an ethnographic study, Atkinson reported on the language socialization process of non-traditional students who gained recent access to a formerly elite college in India where English was the medium of instruction. The author explored how language socialization affected academic success of these non-traditional students. The author coined the term "dys-socialization" to describe the negative socialization experience of the non-traditional students who felt inferior in this process and consequently resisted this kind of socialization. The author suggested that a language learner/user's identity might play an important role in language socialization. Other articles, such as Duff (2002), Watson-Gegeo (1992), and Willett (1995), share this point-of-view that discontinuity can and probably will cause difficulties for students.

Even when L1 socialization was not in serious conflict with L2 socialization, it could still cause some negative transfer as illustrated by Yoshimi (1999). Through a qualitative discourse

analysis of 5 Japanese learners, Yoshimi addressed the possible influence of L1 socialization on the production of the L2 in their erroneous use of *ne*, which conveys empathy and shared-ness of knowledge between the interlocutors. The author tried to find how the learner's use of *ne* was different from that of Japanese native speakers and to what extent the learner's error in use of *ne* could be attributed to L1 influence. The findings revealed that the learners could use *ne* appropriately in most cases. But one third of the erroneous use was possibly caused by negative transfer from their mother tongue. Yoshimi suggested further research should examine the relationship between the learner's L1 and L2 socialization.

Summary of these studies. The above studies reveal a possible conflict between L1 socialization at home and L2 socialization at school. If secondary socialization is consistent with the socialization at home, the transition will be relatively smooth. Otherwise, it will be problematic, as illustrated by the above-mentioned studies. Some socialization occurring at home might have a negative effect on socialization at school. In other words, when primary socialization at home is incongruent with the secondary socialization at school, it will lead to negative consequences such as under achievement or a high dropout rate.

For Chinese students who come from a very different cultural and linguistic background, the socialization they receive in the western world might be different from the socialization at home (Ho, 1989). Li (2000) suggests that students such as these will undergo "double socialization." Will this create difficulties for Chinese students? How can this transition be made easier? How does the secondary socialization in their home country affect their continual academic socialization in a new environment? Or more specifically, how does the L1 academic

socialization of Chinese graduate students affect their L2 academic socialization? More studies need to be conducted to find answers to these questions.

2.3.3 L1 Socialization versus L2 Socialization

While it is true that L2 socialization research has drawn heavily on research in L1 socialization, it is also true that L2 socialization is significantly different from L1 socialization in several aspects.

In L1 socialization, children usually share a similar culture with other community members. Therefore it is relatively easy for them to be socialized into the community within a "supportive environment" (Shi, 2006a, p. 4). Research on children's continuous socialization from primary to secondary language socialization suggests that there might be conflict between primary socialization at home and secondary socialization at school. For adult novices, the situation is even more complicated since adults need to further develop their verbal repertoire so that they can "master new registers or speech styles associated with work and professional life and expanding social horizons" (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002, p. 349). In other words, the environment in the workplace may be not very supportive. Taking this into consideration, however, it is still justified to say that, although children have a different socialization at home than that at school, they are still using the same language in both settings, though English used might be somewhat different depending on the setting, as is the case in Heath (1983). For adult novices, there are different working cultures and different jargons in the workplace and there are different ways of learning things at school. The socialization differences between home and school, or school and the workplace, create problems for the students or new employees. In L2

socialization situations the foreign status and cultural disparity of the L2 population amplify the difficulties in the socialization process when the novices, coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, carrying their cultural baggage with them. That is, their L2 socialization is influenced by many factors such as their prior socialization, identity, and cultural differences. Duff (2002) stated that L2 socialization is much more complicated than L1 socialization. Shi (2006a) argued that it is inevitable for L2 learners to encounter cross-cultural communication difficulties to a certain degree. For L2 learners, "the intercultural language learning/using contexts constitute extremely powerful and influential settings for secondary socialization" (p. 4). That is, in L2 socialization, there might be a much bigger difference between the novices who join a community and participate through the L2 in comparison with monolingual children who move from primary socialization to secondary socialization or adults who transition to workplace socialization. Not only is there a very different language for ESL students, there is a larger difference in how to use the language appropriately in the two cultures.

In the case of ESL international students, they are not only continuing their language socialization process in their personal life but also they continue their language socialization in the new communities they have just joined in another language. As newcomers of the target-language-speaking society, they need to be socialized into the community through language use and through practicing their L2 in interaction with others.

In recent years, as discussed above, researchers have started to conduct L2 socialization research to explore the learning experience for ESL students. For instance, Morita (2004) noted several studies focused on academic discourse socialization through writing. However, there is a

lack of studies on socialization through oral activities (Kobayashi, 2005; Morita, 2000). As Morita points out, “L2 learners’ socialization through primarily oral activities such as discussions and presentations has received relatively limited attention” (2004, p. 575). Studies on L2 learners’ socialization into academic discourse through oral activities will help us to fill this gap.

2.4 Methodological Issues

According to Baquedano-Lopez (2002), research in language socialization “draws on anthropological, (socio)linguistic, sociological, and psychological approaches to human development, seeking a maximally holistic and integrative perspective” (p. 341). As a result, ethnographic methods have been an important methodology to the study of language socialization. Next is a brief review of some of the issues related to the use of ethnographic methods in this area of study.

In a language socialization study at the postsecondary level, Poole (1992) examined language classroom interaction at the beginning level of ESL classes to explore how the student teacher interaction imparted local academic culture. The findings showed the more experienced party (the teacher) socialized the relatively novice students into the language community. However, asymmetric interaction between the teachers and students was similar to the interaction between American middle-class caregivers and their children. The seemingly routine and unremarkable sequences of the classroom interaction were actually part of the cultural beliefs and practices of the teachers who were members of that culture and whose behaviors would be “culturally constrained and motivated” (p. 611). This asymmetry hindered the socialization process of the students.

Along the same line, Ohta (1999) examined how interactional routines were used to express alignment and how this occurred through learner participation in a Japanese foreign language classroom in America. Ohta claimed that interactional routines played a powerful role in the socialization of expressing alignment. Through peripheral and gradually more active participation in the routines with the teacher and the peers, the learner developed her ability to express alignment and assessment appropriately in the target language.

There are some weaknesses in the data collection methods of both Poole (1992) and Ohta (1999). Poole collected 10 hours of observation and audiotapes while Ohta carried out her analysis based only on 15 hours of video and audiotapes. Undoubtedly, observation and video/ audiotape analysis provided rich data for their studies. However, both studies could have benefited from incorporating interviews, because researchers and participants might interpret the same data very differently. By triangulating the data through interviews, Poole and Ohta could have enhanced the validity of their research. Although both the articles had plentiful discourse data examples, they failed to explicitly discuss their analytic perspective.

Yoshimi (1999) investigated the possible influence of an individual's L1 on the production of the L2, focusing on the interactional use of *ne,* which conveys empathy and sharedness of knowledge between the interlocutors. Five male native-English speakers, who were in a 2-month summer program in Japan, participated in the study. Methodologically, Yoshimi used "quasi-experimental-like pairs" in which each participant was paired with a Japanese native-speaking peer partner in two 10-15 minute audio-and video-taped conversations. Her study was very focused in the sense of the analysis of *ne,* but again she did not take into

consideration the participants' opinions, despite the fact that she was studying the possible influence of their L1. In addition, the data analysis was not clearly described. These studies have made contributions in building and expanding the language socialization theory. However, the studies above could be improved by triangulating their data through interviews with the participants.

Duff (2002) made a contribution to the study of classroom discourse by elaborating on the ethnography of communication (EC) as a research method for language socialization studies. According to Duff, EC has specific strengths that are important to the study of language socialization: (1) it identifies how L2 learners use the language appropriately and the consequences of failing to do so; (2) it focuses on oral communication and social interaction with attention to the communication patterns across cultures; (3) it considers speech events, activities, or tasks are crucial sites for analysis; (4) contexts are of vital importance; (5) participants' perspectives are valued. Duff asserts that EC makes it possible to analyze classroom discourse both at the macro- and micro-level, and to include both etic and emic perspectives.

Most of the studies foregrounding the language socialization perspective are either ethnographic or qualitative in nature with one exception. Matsumura's (2001) study is quasi-experimental with quantitative analysis. The study focused on how Japanese learners of English were being socialized into L2 pragmatics, more specifically, how to offer advice to people of different social statuses. The author compared one group of students who came to Canada as L2 English learners with another group who continued to learn English as a foreign language in Japan. The findings revealed that while the group staying in Japan achieved giving

advice in English appropriately only to a higher-status person, the group in Canada could perceive social status better and gave advice appropriately to people of various statuses. There are several limitations to this study. First, the study reports that that the learners did develop pragmatic competence, which is to be expected, but it is not clear how the learners developed this competence. Second, since individuals are very different, it is difficult to determine whether the results could be generalized to all the participants involved in this study or to other populations. This study contributed to language socialization studies by utilizing quantitative methods. However, it could be improved by incorporating qualitative methods. As Watson-Gegeo (2004) argues, good language socialization research requires "a combination of ethnographic, sociolinguistic, and discourse analytic methods at a minimum, and often includes quantitative and sometimes experimental methods as well" (p. 341).

Summary of these studies As can be seen from the above analysis, language socialization research is still crafting its research methods. As suggested by Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003), there are several considerations for language socialization methods: "…the need to interrogate key analytic concepts, unsupported interpretive leaps from data to cultural pattern, lack of contrastive examples where these are essential to assessing the quality of the analysis, and less than transparent procedures of data collection and /or analysis" (p. 168). Another critique is that many studies do not provide enough discourse data to support their analysis. In correspondence to this criticism, Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen suggested that while the ethnographic tradition will continue to be part of the method for investigation, future research needed to clearly define the

key terms, and provide more solid interpretation of data through more spelled-out data collection and analysis procedures.

Language socialization study is still a new area in SLA, which is worthy of further investigation. Particularly, examining the language use in this language socialization process has special significance for second language socialization, as the purpose for ESL population is to learn to use the language appropriately. For this study, what are the linguistic features of oral presentations that ESL students need to appropriate in this socialization process? There are no specific studies addressing the discourse socialization process in terms of oral presentations in literature so far; however, studies on the features of spoken language might provide information for a study on oral presentations.

2.5 Studies on Features of the Spoken Language

Compared to the large number of studies on writing, there are relatively smaller number of studies that focus on the oral language. In the academic world, speech has generally been considered as unimportant when compared with writing. It is often “disregarded as unsystematic and not representative of the true linguistic structure of a language” (Biber, 1988, p.7). However, some researchers such as Aronoff (1985) argued that only speech should be considered as serious linguistic analysis. Studies examined the differences between speaking and writing are discussed in the following section because no studies on the specific features of spoken language in oral presentations is found. These studies comparing speaking and writing might provide some insights on spoken language.

Biber (1988) is one landmark study on the differences between speaking and writing. Biber

made an argument that both speaking and writing are important in their own way and therefore both deserve careful analysis according to his corpus-based research on the overall patterns of speaking and writing register variation of academic discourse. Biber (1988, 1994) designed a Multidimensional (MD) analysis, through which he analyzed the overall linguistic features of the speaking and writing register variations. More specifically, the MD identified 67 linguistic features across 481 spoken and written texts of contemporary British English. Some spoken linguistic features Biber listed include involved (when compared to written language, which is more detached); private verbs (feel, think, believe); that-deletions (I heard (that) you just came back from Africa); contractions; second person pronouns, demonstrative pronouns; first person pronouns; discourse particles (now, well, anyway); general hedges (something, like, almost), the absence of the passive constructions. According to Biber, the spoken language is more situated, interactive, and immediate compared to written registers, which are more abstract, edited and reported.

In another article, based on a survey of the Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English, Biber and Vasquez (2008) listed a number of grammatical features that are common in conversation but relatively rare in academic prose:

1. Verbs and verb phrases: lexical verbs; mental verbs; phrasal verbs; present tense; progressive aspect; modal verbs; semi-modal verbs
2. Adverbs: simple adverbs; adjectival forms used as adverbs; amplifiers; stance adverbs
3. Pronouns: Personal pronouns; demonstrative pronoun that
4. Simple clause features: questions; imperatives; stranded prepositions in WH-questions;

coordination tags;

5. Dependent clause features: verb+that complement clause; complementizer that omission; verb+WH complement clauses; conditional adverbial clauses (p.540)

Even though these features are the general features of spoken language, they might provide some useful information since the oral presentation is still spoken language and therefore should share some of these oral features. Hughes (2002), in a discussion focused on oral language, pointed out that L2 learners should be aware of the three basic aspects of spontaneous speech: speaking is fundamentally an interactive task; it happens under real-time processing constraints; it is more fundamentally linked to the individual who produced it than the written form is. The oral presentations as discussed in this dissertation are different from spontaneous speech because these oral presentations could be prepared. Still, these oral presentations share some characteristics with spontaneous speech, particularly for ESL students.

As to the specific linguistic features of oral presentations, there is very little literature on it except Tanskanen (2006), in which the author briefly discussed the cohesive features of prepared speech. The author's definition of prepared speech is similar to what is defined as oral presentations in this dissertation; therefore, what the author discussed on prepared speeches is relevant:

> "The cohesive profile of the prepared speeches is an intriguing mixture of the profiles of the conversations, on the one hand, and academic writing, on the other…"in terms of the contextual features of the speeches, the finding that the spoken monologues seems to be a mixture of the spoken dialogue and the written monologue is not illogical. (p.162)

This also echoes what Schleppegrell (2008) found. During the 1980s, research had been

conducted to describe the differences between stereotypical speech such as conversation and stereotypical writing such as academic prose. Schleppegrell concluded that researchers had made it clear that the differences between the two modes are more on a continuum rather than clear-cut dichotomy. In spite of that, Schleppegrell pointed out that “the mode of production, whether spoken or written, is generally seen to have an influence on the grammatical organization of language (p.553).

To briefly summarize, there are not many studies focusing on the features of oral language up to this date. Among those that have studied the topic, the data are all from native-speakers of English. The significance or relevance of these studies for the current study is that they provide important information on the features of oral language in general. At this point, however, we still know little about the linguistic features of ESL students’ oral productions. What are some of the features of L2 speakers’ language in oral presentations? This is one of the foci of this study. To analyze the linguistic features and the language process of the Chinese graduate students’ oral discourse, an SFL approach is adopted. The following section discusses the relevance of this analytic tool with reference to its the theoretical framework and its application to this research topic.

2.6 Language Socialization and the SFL Approach

Language socialization together with some other sociocultural theories provides a theoretical framework for this study. Particularly, it provides the theoretical support to analyze what is happening at a macro-level. At the same time, language socialization does not happen only at a macro-level, the language socialization process is shown to a great degree through the

language production—in this study it refers to the oral texts that the participants produced. SFL approach can work as an effective analytic tool for the oral texts.

As a social theory of language, SFL was originally proposed by linguist Michael Halliday (1973) over four decades ago. Because of the inadequacy of the grammar established by the works of formal linguists represented by Chomsky (1969), many linguists searched other theories to tackle the complicated language issues, particularly theories for language use. SFL is one of the linguistic theories that could effectively explain language in use. This theory has been developing and expanding since 1970s by a number of researchers all over the world (for instance, Achugar & Colombi, 2008; Byrnes, 2006; Christie, 2002a, b; Lemke, 1998; Martin, 1993; Mohan & Beckett, 2003)

As to the compatibility of using an SFL approach in second language socialization studies, the most recent discussion on their close relationship can be found in Stiefvater (2008), who did an excellent job elaborating how functional linguistics approach is in line with language socialization, both of which are in line with Vygotskyan sociocultural theories. Stiefvater argued that SFL considered language as a resource rather a collection of rules, language as meaning-making tool rather than a meaning-expressing tool, text-based analysis rather than sentence-based analysis, a conceptualization of texts in social context rather than as isolated objects, a tendency toward what Halliday and Martin (1993) refer to as “extravagance” (p. 23) rather than parsimony. Stiefvater found that SFL was of great value as an alternative way of teaching writing. Her study found that the teachers socialized the ESL students in terms of attention to field, tenor and mode even without formally knowing that was what they did.

However, like most other studies in the literature, the author used the theory as a macro-level and the actual products of language socialization were not systematically examined.

2.6.1 Context, Language use and SFL

In discussing language and context, Schleppegrell (2004) argued that a great number of children entering school faced challenges of using the language to "accomplish new types of tasks and new expectations for how they will structure what they say" (p.21). Although the target population the author intended to discuss were the students who were not the mainstream middle-class population which include ESL population in American schools, what Schleppegrell argued here can be applied to the Chinese graduate students who come to the United States as international ESL students. When they come to this new academic community, they are often required to use the language for new types of tasks---including but not limited to oral presentations. They not only need to use the language to fulfill the tasks that are required of them but also need to learn to use the language appropriately in a way that meet the expectations of this target academic discourse community.

> …a Vygotskyan perspective illuminates how differences in socialization practices mean that students from different backgrounds come to school with divergent preparation for using language in the ways expected at school, but does not offer concrete solutions that are specifically bound to the nature of language. (Schleppegrell 2004, p.23)

SFL provides a means of integrating the context and language use, in opposition to the formal linguistics approach, which analyzes the individual phonics, semantics or syntax without considering the context which is a part of the meaning-making process, as discussed by Stiefvater (2008). Similar opinions can also be found in Schleppegrell (2004, p.45)

> Rather than analyzing linguistic structures in isolation or as abstract entities, a functional approach identifies the configuration of grammatical structures which is typical of or expected in different kinds of socially relevant tasks and links those linguistic choices with the social purposes and situations that the "texts" (spoken or written) participate in.

Based on such an argument that it is important to analyze not only the linguistic structures but also "the social purposes and situations", the individual texts that the participants produced hence were used as the unit of analysis for this dissertation.

In brief, the conclusion of the above discussion is that language socialization research would find the use of SFL approach helpful in the socialization discourse analysis. Next is literature review of using SFL approach as a research tool by a number of researchers in various studies.

Achugar and Colombi (2008) argued that SFL not only provides a general theoretical framework to study the second language learning, it offers a specific analysis tool for research. According to these authors, this linguistics theory started with the study of first language acquisition and developed into the second language learning. "In bilingual and second language (L2) development, too, the social practices individuals participate in are thought to shape the types of languages they develop" (p.37). The authors also argued that the differences between learning results could be explained by this theoretical framework since different social positioning of the individual learners might lead to different types of linguistic resources people develop. In contrast with universal grammar, which studies the language out of its context and focuses on the language itself, functional grammar focused on language use in its context. By using written samples, the authors demonstrated the effectiveness of using SFL as their analysis

tool.

Besides this effort, there is additional literature using SFL as the primary research tool, namely, Stillar (1998) and Schleppegrell (2004). Stillar (1998) illustrated that SFL can be very useful in examining everyday texts. According to Stillar, when someone speaks (or writes), the linguistic resources he draws upon will simultaneously reflect his/her experience of the world. The linguistic resources would also represent the social relations between the participants involved. Ideally the linguistic resources the speaker or writer use should create a text that is cohesive internally and appropriate for the context.

Using SFL, Stillar (1998) developed a framework to describe the linguistic structures, functions of texts and explore how the linguistic resources realize the social aspect of the context. Following Halliday (1994), Stillar (1998) discussed that language resources could be organized along the lines of three general functions: ideational function, the interpersonal function, and the textual function. After presenting the functional resources for the construction of the text, Stillar discussed the context under the SFL theory. The context was identified with 3 situational features: field, tenor, and mode, corresponding to the three functions ideational functions, interpersonal functions and textual functions. Schleppegrell (2004) extended this model, which is discussed next.

In her study on the language of schooling, Schleppegrell (2004) illustrated the effectiveness of SFL in her argument that many children who did not know academic language might perform poorly for academic tasks. Schleppegrell divided the context into 3 variables and listed the grammatical structures that realize those variables in the following Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Grammar and the Context of Situation, Schleppegrell (2004)

Contextual variable	Linguistic realization
Field (presenting ideas)	Noun phrases/nominal groups, Verbs Prepositional phrases, adverbial adjuncts, and other resources, etc, Resources for marking logical relationship
Tenor (taking a stance)	Mood (statements, questions, demands) Modality (Modal verbs and adverbs) Intonation Other resources for evaluative and attitudinal meaning
Mode (structuring a text)	Cohesive devices, including conjunctions and connectors Clause-combining strategies Thematic organization

According to Schleppegrell (2004), there are 3 contextual variables: field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the ideas to be conveyed. Tenor refers to the relationship between the audience and speaker or the reader and the writer. And mode refers to how the language is structured to serve the ideational and interpersonal purposes of the speaker. Here it is important to note that the three aspects are not so distinctly divided. Instead, they are interwoven with each other.

For L1 speakers who grow up in the discourse community, it is easy for them to use the linguistic resources appropriate for the three aspects. Of course it might happen that specific discourse communities acquire newcomers, no matter whether they be a native speaker or a non-native speaker, who must learn the rules and norms for that specific discourse community. Still in general, it is much easier for the native speaker to pick up the norms and culture with a certain specific discourse community. For ESL students, it might be a greater challenge.

To conclude this section, language socialization studies, particularly on oral academic discourse socialization, need to be conducted using more rigorous research methods. Framed in

the theory language socialization, this study employs qualitative case methods but at the same time, it also applies SFL approach to analyze the oral academic discourse data to enhance the rigor of the study. The next section discusses the oral presentation, as one important activity of oral language socialization, which has attracted the attention of researchers in L2 learning. Four studies will be examined in more detail.

2.7 Studies on ESL Oral Presentations

ESL oral presentations do play an important role in second language learning. On the one hand, it requires ESL learners to have a mastery of the language required for presentation. At the same time, one still cannot make high-quality oral presentations only with high linguistic proficiency. One also needs to be familiar with the oral presentation culture because oral presentation can be heavily culturally loaded. Therefore, studies on oral presentations will enable researchers to investigate both the linguistic and the cultural development of L2 learners.

So far, only a few studies have been conducted on Chinese students' oral presentations. Most of these studies mainly focus on how to teach Chinese students effective oral presentation skills. For instance, Katchen (1995) studied how a group of students majoring in science in Taiwan developed their oral presentation skills. The study documented how the class was organized and students' feedback on the course design. Another study conduced by Mueller (2000) demonstrated how to teach Chinese students to deliver oral presentations effectively through a step-by-step process of how to teach the course. In a similar vein, Hill and Storey (2003) described the development of an online course to help Chinese students in Hong Kong to improve their presentation skills. Along the same line offering advice about making academic

presentations, Renfrow and Impara (1989) suggested that it is very important for presenters to understand different medium might mean different ways of language use, drawing attention to the distinctions between spoken and written language. Unfortunately, the paper did not provide further elaboration.

Though these articles are very practical in a “how to” sense, they do not help understand the process of socialization through oral presentations. In addition, these studies do not have a strong theoretical framework to support their claims. Therefore, while these articles have their value in curriculum design, they fail to examine the process of how to socialize students into an academic oral presentation culture through their L2. Most of these studies have focused on the operational level without going into the deeper issues that are part of ESL oral presentation. In delivering an oral presentation, an ESL student is not only required to convey his /her message through linguistic means, but at the same time, he/she needs to know clearly what is expected in the oral presentation such as the appropriate use of stage, body language and audience interaction and rapport. There may be culturally specific practices to which L2 presenters need to pay special attention. Studies that examine these issues will offer ideas about some peculiar challenges for ESL learners.

Besides these “how to” studies that focus on how to teach oral presentation skills, there are four comprehensive research studies on oral presentations. Morita (2000) studied academic oral presentation with language socialization as its theoretical framework. Employing an ethnographic approach, the author discussed oral academic presentations as part of the students’ academic discourse socialization in a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) graduate

program in Canada. She explored how the students were socialized into the academic community through oral academic presentations. The findings suggested that both the nonnative and native English-speaking students were gradually socialized into the academic community by trying to meet the instructor's expectations, by preparation, observation, performance and review of their oral academic presentations. Data were collected from a variety of sources including classroom observations, video recordings, interviews, questionnaires and relevant documents. This study's vigorous data collection procedures contribute to the validity of the arguments made based on the findings.

Drawing on language socialization theory, Kobayashi (2003) examined how three Japanese undergraduates collaborated with each other after class to accomplish the task of academic oral presentations. Data sources included taped observations of project work, interviews, and student journals and papers. The findings showed that in preparation for their academic task after class, students negotiated task definitions and teacher expectations, and collaborated with each other in preparing materials and rehearsal. Both spoken and written language was employed in fulfilling the task requirement. The L1 assumed a positive role in L2 task accomplishment.

Kobayashi (2005) is a more comprehensive version of students' collaboration in accomplishing academic tasks through oral presentations. In this dissertation, Kobayashi explored a group of Japanese undergraduate ESL students' language socialization through group project work during their yearlong academic studies in a content-based ESL program at a Canadian University. This study draws upon sociocultural perspectives, including Vygotskyan sociocultural and activity theory, language socialization theory (Ochs, 1988, Ochs & Schieffelin,

1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b), Hallidayan socio-semiotic theory (Halliday, 1978, 1993; Halliday & Hasan, 1989) and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). However, his central theoretical framework was Rogoff (1995)'s three-plane analysis of sociocultural activity. According to this theory, sociocultural activity could be analyzed through three planes: at the personal, interpersonal and community level. Kobayashi described how the academic tasks unfold on the three levels, namely, the community and institutional aspects of the task environment, the students' agency and collaboration between students while they were preparing and performing their oral presentations, and finally, the students' personal appropriation and transformation in the process of accomplishing the required tasks. Kobayashi not only documented the students' participation and growth within the classroom but his study went beyond the classroom and gathered data from students' preparation of the tasks after class. Kobayashi's dissertation, like Morita (2000), focused mainly on the students' participation in the community, collaboration with peers and personal transformation; that is, the main focus of the study was the socialization part of the language socialization process. Kobayashi (2005) found that a "good" oral presentation should have the following features: critical reflection; relevance to the course; references; new information; audience engagement and involvement; performance; clarity of speech; organization; presentation aids and transitions between aids. All of these are some macro-level features of a good oral presentation. Besides the macro-level of features for a good oral presentation, Kobayashi (2005) is the only study so far that analyzed some linguistic data of the participants. In his Chapter 6, the author examined oral presentations from a functional linguistic perspective, discussing students' ideational reflection, interpersonal actions

and strategies to involve the audience and how the students manage their presentation discourse. For the third part, four themes were discussed: the structure of the presentations, the scope of the presentation, referring to the previous parts and referring to the previous presentations. What the author did was to examine the presentation as a whole and analyzed, in my point of view, still in a global way. He touched on the textual aspects of participants both in Chapter 5 where he examined the students' preparation of the presentations and Chapter 6 where he discussed the students' oral presentation performance. Yet linguistic features or the progress of these students in terms of their linguistic structure were left out.

Along the line of studies on academic oral presentations from a language socialization perspective, Zappa-Hollman (2007) explored the discourse socialization of six non-native graduate students in their disciplines at a Canadian university. Using a qualitative multiple-case approach, the author extended the studies conducted by Morita (2000) and Kobayashi (2003). The study found that non-native graduate students considered their academic discourse socialization a complex process and therefore challenging. This was the case even for some highly English proficient students. Some other students resisted this kind of activity.

To sum up, these four studies examine the students' discourse socialization through oral presentations. They utilize strong research methods by collecting ethnographic data from observations, interviews, and documents such as field notes, syllabi and students' writings, video and audio journals. At the same time, there are still several gaps in their study of language socialization through oral presentations. The first concerns the target population. Of second language socialization studies, there have been a few conducted with Chinese as their

participants, such as Beckett (1999). However, so far, there are almost no language socialization studies carried out with Chinese graduate students who comprise a big part of the international student population except Morita (2000) who has only 2 Chinese students among her 21 participants and Zappa-Hollman (2007) with 2 among her 6 participants. We are not sure whether different populations in different contexts would still yield similar socialization process. Studies with Chinese graduate students as participants can expand research in this area. They would contribute to the study of language socialization through oral presentations and build on the present theories. Besides the population and context gap, these studies mainly focused on one aspect of language socialization, which is to learn the culture through language. They did not address the other aspect of language socialization: how novices or children learn to use the language appropriately in context except by Kobayashi (2005) with a brief account.

2.8 Summary

Language socialization has developed from an alternative research paradigm for children's language acquisition to language development of adolescents and adults. In the past decade, it was introduced into the second language acquisition field and was further elaborated as a theoretical framework for second language learning.

Both L1 and L2 language socialization studies have illustrated the point that culture factors play an important role in the language socialization process. Discontinuity between home socialization and school socialization might cause problems for students. Although some studies describe the language socialization process as smooth and successful (e.g., Ohta, 1999), others

present this process as very problematic (e.g., Duff, 2002). Future studies might need to consider this as a factor for L2 socialization.

Methodologically, most studies have been ethnographic, using observations, interviews, audio or videotapes, and relevant documents as data collection methods. As can be seen from the above review, language socialization studies have been crafting and perfecting its research methodology. Still, researchers like Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003) called for more rigorous and spelled-out research methods such as combining it with quantitative methods and making research methods more transparent. In this study SFL approach is adopted as an attempt to partially address the methodological gap in data analysis with language socialization research.

Review of language socialization provides many important insights for future studies, particularly Chinese graduate students' discourse socialization. Coming from a very different linguistic and cultural background, the language socialization process of Chinese graduate students will be able to provide rich data for understanding the second language learning process in context, and thus contributing to the general theory of second language learning and second language socialization. From the literature on first language socialization, on L2 socialization and on oral presentations, it becomes clear there are a number of important gaps in our understanding of this area, especially as relating to the Chinese student population in particular.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF INQUIRY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology used in this research effort. The research process involved a pilot study conducted prior to this study, so it is included in this chapter because of its relevance to the current study. In this chapter, I will first discuss the pilot study (3.2). Then I will discuss the design of the study (3.3) including data collection, and finally I will discuss data analyses (3.4).

3.2 The Pilot Study

Using a qualitative case study, a pilot study examined the academic language socialization experience of two Chinese students, Ella and Ming, who were enrolled in an ESL oral presentation skills class during Winter Quarter, 2007. Three research questions guided this pilot study: 1. How were the participants being socialized into the academic discourse of oral presentations in a class on oral presentations? 2. What challenges and needs did the participants have in regard to preparing and delivering oral academic presentations? 3. In what ways did prior academic experiences with oral presentations affect the ways in which participants were socialized into the discourses appropriate for oral presentations?

3.2.1 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

In the tradition of qualitative research, data collection and analysis was a continuous process starting from the beginning of data collection to its end. Data sources for the pilot study included classroom observations, interviews, and documents including the course syllabus, student

presentation video clips, handouts or any other related documents. I observed the class for five weeks and took field notes. I conducted two interviews and collected and analyzed the course documents including the syllabus, handouts given to the students, and lecture notes provided on PowerPoint. I also collected students' documents including needs analysis, their PowerPoint for their presentations, and video clips.

After data collection, the data were coded into categories and codes. Data reduction made managing the data more feasible (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After the initial categorization, the categories were put into a data display, in order to establish the major themes and patterns that best described what was transpiring with these two participants. Triangulation of the data sources (i.e., observation notes, interviews, documents and member checking) was also used to maintain the rigor of the study.

3.2.2 Findings and Discussion

Students in this pilot study were socialized into the academic discourse related to oral presentations through four components of the course, namely, observations of others, expert guidance, feedback and practice. These activities were analyzed separately but as one might suspect, they were frequently interwoven with each other and could not be separated in the real life. It seemed that as a community of practice, this class achieved the purpose of guiding novices in the community through gradual language socialization towards competency and membership in the larger academic community of practice, namely, the ability to generate an oral presentation. The instructor played the role of the expert and the socializing agent. However,

depending on the specific situation, peers also took on this role, making substantial contributions to their own socialization process and their peers' socialization process as well.

At the same time, it is important to realize that this class, as a community of practice (COP), was not isolated from the larger academic COP, namely, the university itself and the larger the U.S. academic community. These COPs interacted with each other to influence each other. For instance, students in the ESL class were required to complete observations in and out of the class. Once beyond the classroom, the students came to observe the behaviors of their professors, the more experienced members of this larger community of practice. Moreover, students also practiced their oral presentation skills outside the class in their own field for class purposes or for attending conferences.

The class acted as a platform where students could acquire rules and practices of oral presentations through explicit instruction. In a way, it functioned as a bridge connecting broader contexts. In the U.S. academic community, the range of required oral presentations and the influence of oral presentation tasks on oral presentation skills in formal settings might be worthy of investigation.

Socialization through an oral presentation class helped the participants acquire a more competent membership in this new academic community. However, during this socialization process, the participants still faced a number of challenges. One participant claimed the challenges came from her unfamiliarity with this cultural activity while the other participant thought that his linguistic ability was his main obstacle in this socialization process. My dissertation study focused more on these issues, as well as other specific challenges and needs of

Chinese graduate students that might emerge. The findings of this pilot study also seemed to illustrate that the participating Chinese students' prior experience did not prepare them for the oral presentation skills required in the new academic community. However, it was very difficult to generalize and conclude that Chinese students' challenges in oral presentations are caused by their prior academic socialization experience solely based on the findings from this case pilot study. As an extension to this study, my dissertation involved more participants and explored how the above factors might contribute to the oral presentation challenges that Chinese graduate students face.

3.3 Design of the Dissertation Study

This study focused on Chinese graduate students' academic language socialization in the U. S. academic community specifically focusing on the academic discourse of oral presentations. Like my pilot study, this study employed a qualitative case approach (Merriam, 1998).

The major strength of qualitative case research is its process-oriented nature, which offers "real, rich and deep" data (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991), a detailed and contextualized view of the cases under study. As a long and continuous process, language socialization requires the data collection methods to reflect this process. A qualitative case approach is appropriate in recording a continuous and dynamic socialization process when the data collection extends over a longer period of time. It also requires data collection from multiple data sources such as observations, interviews and other types of documents to ensure the rigor of the study. By collecting data with various data tools and for an extended period of time, the dynamic academic discourse

socialization process of Chinese graduate students can be more fully documented for a better understanding of the continuous process of socialization into a new academic community.

3.3.1 Participants and Setting

The participants of this study were recruited from the pool of Chinese graduate students who were pursuing their studies in a Mid-Western public university in the United States. Purposeful sampling was used for data collection. 9 Chinese graduate students who had oral presentations in different situations were recruited during spring quarter, 2008 for data collection. The recruitment of 9 participants provided me with sufficient data even if some participants dropped out in the process. It turned out that most of them stayed for the data collection except one participant, Buwei, whom I could not reach for a second interview. The following Table is a brief demographic summary of the participants (all pseudonyms) in this study. All were pursuing their doctoral degree in science departments and their specific department information is not mentioned to protect the participants. And their first language was Chinese.

Table 3.1 Overview of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Came to US
Anning	F	28	09-2007
Changkai	M	29	09-2007
Dailin	F	29	09-2006
Gaomin	F	25	09-2007
Buwei	M	25	09-2007
Enjia	F	25	09-2006
Feng	M	24	09-2006
Haidong	M	25	09-2007
Shengrong	M	30	09-2007

Dailin, Enjia, Haidong and Shengrong were selected as the key participants for this

dissertation because of the representativeness of their cases. At the same time, data from the other participants were also quoted as relevant to the topics under discussion. The following is a brief profile of the four key participants.

Dailin was from Guangzhou, a large city in southern China where she had worked as a faculty member for three years in a university before she decided to come to United States for a doctoral degree. She was disappointed with the experimental facilities here though she was happy that the faculty members were outstanding in their research. At the time of the study, she seemed to be under a lot of stress because it would take considerable time to earn a degree and she found living in another country very difficult. In general, she was very outgoing and as she mentioned in her interview, “I like to talk, I have to talk” (Original English, Interview 2, October 2008)

Enjia was from Beijing, the capital of China and went to one of the best middle schools in Beijing. She still felt the humiliation that she failed to be admitted to the best university in China because she was sick during the college entrance exam and did poorly---which single-handedly decided which university a high school graduate would go. As a consequence of that untimely sickness, she earned her bachelor’s degree in a local university. After graduation, she came to pursue a higher degree in the United States.

Haidong earned his bachelor’s degree in a university in northwest China and came to the United States in 2007 pursuing his doctoral degree. Haidong and Shengrong were good friends. Both could afford to study in the United States because they were financially supported by a university scholarship. To keep their scholarship they were required to work as teaching assistant,

and as part of the qualification to work as teaching assistant, they were required to take the Oral English Proficiency test (OEPT hereafter) for international students. Haidong was a very pleasant but quiet young man and even when we had some conversation in Chinese, he would only talk or comment very briefly on whatever topics that was discussed.

Shengrong, a male doctoral student, earned a master's degree from the best science academy in China after he got a bachelor's degree at another top university in China. After graduation, he was offered a faculty position in a university. However, he did not go to work because he applied to further his study in United States and was admitted in 2007. It was very interesting to see how outgoing that Shengrong was when he was speaking Chinese. However, once he started to converse in English, he looked very different. He became shy and nervous. It seemed that Shengrong was not very satisfied with his program and he had been thinking of transferring to another university in the United States and had been preparing for it by taking the language testing and application materials for it.

Both Haidong and Shengrong took the OEPT several times over the time of more than a year. The videos they took for the test were selected as an important part of the data for this dissertation. A more detailed introduction about this test can be found in the 3.3.2.3 Documents Section.

3.3.2 Data Collection Procedures

Data sources for this study included classroom observations, interviews, documents such as syllabi, student presentation video and audio clips, and a reflective journal during the research process.

3.3.2.1 Observations and Field Notes

I observed and recorded two of the participating students (Buwei and Anning) when they made oral presentations in their discipline classrooms. I also observed and recorded one of Dailin's pre-lab presentations. As to the rest, I did not observe their presentations on the spot because of various reasons as discussed in the data collection section. I reviewed their video clips including ESL classroom presentations, OEPT videos, lab reports videos, and teaching session videos.

These observations focused mainly on the context of oral presentations such as their location, the formality of the presentations, and descriptions of the presenters and the audience. Field notes were taken and typed immediately after the observation (Silverman, 2001). These field notes were strictly descriptive, and comments or reflections from the observations were recorded separately in the observer's comment section. For the presentations, I used an observation form adapted from Cummings (1992). There are three major categories in this observation form. The first is "content and organization of presentation", which includes more specific items such as "clear thesis/purpose, organization, (beginning, body and conclusion, transition, coherence and clarity, density of information, relevance to audience, use of relevant examples and details." The second category is "interaction between the audience and the presenter", including items such as pacing and timing, quality and use of visuals, audience rapport and control and eye contact. The third category is "platform skills", including items such as volume, speed of delivery, tone/level, hand gestures body position, posture and use of stage space. Besides these categories, I added another category: general language use such as

vocabulary, listening, grammar and pronunciation. Some of the categories generated from the observations were not discussed in the dissertation such as body language or the phonetics related areas (except pronunciation/accent) because I consider these as out of the scope of this study.

3.3.2.2 Interviews

I also conducted two semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews with most of the participants except one, Buwei, whom I could not reach for a second interview. Each interview lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Two participants (Changkai and Gaomin) did both their interviews as a pair because they are a couple and they preferred to be interviewed together. These interviews were conducted in a place that the participants felt most comfortable. Some were so kind that they offered to come to my home to be interviewed (Dailin and Feng for both interviews, Enjia, Changkai and Gaomin for their first interview). Others accepted me into their homes (Buwei for his interview, Enjia for her second interview). Also I conducted some in the individual study rooms in one of the libraries on campus (Changkai and Gaomin for their second interview; Haidong, Shengrong for both interviews) or in the participant's office (Anning for both interviews).

The first interview attempted to determine the issues these students had with oral presentations and to record their perceptions and progress, if any, that students made in their academic socialization. The second interview focused more on the socialization process, particularly on the linguistic issues of their oral presentations and their progress they thought they have made.

The interviews with most of these Chinese students were conducted in Chinese at their choice. Using the mother tongue seemed to facilitate the students' ability to articulate their ideas and opinions better. I translated the interviews that were conducted in Chinese into English. All the quotes that I translated from Chinese were noted with "translated from Chinese." in parenthesis. It should be pointed out that two of my participants felt comfortable enough to choose to use English when they were given the choice. These participants' quotes were noted with "Original English" in parenthesis.

3.3.2.3 Artifacts and Documents

I collected relevant class documents, particularly descriptions about the required presentations, students' power point documents (if they had any), and most importantly, participants' video clips for their presentations. These artifacts and documents provided a better overview of the contexts for the oral presentations in their academic community. One particularly important aspect of data was the videos of students' presentations at different times. The videos I collected include OEPT videos; ESL oral presentation skills class videos, and discipline videos, which are discussed in the following.

3.3.2.3.1 OEPT Videotapes

Background information of the OEPT videotapes

The OEPT is a 20-minute videotaped test designed by the University to meet a state law that mandates that international students whose native language is not English but who will work as teaching assistants should take and pass before they assume their responsibilities either in the classroom or as lab assistant or any other responsibility that require them to have direct contact

with undergraduate students. This test can also be taken as a diagnostic test for any other international students who are not assigned teaching responsibilities but still want to have their language proficiency diagnosed so that they could decide what ESL classes they would like to take to better address their needs. Students could take the test twice for free and a third time for free only on the condition that they are enrolled in an ESL class offered at the Center for ESL.

The test consists of three sections besides a brief warm-up activity, which is not being scored. In Section I, the evaluators and the test-takers have some conversations around randomly selected academic related topics. In Section II, the test-taker plays the role of an instructor and presents his/her course policies and procedures on the first day of class and the evaluators will pretend to be freshmen and might interrupt and ask questions. In Section III, the test-takers are required to present a short lesson on an academically related concept in an academic manner.

Rationale for using the OEPT videos as oral presentation samples

Firstly, this test provides an excellent record of the participants' oral presentations when they just joined this academic community. It provided the threshold data on 8 out of the 9 participants who took the test as soon as they arrived. Acquiring these testing tapes is important because these tapes provide a valuable baseline measurement of the participants' presentation skills immediately upon their arrival in the United States. For those who took it multiple times, it also provides a measurement of their progress in this area. This test therefore provides a record that would otherwise be impossible to obtain.

A second reason to use these test records is that the test remains the same every time. Some of my participants took the test more than once--this provided ideal data to compare students'

performance on the same task during different times and thus to see whether there are differences between different times. For instance, Haidong took the test four times, and Shengrong took the test six times. What made these data more valuable was that both Haidong and Shengrong talked about similar concepts in their OEPT presentations. For both, they had at least three presentations on the same topic. From a research perspective, these authentic documents provided excellent language materials to examine the language progression especially of linguistic structures of these two participants.

The third reason is that in the test the students were required to make two mini presentations. I used some data from Section II but mostly, Section III was used for analysis for this study. This task is described below and is drawn from the students' registration packet:

> The purpose of this section is to be sure that you have a strong grasp of the language and organization required of academic presentations. Here you should present a lesson on a concept which is necessary for basic understanding in an academic field. The lesson does not have to be in your area of concentration, but it does need to be presented in an academic manner. If the definition is done appropriately, it should be intelligible to anyone and not just to someone who specializes in your field. (OEPT documents)

Limitations of using test

It must be acknowledged that testing must be stressful for the participating students and therefore it should be taken into consideration that these records were generated with the students under pressure. However, I would argue that the pressure in testing is similar to pressure of other presentations in front of an audience in that both situations involve the element of evaluation, either by a tester or by an audience evaluating what is said. Another limitation of using test records is that the test-takers can rehearse their materials many times before they take the test.

For the purpose of this study, however, when the students made their presentations, they were supposed actually to rehearse them. Therefore, while I am fully aware of the effect of test, particularly the effect of repetitive test, these test videos are still valuable for this study. The video could honestly show the performance of these students. Particularly when the participants took it several times, it provided excellent materials for comparison because it provided an experimental kind of design (for instance repeated measures) where the conditions remained the same for the participants. Therefore, these data were used for their great potential to provide valuable information on students' language socialization, particularly for the linguistic development over time.

3.3.2.3.2 Video Clips from the ESL Oral Presentation Class/Professional Seminar

As part of the data set for this study, I also collected video clips of some participants' presentations in ESL classes. Some took this class at the recommendation of the ESL center based on their OEPT tests (Dailin, Haidong, Shengrong). Others took it of their own choice (Anning). Students who had taken the ESL oral presentations class and had discipline presentations were invited to participate for the dissertation study. I also collected video clips of Buwei and Enjia who took the professional seminar organized by their department.

3.3.2.3.3 Video Clips from Discipline Presentations

I also collected video clips from the participants who were required to make presentations in their various disciplines. It turned out that this disciplinary data collection was not as easy to obtain as the language test data and the ESL class data because of several reasons. Some of the participants were working on some sensitive topics and therefore I could not obtain their

advisor's permission to record their research presentations. Other issues include schedule conflicts and the participants' concern that a researcher and a video recorder's presence might affect their scores in their courses. I ended up with eight disciplinary presentation videos from six participants, including presentations for courses, lab reports and also pre-lab teaching sessions (Anning, Buwei, Dailin, Feng, Changkai, Gaomin).

A series of presentations recorded at different times enabled me to capture the important moments in this continual socialization process. By analyzing and comparing their early presentations with their later presentations, together with other data sources, I could document how they are being socialized into the academic discourse required by their disciplines.

3.3.2.4 Researcher's Reflective Journal

I also kept a reflective journal to record ideas and thoughts that came along with the data collection and analysis process. For my pilot study, the research process evolved significantly and I did not document this evolution. However, I found that after some time, my memory of the forces behind the changes and modifications I had made to my research questions or certain data collection procedures had faded. By keeping a journal, I kept track of the questions, doubts, and ideas that accompany the process. This helped me to organize my thoughts, keep a record of the evolution of my research ideas, knowing where I was, where I went, how or why I went there eventually.

To sum up this data collection section, collecting data from multiple sources enhanced the rigor of the study because it provides means to check for consistency. For example, when students made comments about their progress in making oral presentations, I verified this data

from other documents available, for instance, their test records. When a theme occurred in the field notes, I turned to data in the interviews or documents to see whether it could be validated. Data that were consistent in two or more sources were considered valid. Other times, I was unable to validate through other data sources (e.g., the themes that occurred from the interviews); in these instances, I performed a member check with the participant in question to obtain his or her perspectives on this theme. Sometimes I checked my journals to see whether these relevant issues were recorded. All these measures served as an effort to improve the rigor of the study.

3.4 Data Analyses

Using language socialization and communities of practice as my theoretical framework, it was the purpose of this dissertation to document and analyze the language socialization process of Chinese graduate students in various science fields. At a macro-level, Chinese graduate students' language socialization process as reflected in one particular academic activity—oral presentation—was analyzed. The students' progress in terms of acquiring oral presentations as a way of learning—a social practice was also analyzed. Data from field notes, interviews and documents were used for the macro level analysis. At a micro-level, progress in the mastery of the linguistic structures of this academic discourse progress over time was examined using the oral presentation productions of the participants as well as relevant interview data and documents.

3.4.1 Analysis of the Interviews and Field Notes

The interview data were first transcribed and then read many times before they were coded into initial categories, using the inductive analysis strategy suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (1993). For instance, in the following excerpt:

> Sue: So what difficulties do you have when you are doing oral presentations?
> Gaomin: Vocabulary. Particularly terms. You can look up the words in the dictionary in advance but oral presentation is interactive, so even if you looked up the words and you were well prepared on what to talk about, if someone asked you a question, it was like everything was disturbed and you didn't know how to continue. You had to reorganize your ideas and thoughts because you had to think in Chinese and then translate them into English. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

For an excerpt like this, I categorized them into three kinds of difficulties with oral presentations: the first is vocabulary (terms), the second is interaction with the audience, and the third is the requirement to respond immediately. After the initial categorization, these categories were put into a data display to find the major themes and patterns at a higher level, thus this data reduction made managing the data more feasible (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For instance, the above initial category of "vocabulary (terms)" would be put under the category of "language difficulties" and "interaction with audience" would be put under the category of "presentation skills difficulties" and "the requirement to respond immediately" under another category: immediacy of oral presentations. Some categories generated from the interviews are as follows: personal background information, participants' prior presentation experience in China, perceptions of oral presentations in the United States, challenges with oral presentations including language issues and presentation skills difficulties, means used to improve their oral presentations and the progress the participants made. The themes that arose from different cases were also compared and contrasted to find themes across cases.

During this coding process, connections between the initial codes and the theory guiding the interview questions were also sought to see whether they were in line with each other. For instance, when the participants talked about how they improved their oral presentations, they mentioned they improved by watching others to present, by attending ESL classes, seminars from their department, getting assistance from their orientations, faculty advisors, assistance from their peers and they also mentioned practice was important. I aligned these categories with my theories of language socialization and communities of practice. To answer the research question of how the participants are being socialized into the academic community, I coded the data into categories such as **observations** (watching others present), **expert assistance** (departmental assistance, faculty advisors, ESL classes), **peer support** and **practice**. At the same time, although the theoretical framework guided the interview questions, it happened that some themes, not covered in the interview guide, emerged from the data. For instance, for the question "what language difficulties you have with your oral presentations?" I was expecting that the participants mention vocabulary or grammar. However, most participants mentioned that listening was a problem for them. Therefore, I listed listening as a theme under the language difficulties.

I also went through my field notes. These field notes described physical settings and the procedures of the presentations, providing contextual information about the presentations. Categories from the notes are generated based on the observation form I used: content and organization of the presentations, interaction between the audience and the presenter, platform skills such as volume, hand gesture, body language and also general language use. These themes

were compared with those from interviews to generate larger categories. In general, the field notes were used to supplement the data from interviews and used as a source to confirm or disconfirm the themes generated from the interviews.

3.4.2 Analysis of Documents

The collected documents such as the participants' course syllabi, their PPTs, handouts for presentations, their OEPT testing evaluations and their videotapes for oral presentations provided a contextual understanding of the presentations that the participants made in several situations.

As the first step, the documents (except for the video clips, which were analyzed separately) were read several times and then classified by categories: such as the requirements related to presentations (e.g., course syllabus; testing instructions), supplementary materials for presentations (e.g., handouts and PPT for presentations) and also evaluations on the presentations as available (mainly the testing results and evaluator comments, for instance). After that, in synthesis with other sources of data, themes were generated and categories were formed in relation to the research questions. For instance, as above discussed, language difficulties were found to be a theme through the interviews. I then searched for evidence from the documents like the participants testing records. It might have been noted in evaluators' comments or the individual scores that the participants got on their language, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Relevant document data then were presented under their corresponding themes in the findings chapters.

To summarize, an inductive approach was adopted with themes and patterns emerging from various data sources including interviews, observation notes and documents. In the tradition of

qualitative research, data collection and analysis is a continuous process, starting from the beginning of data collection to its end and beyond (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). When I found some themes from the document analysis, for instance, Shengrong made such slow progress in the OEPT testing, I tried to look for answers in our interviews. The data collection and data analysis were interwoven and evolved through continual data collection and analysis. It also evolved as part of the writing and rewriting process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At the same time, literature review and the theoretical framework for the study also informed the data collection and analysis process (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.4.3 Analysis of the Spoken Texts: An SFL Approach

Video clips from the participants offered a window to the Chinese graduate students' discourse socialization, reflected in their oral presentations. Therefore, videos were an important part of the document collection and analysis. The videos were used for linguistic analysis from an SFL approach (Halliday, 1994, Schleppegrell, 2004), which provides a tool for analyzing linguistic choices in its context. According to this theory, the social context of a text is further divided into *the field* (what is being talked about), *the tenor* (the relationship between the speaker and listeners), and *the mode* (channel, the rhetorical mode) (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Following Schleppegrell (2004), the analysis focused on the lexico-grammar of the texts, through what is termed, respectively, *ideational choices* (such as noun phrases/nominal groups; verbs; prepositional phrases, adverbial adjuncts, and other resources for information about time, place, manner, etc.), *interpersonal choices* (such as mood, modality, pronouns use, etc.) and *textual choices* (such as cohesive devices) discussed in Chapter 2 (Schleppegrell, 2004).

When Chinese graduate students were making oral presentations, they were trying to accomplish the communication task in an oral form. Firstly, they need to get their message across, that is, the content. This can be put under the context variable: field---what is being talked about. For this part, the linguistic realization can be nouns, verbs or other resources for information. Secondly, for oral presentations, it is vital that the presenters establish a rapport with the audience, using SFL terms: the tenor. By examining how the linguistic resources the participants used or failed to use to establish and maintain a good relationship between the presenters and the audience, we can see what linguistic resources are necessary to establish and maintain a pleasant relationship between the audience and the presenter. Third, besides the ability to use linguistic resources to get the meaning across (field, such as nouns, verbs, logical relationships) and establishing a good relationship with audience (tenor, such as modal verbs, adverbs), the presenters are also expected to use the language in a way that makes the oral texts effective in realizing field and tenor. For instance, how to use cohesive devices to make the texts coherent so that the meaning will be understood (field) and the audience were able to follow easily what is going on (tenor). That is mode in SFL terms. From this, we can see that the SFL approach can be used to analyze the key elements that decide the success of an oral presentation.

This analysis attempts to identify what ideational (field), interpersonal (tenor) and textual choices (mode) Chinese graduate students make and how this affects their oral presentations. It also attempted to describe the linguistic development of students' progress of being socialized into the academic discourse. Other sources of data such as interview data and observations were used to support the linguistic analysis (e. g., for triangulation).

3.5 Researcher Reflexivity and Trustworthiness

I took the oral presentation class as an ESL student in Spring Quarter, 2006, because of my interest in the topic. At that time, I had been a doctoral student in the TESL program for more than half a year. I found many Chinese graduate students I knew personally were struggling with their oral presentations. Particularly, many complained that the OEPT had become a huge challenge for them. Some of them worried about failing the test, which would eventually result in losing their scholarship. As a fellow Chinese doctoral student, I understood their worries. As a TESL student, I decided it was worthwhile exploring this issue. I also discussed with the professors in the program and reviewed relevant theories and literature on this topic. Taking the oral presentation class as an ESL student at the spring quarter of my first year was a very enlightening experience and fueled my fascination with this activity. While I took the class as a student, I found much new knowledge about oral presentations that I never thought about. I was interested in seeing how the instructor socialized the students into the academic oral discourse required for oral presentations. I have been contemplating and researching on the topic since then. In 2006, I conducted a pilot study on Chinese students' academic discourse socialization through an ESL oral presentation class, focusing on two Chinese graduate students who enrolled in this class.

The pilot study concluded that the ESL oral presentations skills class was very effective in the academic discourse socialization of Chinese graduate students. However, as a pilot study, it had many limitations, such as the small number of participants. Many issues remain unsolved. A dissertation study with more participants and a longer time of data collection might produce

more accurate and richer information about the socialization process. How students are socialized into the academic discourse through oral presentations over their stay in the host academic community, not only limited within a class is worthy of investigation.

As a Chinese graduate student studying Chinese graduate students, I am fully aware that I might have made biased assumptions based on my own experience or sometimes, I might neglect some aspects that might be important to this research. My personal experience as a Chinese graduate student might affect the data collection process as well as my interpretation of the data. However, coming from the same country, speaking the same language, and sharing a similar educational experience enabled me to understand the student participants' ideas and perspectives better and with that I hope I can accurately and faithfully represent their academic socialization process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS IN CONTEXT (I)

ACADEMIC ORAL DISCOURSE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS: LEARNING TO MAKE ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS THROUGH A SECOND LANGAUGE

4.1 Introduction

Schleppegrell (2004) argued that students' ability to use academic language depends on their experience with it:

> The ability to draw on the linguistic features that construe academic contexts depends on experience with those contexts that may not be available in the home or community for many students, especially for those who speak English as a second language, who speak non-standard dialects of English, or whose home and community experience has not socialized them into the ways of making meanings that are expected at school. (p. 24)

For Chinese graduate students who need to develop the ability to use language appropriately in a new academic context--oral presentations, for instance--it is important that they have experience with this activity. If oral presentations are not available or not so commonly used in instruction in their home academic community, what impact does that have on Chinese graduate students' socialization into the discourses appropriate for oral presentations? And how are Chinese graduate students being socialized into this academic community in terms of oral presentations? This chapter addresses these two research questions. The first section presents the findings from the first question and the second section focuses on the second question.

4.2 The Impact of L1 Academic Socialization on L2 Academic Socialization

As discussed in the Chapter II, L2 learners' L1 socialization exerts a great influence on their L2 discourse socialization. This discourse socialization process is more complicated for adult

novices who join a new academic community than for children, for instance, growing up in a working class home and experiencing difficulties with their secondary socialization in schools where middle class values are considered the norm (Heath, 1983). L2 learners face a wider gap complicated by the cultural disparities between different educational systems.

Data collected for this dissertation indicated that the Chinese graduate students also experienced the impact of their L1 socialization on their academic discourse socialization into their new academic community in the United States. And this impact on their secondary socialization posed a great challenge for them. The participants described their L1 academic socialization as one reason for their difficulties in their L2 academic community. They needed to adjust to learning new ways of doing things. That is, the L2 academic community has different ways of doing things from their L1 academic community and they need to learn new or different ways of doing things:

> Dailin: In deep… in every country, every area like Chinese educational system, or American educational system, they all have their rules of their games. I call it game because it's some kind of game, it's kind of game. Because we are students, we talk about when we do a presentation, we say whether this presentation is successful or not, it depending on your…maybe… on your advisor. I don't know how to express this idea but it's like the rules of the game. There are some differences. Also there is rule for each situation. I think you need to know the rules for different situations (Dailin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]

Dailin theorized that educational systems have "their own rules of games", which means that she realized there were differences between the two educational systems and she was supposed to act accordingly. She also mentioned the importance of context (situation) for specific oral presentations.

4.2.1 Chinese Graduate Students' L1 Academic Socialization

To understand the Chinese graduate students who finish their undergraduate degrees (at a minimum) and come to the United States to pursue a doctoral degree, it is necessary for us to have some background information on the Chinese educational system.

There have been many researchers who have discussed the Chinese educational cultures (e.g., Gardner, 1989; Hu, 2002). A more detailed discussion can be found in Beckett (1999) who did a comprehensive comparison between North American and Chinese educational cultures to explain the discrepancies between teachers' and students' attitudes towards project-based learning in a Canadian secondary school.

Beckett (1999) argued that in the Western educational culture, students are expected to be independent and learn "at their own pace" (p.186). It is a "student-centered approach" (ibid). Therefore, Beckett contended that "independence and self-motivation" are valued in these societies. Children were given more choices at an early age so that as students they might make decisions for their own learning. In contrast, in traditional Chinese educational culture, the teachers are authority figures who impart knowledge to the students; the teacher's authority should not be challenged. Along this line, many families raise their children with the traditional value that authorities such as parents and teachers should not be challenged.

According to Beckett (1999), the culture of learning in China is different from the West.

> Students are considered to be receivers or consumers rather than creators of knowledge. They expect external structure and close teacher guidance and modeling in their education (Ogbu, 1995). They expect teachers to initiate questions and to learn in a low-risk environment where they will not lose face by making mistakes in front of others (Guo, 1996; Lum, 1993). (p.188)

This kind of culture is reflected in the data collected for the present study. For instance, when asked about the differences between their home country educational system between and the United States, here is Enjia's response:

> (In my home country) we are studying for exams. For example, in actual study, the teacher always teach us everything that, er, we need, so we don't need to think about what should we learn and then… should I learn this, should I learn that, we should follow the teacher. The teacher should tell me, you should learn this, we just write down something, do some problems, solve some problems. It's ok…
> But I have stayed here in the United States and finished a quarter and I found that in America, in class, the teacher just say something very quickly, you get the total (unclear) what should you learn, what should you know and actually the study happens after the class by… you have to learn a lot of things after class, do homework, reference to your books and go to the library to check something so…
> But I think this kind of, er, style is more proper for study because, em, it can make us know the method to study, not only the content or the formula, the problems… or something…
> (Enjia, OEPT Videos, December 2006) [Original English]

This was exactly what Beckett (1999) discussed, namely, that the teachers and students played different roles in the Chinese educational culture from the roles they were expected to play in their new communities, whether in Canada or in the U.S. where students are to be independent learners, just as Enjia reflected.

4.2.2 Impact of Prior L1 Educational Experience on Oral Presentations

As mentioned in Enjia's quotation, a Chinese student socialized into the Chinese academic community recognized that the teacher was the authority and the source of knowledge. Therefore, it was very confusing and difficult for these students to study under professors in their new community who believed that students should be "self-explorers" who pace themselves through their own studies. When these students were required to present a class project or a lab report, it was inevitable that these students' prior L1 educational experience left marks on their

presentations. This was illustrated by another participant Gaomin:

> When I first came here and presented, I would recite my presentations. I just memorized them and then recited them… [laughing] but Americans did not do that, I think. [turning to Changkai] You remember? This is what we got from our education. In high school, the teacher would always say, this is good sentence structure; memorize it so that you can use it in your writing in the future. We were taught this way. So after I came here, I thought I needed to make presentations and I needed some good sentences; but I don't use them very often, I just memorized them. In that way I might use them in my presentations. That's how I thought, but I found Americans seemed more informal, and it's unnecessary to use those fancy sentences or words… [laughing] (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Besides that, Chinese tradition does not stress the importance of oral expressions of one's ideas. In an article on the potential cultural resistance to communicative language teaching in China, Hu (2002) discussed the Chinese culture of learning is in conflict with the tenets of communicative language teaching in several important ways. And he argued that Chinese students "are required to be mentally active (rather than verbally active)"(p.100). Some participants in this study also mentioned that their L1 educational socialization did not prepare them for using oral presentations to express their ideas nor parenthetically did it aid them in classroom interactions in general as mentioned by Haidong and Enjia in the following:

> For us, growing up in China, we have the tendency not to like to express ourselves verbally. We think more highly of a person's actions and actions speak louder than words. It's like "you know what I am doing, so I don't have to say it out loud." Like that. (Haidong, Interview 2, December 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Yeah, why would you be nervous in China? Because you seldom had a chance to present. Once you had a chance to do so you would be nervous, but here it is like an everyday thing. It is so common. Some labs have group meetings and if they do it from childhood they will get used to it. So when Chinese students are here long enough, they will learn it too… (Enjia, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Gaomin noticed, as Enjia did, the differences between the presentation styles of

Americans and Chinese as a result of their language socialization in the new academic community. They also tried to make sense of this phenomenon:

> Enjia: I remember when I was in China, I saw people presenting—Of course, they presented in Chinese, their native language, but it still didn't sound as natural as Americans because they just recited it or read it. Americans, on the other hand, are very natural presenters and they talk freely when they present. Of course, sometimes they might be off the topic, but still they look very natural and relaxed. (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Sue: Why do you think they (Americans) are better at presenting in general?
> Gaomin: I think that Americans have this kind of training from childhood and, like in our department we have a professor who has a daughter, she is only 11 and she started to do research and she was required to do presentations and her dad gave her some feedback on to make her presentation better, like using more humorous language. I might not be able to do that even using Chinese. They are doing this since childhood. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

The lack of naturalness in Chinese students' presentations might be related to the fact that many Chinese students did not make oral presentations as Americans would throughout their education, mainly because that was not part of the Chinese curriculum in their education.

> Sue: Can you recall whether you had oral presentation experience in, for instance, in high school?
> Buwei: I think no, I think what I have done is to answer questions and to solve problems in the front but not presentations …
> Sue: So how about college?
> Buwei: I did one. It's like we did the final project in the group. So I teach my part in the group. For the audience is one teacher and several students…for two hours….yes that's the only one I have
> Sue: so regularly you had
> Buwei: I would raise my hand and ask questions but presentation, I do not think so…. (Buwei, Interview, June 2008) [Original English]

> Sue: Can you tell me some of your presentation experiences in China?
> Haidong: Totally [Original English] none. At the beginning of class each of us would introduce ourselves—if that counts as presentations. In English class, because there were so many people in one class, it was

> impossible to do presentations. (Haidong, Interview 1, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

While for most participants, oral presentation was not part of their regular educational life, Changkai, another participant, seldom had the chance to even speak English:

> I never used it [the English language] except for my visa interview to the US [laughing] (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

If participants like Changkai and Gaomin were required to make oral presentations right after they came into their new academic community, it is not hard to imagine that they would face great challenges, which were indeed reflected in their data, as we would see in the following chapters. I also sent several interview questions to an instructor through email who required oral presentations in his class. It should be pointed out that this particular instructor himself is of Chinese origin. He had his education in China but he received his doctoral degree in the United States, and currently works as a faculty member at this university. When asked, “Is there anything else you would like to share about Chinese students' oral presentations?” he responded:

> I do not think there is any intrinsic differences between Chinese students oral presentations versus other nationalities, except some obvious language habits. The reason that native speakers are somewhat better in many occasions is, I think, mainly due to the systematic trainings that they had throughout their education. And for Chinese students, practice does make a difference, especially in terms of confidence. (Email communication, May 2008) [Original English]

This instructor also confirmed that Chinese students did not have training in oral presentations. He acknowledged there might not be “intrinsic differences” between Chinese students’ presentations when compared with other groups; though he thought that native speakers have “systemic trainings”. While most participants did not have much prior experience with oral presentations, the value of oral presentations as a way of learning and teaching was confirmed by

the participants. They held very positive attitudes towards this activity as Feng explained:

> I think doing oral presentations improves your overall qualities. For instance, it will make you less scared of public speaking. Another point is it will help you organize your thoughts and ideas. And you also learn to respond on the spot. When your presentations are delivered in English, of course, it improves your oral language abilities. (Feng, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

At the same time, although most of the participants mentioned that they had little experience with oral presentations while they were in China, it also seems that the situation is changing because data also indicated a tendency towards using this approach at a college level or even graduate level where independent thinking is more valued. For instance, Dailin mentioned that she had oral presentations at graduate school because vice-president of the university wanted to reform the instruction there.

> Sue: Were you required to do oral presentations in class in China?
> Dailin: While I was in graduate school, we had a very good vice-president. He had his education in Berkeley [University of California] and he had a reform in the school. So we had a lot of oral presentations in English classes. We were given topics for discussion and then we gave opinions. Because we were all adults and we were interested in those topics we wanted to participate. (Dailin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]

It is very interesting to note that oral presentations were used in teaching at Dailin's university because they had a vice-president who received his education in the United States. It was clear from the above discussion that oral presentations were not commonly used as a way of instruction in China. This might also explain why the students had difficulties with the technique when they came to their new academic community and were suddenly confronted by the expectation that they know this technique as well as local students. This was evident to some participants who argued that it was not simply a language problem but might be more of a culture problem---the language problem was partially caused by their unfamiliarity with the content in a

new academic community and their transition into a new academic community. As Buwei argued:

> Yes, I think a lot of people talk about the second language people that cannot handle language very well. I think the most important thing is you do not… there are problems but there are minor problems compared to…. I think the most important you should know what they want to say, not what they say. You should know the underlying things it's more like a cultural or academic thing, you do not know, not the English word that you do not know.
> I think the language problem is more like a cultural problem or academic problem, more than pure language problem…Back to the point. I always think that the language problem is not only a language problem. It is a language problem and culture problem. … yeah. Even the same word, you know the meaning of it, you do not know the meaning they say it in their way. Maybe it's just the tone, make it different… (Buwei, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]

According to Buwei, language difficulties in general might be partially due to one's unfamiliarity with the culture. As he said "Even the same word, you know the meaning of it, you do not know the meaning they say it in their way". Therein lie the nuances that only people who are socialized into the culture of this community would understand.

There are also other aspects that may illustrate the cultural aspects that are more specific to oral presentations; questions, for instance, are considered an essential part of oral presentations. Presenters should expect the audience to ask questions and they are expected to answer questions that the audience might have. However, it is very interesting to see that, as Changkai discussed here, there might be cultural differences towards presentation elements like questions:

> I noticed here you could always ask questions. There are no bad questions. The professors always say "great question", "very good question"… Back home, the teacher might say: "what kind of question is that?" or "didn't you read your book?"… Sometimes, I think the questions [that some students asked] are bad questions. They were simple but I had to explain to them (shaking head)… It is so

different…I guess it's a cultural thing. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

I discussed the cultural aspects related to oral presentations and also some general cultural practices that newcomers might need to be socialized into. The following is another anecdote from my observation of how to use a marker in one participant's OEPT videos. Haidong, one of the participants, took his first OEPT shortly after coming to the country. During the test, Haidong was told by one of the evaluators that he could use the whiteboard and the marker. On the video he was recorded looking at the marker a couple times and then writing on the blackboard—without taking the cap off the marker. An evaluator reminded him that he needed to take the cap off to use the marker (Observation notes, OEPT Video, September 2007). He might have been nervous, but when I mentioned this in the interview, he said that he just had never seen or used a marker before—and he had just arrived in this country a couple of weeks prior.

This little anecdote is mentioned here because something as common and simple as a marker might be an issue for newcomers. The student did not know how to use a marker but no one can deny his intelligence—he was pursuing a PhD degree. He had simply never seen or used a marker before so it was natural for him not to know how to use it. The unfamiliarity with the marker may have caused him to feel nervous or embarrassed and consequently negatively affect his presentation performance. This anecdote was cited to argue that language socialization is so enormous that it brings immense challenges for newcomers in various respects.

4.2.3 Discussion

4.2.3.1 Oral Presentations as a Culturally Loaded Way of Learning

As the data presented indicates, though oral presentations were not completely foreign to all

of the participants, most (except Dailin and Shengrong who had this experience as graduate students in China) mentioned that oral presentations were not part of their regular academic activity in China. The data suggest that there could be several reasons why oral presentations were not used (or at least not so commonly used). First, the belief that "action speaks louder than words" leads to a devaluing of speaking or communication skills. It is consistent with the traditional value of emphasizing doing rather than speaking. Second, the reality in China is that most classes are big—a class of 30 is considered small. In many cases classes could be as many as 50 or more from elementary school through college. Constrained by this kind of situation, it is extremely difficult to have interactive instruction. It is much more manageable for students to listen to lectures delivered as monologues by the instructors. This finding is consistent with Davey and Higgins (2005) in a study skills survey where 53% attributed their poor oral presentations to lack of experience. Although my finding approaches the issue from an academic discourse perspective, the implication is that these students have to be socialized into this particular activity and they might encounter difficulties during this process. This finding is also in line with the existing literature about the importance of prior experience in socialization, as discussed in the case of children as they continue their socialization from home to school (Heath, 1983) or immigrants who continue in their socialization in even more different social and academic contexts (Duff, 2002; Pon, Goldstein & Schecter, 2003). As Heath (1983) argued, the discontinuity between the primary socialization at home and the secondary socialization at school created problems for school children from certain socioeconomic backgrounds and negatively affected their chances of achieving success in academic settings. A similar opinion

was echoed by Schleppegrell (2004). When the newcomers continued their socialization in a different community, conflicts could occur. For instance, Pon, Goldstein and Schecter (2003) discussed how Chinese students and their Canadian counterparts interpreted silence differently due to their different cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Duff (2002) discussed how local Canadian students and the immigrant students positioned themselves differently in oral discussions. Both studies argued that cultural interpretations of the same phenomenon might be very different and bore consequences if it was not communicated well between the parties involved. Therefore, the finding indicated that the Chinese participants who had little prior experience with oral presentations should be socialized into this activity to avoid the conflicts caused by different interpretations of their behaviors. It can be argued that oral presentation is a culturally loaded activity and the cultural element of the oral presentations is something the newcomers need to learn to properly employ with this activity. Therefore, these Chinese graduate students needed to be socialized into the host academic community.

4.2.3.2 Participants' Awareness about the Cultural Aspects of Oral Presentations

When Chinese students come to a host academic community, they need to be socialized into the practices of this community. In terms of oral presentations, it is important that they become aware of the cultural aspects of oral presentations.

It seems that some participants developed a better sense of the cultural expectations of a good presentation; others did not adapt so well. This is in part explained by Vygotsky's notion of spontaneous concepts and scientific concepts (1987). The former refers to the concepts from experience and the latter refers to the concepts from theorizing about the experience. Some of

these participants seemed to have developed some spontaneous concepts about oral presentations after gaining experience in this activity. From their interviews, it can be seen that as the participants continued their language socialization in the new academic community, they gradually recognized the importance of various presentation features that are valued in this community. For instance, most participants developed the concept that the audience should be their priority when preparing and delivering their presentations. In comparison, when they started to perform the presentation tasks in this new academic community, they considered these tasks as assignments that just needed to be done. However, they might benefit more if these spontaneous concepts could be changed into scientific concepts. In other words, if they received explicit instruction in the presentation culture, they could apply that knowledge directly to practice without having to go through the often painful and less effective journey of self-discovery. For ESL professionals, therefore, knowing what students bring to the table and what cultural baggages they bring with them are very important. Another approach is that “schooled ways of using language” (Schleppegrell, 2004, p.41) should be made explicit to students. Schleppegrell points out that there are different ways of using languages in different communities and different contexts and students should be aware of what is expected of them. Culture is deeply embedded and helps guide our sense of normal or usual. However, newcomers need to learn what is considered normal or usual. This is of particular importance for Chinese and other international students who come to this very different community. It is the responsibility of ESL professionals to work as bridges to unpack what is considered normal or usual in one culture for L2 learners from another culture in order to raise their awareness of cultural practices thereby facilitating

their socialization process.

4.2.3.3 Paralinguistic Means of Communication in Oral Presentations

The oral presentation, as a way of oral communication, is a comprehensive activity in which many factors contribute to its success. Among these factors, paralinguistic means of communication cannot be neglected. Paralinguistic means of communication refer to body language or gestures that accompany or occur right before the oral communication. Gestures are also culturally related and, therefore, L2 learners need to learn these gestures (McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000). From my observations of the participants' oral presentations, it was clear that body language including eye contact, gestures and stage use played an important role in oral presentations and some participants spoke of this as well. However, the paralinguistic means of communication is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Its importance is briefly discussed in Chapter VI, in the future direction section.

4.3 The Participants Being Socialized into the Academic Discourse Community

What was the academic discourse socialization process like for the participants who were in general not familiar (enough) with making oral presentations when they joined the host academic community? This section addresses my second research question: how are the Chinese graduate students socialized into the academic discourse related to oral presentations as required by the academic community they have joined? It seems that there are several ways for the participants to be socialized into the host academic discourse community in terms of oral presentations: observations, peer support, expert guidance and practice.

4.3.1 Observation

In my pilot study, the participants continued their language socialization through an ESL class in which observation was made part of curriculum. By requiring the students to observe the qualities of a successful presenter and learn from that, the ESL oral presentation class intentionally socialized these students into the process of oral presentations. For the participants in this study, data showed that most of them made an effort themselves to observe the oral presentations to learn from others on oral presentations. Simply by watching others, particularly those who were more familiar with this activity, these participants got ideas about what was required of them---if not in detail, at least enough to imitate and follow the suit as Dailin said:

> so it was like that when you do that (present) not only you but watch the other people do it, what they do good and what they do bad, you learn the good things and prevent the bad things happen on you. (Dailin: Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]

Some participants also indicated their preferences about who to observe during presentations. While Changkai thought that American students provided good examples of presentations, another participant Feng thought differently.

> Sue: How do you improve your presentations?
> Changkai: Mainly through observing the Americans present. It seems that they could present without any effort. Americans can talk. They can talk a long time using a few slides. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008)

> Sue: So how do you improve your presentations?
> Feng: Sometimes I watch others who are about same level as I am— other Chinese students, for instance. When they did presentations, I would listen, for instance, for good pronunciation and if he spoke words clearly or …could stress the word well… I compared. Sometimes, I listened to my American classmates doing presentations. They usually spoke fast, but I felt there is a big difference between their presentations and mine. (Feng, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Sue: You just listen and see how [American students] present, how…
Feng: Yes, but they are very different. So what I mainly focused on are those [Chinese or other non-native speakers] who are similar to my level or a little better than me.

Feng: I paid attention to their [peer] presentations so that I could avoid some of the mistakes they made. Sometimes they repeated a lot, used a lot of fillers, such as "you know, you know", for instance. Other times they talked too fast so they couldn't make themselves understood. The purpose of the presentations is to make people understand you, right? So if you talk too fast, people can't get what you are talking, so you should talk slowly so that you can express fluently. (Feng, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

While Changkai preferred to observe his American counterparts to improve his oral presentations, Feng thought that he would benefit more from observing other Chinese and non-native speaking students because their presentations seemed closer to his level and hence easier for him to learn from. Therefore, it seems that both native English speakers (NES) and non-native English speakers (NNES) could work as socializing agents in this process, though it should be pointed out that the NNES might be more limited as socializing agents in terms of providing a sufficient model for L2 socialization. The success or appropriateness of NNES and NES models can be further explored since in this study there is no consensus on this issue.

4.3.2 Expert Assistance

Structured assistance from the academic community can make a big difference in the socialization process of the participants. In terms of oral presentations, ESL classes such as Oral Presentation Skills class, department professional seminars and also some key figures (such as advisors) can all provide strong guidance towards the participating students' oral academic discourse socialization.

4.3.2.1 Relevant ESL Classes

The ESL center at the University of X provides an Oral Presentation Skills class specifically designed for ESL students. According to the syllabus the course objectives of this class are described as follows:

> By the end of the course, students should be able to:
>
> - Gain experience and be confident in public speaking
> - Strengthen their overall speaking proficiency and communication skills
> - Be familiar with various types of presentations
> - Learn the essential elements in constructing presentations
> - Learn techniques in how to create and use effective visual aids
> - Learn how to incorporate technology tools in their presentations to complement their language skills
> - Analyze, evaluate and reflect on their oral presentation skills
> - Analyze, evaluate and reflect on their peers' oral presentation skills
> - Learn how to become effective oral speakers and presenters in their field of studies. (Documents: Oral Presentation Skills Course Syllabus)

As I mentioned in the methodology section, several participants took the ESL classes (Anning, Dailin, Haidong, Shengrong, Feng). When asked about the oral presentation skills class offered by the ESL center, Anning said:

> I think this class is helpful. Of course, this class can't improve your language in a short time because, just like Rome, it isn't built in a day. You can't improve your language in a very short period of time. The class I registered for was called *oral presentation* [Original English]. It taught you how to organize your presentations, such as introduction, body and content, and summary, etc. to make your presentations interesting. To give a specific example, this class helped you learn how to make better PowerPoint. I think you can learn those skills in a short time. So I think that this class might help you improve your oral presentation skills. Very helpful in this aspect.
>
> Sue: So [the oral presentation class] trains skills such as making PowerPoint slides, how to organize your presentations, etc.?
>
> Anning: Yes. And also your body language. (Anning, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Other participants such as Dailin and Haidong who took the oral presentations skills class

also reported similar opinions about the class.

> Dailin: [The oral presentation skills class is] helpful with several things because when you take the classes you have several classmates. Each one gave a presentation like 4 students gave a presentation in one class, so it was like that when you do that (present), not only you but watch the other people do it, what they do good and what they do bad, you learn the good things and prevent the bad things happen on you. First one, you make a presentation, it was not so good and the second one you did better and the third better and it is step by step so you learn not only from yourself but also from your classmates and from the teachers so even it is time consuming it is worth… (Dailin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]
>
> [ESL] class was very helpful. But at that time I didn't think so because first quarter, it was so busy and we had pressure; we didn't have time to sleep. We had to spend a lot of time on the class. It was a presentation class, you had to give several presentations and different types and that videotaping it, I didn't want to have a bad score, I want to pass it so it was like …but after that …you know, I felt better at it because when I looked back, I felt it helped. (Dailin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]

> Haidong: At the beginning I just thought about myself and tried to figure it out by myself. And later, when I took the oral presentation class, it was taught in the class—how you structure an oral presentation, the types of outline you could have, so you, so you got those ideas from the class.
>
> Sue: What do you think of the class? You mentioned it a little bit just now that you thought it was helpful.
>
> Haidong: Depending on the situation, it might not help you much with your language abilities but it definitely helped with the presentation skills—how to prepare, how to organize the presentation. (Haidong, Interview 1, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

In contrast with the positive experiences of Dailin, Anning and Haidong in the oral presentations class, Shengrong seemed to benefit very little from the class. When I asked him whether he felt he had made some progress with his oral presentation skills during our first interview, I was very surprised to find that he did not know what "presentation skills" meant. I was very surprised because according to the syllabus of the ESL oral presentation class:

> The main goal of this course is to help students attain the necessary skills to deliver

> academic oral presentations in their field of studies. As such, students will learn techniques to prepare and deliver multiple types of presentations, support arguments, field and respond to questions, as well as strategies to improve their overall language skills…(Documents: Oral Presentation Skills Course Syllabus)

It was surprising to me that Shengrong did not even get an idea of what that meant when there was such clear description of the goal of the class. The interview data provided a partial explanation of the reasons why Shengrong seemed to not benefit from this class: his attitude determined what he did and consequently led to some negative results:

> I took the class, but you know, it was just an ESL class. No one really took it seriously. I just attended the class. That was pretty much what I did. I had to be there because I was required to be there. I don't think it helped much. (Shengrong, Interview 1, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

The class indeed did not help him much just as he said. Other data I collected from his oral presentation class such as the videos also indicated that Shengrong did not pay enough attention to the ESL class. For instance, the first assignment in his presentation class was to make a 5-8 minute presentation on a topic of their own choice. Shengrong's presentation was reading from a piece of paper about his experience of coming to the United States and searching for apartments. He finished within 3 minutes. It was clear that he did not learn the skills that were taught in the class and therefore he failed to apply these skills in his presentations. (Shengrong, Documents: October 2007, Oral Presentation Skills Class video)

From the interviews it became clear that Shengrong's attitude towards the English language might partially explain his slow discourse socialization process. He thought this program of study was very important. At the same time, he thought that English, particularly speaking was not so important to him. He thought publication in his own field would be the most important and he spent a lot of time reading and working during holidays to get a paper ready for

publication:

> Well, I have been working on a paper for publication. I think in our field how many papers you publish is very important. That's the only thing that counts. (Shengrong, Interview 1, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

From the interviews, Shengrong seemed to reduce his level of activity to a minimum beyond meeting his advisor once a week. It is important to note here that Shengrong had been thinking of transferring to another university so he spent a lot of time preparing GRE and application materials for the universities in which he was interested.

4.3.2.2 Department Assistance

Not all participants took the oral presentation skills class offered by the ESL Center at the university. However, some participants (Enjia, Buwei, Changkai, Gaomin) reported that they received assistance from their department, which helped them improve their presentations. Here was what Enjia said:

> Our department held professional seminars on oral presentations for the teaching assistants in the department. In that class you were given a lot of opportunities to present on the stage or lead discussions. Or sometimes you could find something from your academic field and then just pretend [the class] was a classroom full of students and you had to teach it.
>
> I thought the [professional seminar] was very helpful. After the class I felt I improved speaking in front of people and I could also explain things more clearly. (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

For Changkai and Gaomin, their department seemed to provide the students with strong support. Not only did they have orientations for the newly arrived students, they also invited the ESL center to provide some pre-testing training for all their new internationals students as part of their efforts to help the international students to pass the OEPT test. I personally was involved in this training program for two years. The training not only familiarized the students with the test

itself, it also raised students' awareness of their presentations skills and language use. Gaomin passed the test on her first try while Changkai failed his first test—because his language level was too low for him to meet the minimum standard even with the test preparation training. He passed the test three months later. Besides this departmental systemic training, there were also some key figures that turned out to play an important role in this socialization process.

> Changkai: My advisor took this [a first year talk: a summative presentation to the whole department about their research] seriously. We would practice with him first and then we would have a separate session in the lab meetings for more practice and he would also give feedback. My advisor would ask, why did you do that, etc.? The audience [for the first year talk] came from different areas and you had to make sure even the audience outside your research area was able to understand what you talked about. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Compared with other participants, Changkai was the only one who repeatedly talked about his advisor in his interviews and detailing how his advisor was intentionally preparing them in their oral presentations:

> Changkai: My advisor is very nice. If we didn't present [lab reports] clearly, my advisor would ask us to go to his office and told us how to explain [clearly] next time. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Changkai: Yes, my advisor is strict. We take turns making presentations once a month and he always asks a lot of questions, particularly points that you didn't make clear. We called it "*grill*" [Original English]. Everybody has to be "*grilled*" [Original English] once a month [laughing]. He also requires that everybody else ask questions (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Participants such as Enjia, Changkai and Gaomin who received department assistance deemed it highly valuable in learning how to make proper presentations as well as accelerating their language socialization in general. Besides the departmental assistance, it also worth

pointing out that some key figures such as academic advisors could also make a difference in the students' academic discourse socialization process by assisting them in preparing and by providing feedback on their oral presentations.

Compared to the more positive experience of other participants, it seems that Haidong and Shengrong, who had little support from their department, experienced more difficulties in the socialization process. Haidong and Shengrong took took the OEPT several times, which were very unusual cases. The sad news is that while Haidong eventually passed it after the several attempt, Shengrong still failed the oral test at the time of the study. According to the information from the interviews, Shengrong was so busy with his courses in his own discipline; he did not have enough time to prepare for the OEPT even after he failed it several times. He was very stressed by his own field of study. He mentioned to me that he would stay up until one or two in the morning every day and the department had many tests and requirements. In fact, they were required to do their qualifying examination in their first quarter. (Interview 1, October 2008)

For Haidong and Shengrong, their slow progress with their discourse socialization might have been due to a number of reasons. However, the fact that they did not receive any language-related assistance from their department plus their heavy course load might have partially contributed to their slow academic discourse socialization.

4.3.3 Peer Support

In addition to the departmental level assistance in the academic socialization of the participants, it seems that peers also worked as socializing agents, particularly when peers showed patience and tolerance with the participants' presentations. This might have accelerated

the participants' progress of socialization into the academic community.

> Anning: Also, I think both the professors and the classmates here are very nice. Even if you stumble a lot in your presentations, they are very patient and encouraging. So, you feel encouraged. If you stumbled and if your audience were impatient, you might feel frustrated which makes you nervous and the situation might get worse.
> Sue: So it is very important that you have very nice and supportive professors and classmates.
> Anning: Yes, definitely. (Anning, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

For Gaomin and Changkai who hardly used English for real communication purposes before they arrived in this country, they thought their American peers, were very important in their socialization process.

> Gaomin: I think [interaction with the peers] helped me to open my mouth and not be afraid of speaking English, communicating in English. At the very beginning when I first came I was so scared of talking to Americans.
> Changkai: Yes, I was scared of speaking to them, too [at that time]. I couldn't hear them clearly.
> Gaomin: At the beginning I dared not to speak with the Indian students and American students and it became better after a while. They asked a lot of questions and I felt that they were very nice, so I was not afraid of talking and answering questions when I went up on stage and gave a presentation. Much more relaxed. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

In Changkai's case, it seemed that he was working in a very supportive environment for L2 learners; his American peers not only showed patience and tolerance with his speeches but also worked as socializing agents in many other important ways.

> Changkai: [I] never spoke English in China. After you come here you have no choice. You have to speak. And after a while you are willing to talk. If you can't pronounce words correctly, your American friends will correct you…. Also, if you said something not very clear and Americans might know what you wanted to say, they would rephrase it for you so you'd know how to say it. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Changkai: When I was preparing my first year talk [a presentation to the whole department about his research progress], my lab mates helped me practice my presentation. They would say, “Stress this word here”, or tell me how to pronounce a certain word or how to say it to make it clear. And they helped me with my PowerPoint, too. And after they read it several times and revised it, I then sent it to my advisor who then gave more advice. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

As we can see here this socialization process happened both inside and outside the classroom. The peers not only contributed in terms of making Changkai and Gaomin familiar with the procedures (for instance, by asking questions) but also directly assisting them with their language use. Dailin also talked about the similar situation:

> Also for the international students, sometimes I don’t know how to say a word I would ask them because in our group sometimes I would ask them what’s that what’s this I don’t know whether this help…Very simple things what’s this and what’s that? They would explain to you so
>
> Er, I think it’s very common that you don’t know how to say it. When they can’t understand [you], you rephrase it. It’s very common when they learn you don’t know… when you listen to others. When Americans speaking English maybe you heard that words hundreds of times or thousands times, I know how to express that feeling or use that word in that situation even I don’t know how to write the word [laughs] I learned a couple words by hearing it thousands of time.
>
> Maybe I will speak out sometimes and realize I speak this word and, oh, it make sense. At the beginning I couldn’t understand them—they speak fast. You have more contact with them and if they are talking about something I already know I can understand. (Dailin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]

Besides the socialization role peers played in the interaction with the participants as helpers and a friendly audience, there were also other ways that they contributed to the socialization process. For instance, Enjia talked about the seminar initiated by the graduate students themselves as a site to socialize the graduate students into both writing for publication and presenting at conferences. She did not attend the class due to schedule conflict, but she still

considered this important and thought it helpful:

> Our department has a seminar, I think it's called graduate seminar. It is not very formal. The students gather together and discuss how to write more effectively, how to speak more effectively. It is organized by the student volunteers. I have not attended this class but I think it's helpful in becoming qualified graduate students, because writing and presenting is part of the graduate student life. Interested graduate students can come to these seminars to join the discussion. Kind of like preparing you in academia, how to publish, how to present your ideas clearly to others, etc. (Enjia, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Besides observations and structured assistance from either an ESL class or the professional seminars from departments as mentioned above, peers could also be a very supportive force in other ways as well. The participants emphasized other factors of socialization in a broader context, for instance, the importance of having non-Chinese friends. In the following Buwei notes that, having non-Chinese friends would accelerate the socialization process because some Chinese students according to Buwei, always speak their native language, which might hinder their socialization process--including but not limited to their academic discourse socialization:

> I think, well, the more important reason is at least I've been in America for a quarter and I got more American friends and I got non-Chinese international friends. So I really want to suggest all the Chinese students well, because I know the Chinese students well. I want to suggest to get more non-Chinese friends in America because if you speak Chinese all the time, you cannot improve your skill even you speak English in the class or you are a teaching assistant, you teach a class in English. That helps but if you have a very close American friend, especially American friends I think they are better…(Buwei, Interview, June 2008) [Original English]

Participants such as Haidong and Shengrong seemed to illustrate the same point from another angle---their slow progress seemed at least partially due to a very limited contact with the other native speakers and even some other non-native speaking international students.

> Haidong: We don't have many Americans around. It's all international students, from China, India and other countries. In our office, we speak Chinese all the

time because we are all from China. (Haidong, Interview 1, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

It is clear, therefore, that peers contributed to the participants' socialization in many different ways. As discussed in Section 4.3.1, Changkai felt that he developed better ideas about how to make presentations by observing how his American peers made theirs. Besides that, his peers also offered very specific assistance with the presentations in terms of language use: such as how to phrase things clearly for the audience. Other participants also mentioned the importance of peers in the language socialization process in broader contexts, just as Buwei noted. Haidong and Shengrong experienced little interaction with their peers (other than the fellow Chinese students), which resulted in limited access to language socialization opportunities. This could be a partial explanation of their slow socialization process.

4.3.4 Practice

The participants acknowledged the importance of practice in improving their oral presentations. Actually all of them considered this an important part of improving oral presentations.

Dailin: First one you make a presentation it was not so good and the second one you did better and the third better and it is step by step so…the more you practiced the better you are going to perform. (Dailin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]

She also confirmed her opinion in her second interview about the importance of practice for oral presentations.

Sue: What suggestions you would give for Chinese students who just come to your department and ask your advice on making oral presentations?

Dailin: Practice [laughs]. Practice. Yeah, practice a lot because practice can give you… because no matter how hard the questions from the audience, you can say I don't know. But if you cannot give a good presentation, that mess up with

everything and so practice when you …that makes a good presentation. Practice is most important for a successful presentation (Dailin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]

Other participants such as Changkai and Buwei also shared similar opinions about practice in oral presentations:

Sue: Are there other comments you'd like to make about oral presentations?
Changkai: I think more practice is important. The first time I was so nervous and the second time it was better and by the third time I didn't care. I tried to make clear what I intended to express. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Buwei: I think the difficulty is you try to do to …the presentation before the presentation you try to do the presentation at home or in front of people trying to practice before you really do it so… especially for the second language people and I think even for the native language -speaking people. (Interview, June 2008) [Original English]

While participants like Dailin, Buwei, and Changkai thought that practice was the most important aspect in making presentations successful, other participants like Enjia thought other factors could play a role too:

Sue: Another question, how do you think you improved your presentations? Because you have more practice here or the professional seminar that you have?
Enjia: I think it is everything. When you see others doing it, you see what problems they have and try to avoid them. But mainly it is your own practice. The more you do it, the better you become. (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

4.3.5 The Participants' General Progress

As the participants continued their language socialization in the host academic community, they become in general more confident and more competent when making oral presentations. Most of them thought they had made progress in their presentations:

Enjia: It is difficult to present in English, particularly at the very beginning… Later

> this situation becomes better. After a while you are here…I think at the beginning I would think through what I would talk about from the beginning to the end. And I was afraid that I might not know a word somewhere and get stuck. So I checked very carefully but later …I wrote the PowerPoint and just went through roughly and then just left it to the presentation… Now it sounds more natural, because at the beginning when I prepared everything, it sounded like that I was reciting from memory; it did not sound like a presentation. [Laughing] (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]
>
> Now I am much more confident in presentations. Even when I know I might still make some mistakes from time to time. (Enjia, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Enjia felt that when she was new to the academic community, she made her presentations by very careful preparation beforehand, which made it sound like memorization. However, after a period of socialization through observations, departmental assistance (seminar) and practice, she learned that making a presentation was not memorization and recitation. It should be "natural". She also overcame her fear of forgetting a word and losing her place. Another part of her socialization was the realization that it was acceptable to make mistakes from time to time. She was more relaxed and more confident. Some of the other participants displayed similar opinions about their progress:

> Dailin: As to English presentation, I think I have some improvement because, er, how do you say? Like the difference between China and America. In America there are many opportunities, requirements for you to give a presentation, no matter a poster or PowerPoint presentation… or presentation. But in China we don't have poster presentations, at least in my area. (Dailin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]
>
> Feng: First, in China you did not have this English-speaking environment and also you seldom had a chance to make presentations in English. After one quarter here, you had some practice opportunities in your class. And you also sit every day in the classroom, you hear the lectures from the professors, your listening comprehension improves, as well as other areas. (Feng, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Sue: So, you think you did ok at that time but now you've made a lot of progress…
> Gaomin: Yes, now if I were given a topic, I could give an impromptu speech but at that time [when they first arrived] it would be impossible, right, Changkai? (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Dailin, Feng and Gaomin thought that they made progress in various areas in terms of delivering presentations because in the United States, they got more opportunities or they were more often required to deliver different kinds of oral presentations than they were in China. Besides the data from the students' interviews, my in-classroom observations and video reviews also confirmed the general progress of the participants. The following is an excerpt from the observation notes I took for Dailin's in-class lab instructions (May 2008). It was very clear that she was a confident instructor.

> I came to the class a little bit earlier and waited for her outside the classroom. Some students were already in the classroom and started to find their lab seats. We greeted each other briefly and went into the lab. She walked around and chatted with the students very comfortably before she formally started the pre-lab presentation. She even joked "where is my little girl?" when she found one particular female student had not showed up—even though she was about 29—it was very interesting to me that she seemed very relaxed in the class. For the talk before the lab sessions, she first briefly introduced me as someone who was doing a study on international students' language use and started to talk about the agenda for the lab. (Observation notes, May 2008)

This presentation happened in May 2008, almost two years after Dailin came to this academic community. Compared to her earlier presentations, such as the OEPT September 2006 and ESL classroom presentation in Fall Quarter 2006, it is amazing to observe the changes she demonstrated as a presenter in terms of confidence she demonstrated and the ease she had in the interaction with the audience.

4.4 Discussion

4.4.1 General Progress

As the above discussion indicates, the participants were being socialized into the academic discourse community in terms of oral presentations through observations, expert assistance, peer support and their own practice. Most participants reported academic discourse socialization progress. It should also be pointed out that the socialization progress varied for different participants. All the participants (except Haidong and Shengrong) felt they were more confident with their oral presentations as a result of their discourse socialization in the academic community, as indicated in their interviews. The progress was also evidenced in my observations of their in-class presentations as well as in their over-time video clips. A more detailed discussion in terms of language use will be presented in Chapter V.

As discussed in the literature review, two kinds L2 socialization process can be found: one is relatively positive progress as described by studies such as Mohan and Smith (1992), Morita (2000) and Kobayashi (2005), all conducted in Canadian contexts. Particularly, Morita and Kobayashi found that the newcomers were gradually socialized into the academic community or, more specifically, the presentation culture by interacting with their peers, negotiation with their teachers and continuous preparation, practice and reviews. The participants in these studies underwent overall positive transformation in this socialization process.

Other studies such as Moore (1999) and Atkinson (2003) found that this language socialization process was full of tensions and struggles for the L2 learners. The former examined the very negative language socialization experience of some non-traditional Indian students who

gained access to an elite university in India. He coined the term “dys-socialization” to describe this negative language socialization experience, which was strongly resisted by the participants. Moore examined the language socialization process of primary school students in Cameroon. Many students dropped out because of the conflict between the language policies at school and their own community. Similar to what Moore and Atkinson found, Zappa-Hollman (2007), whose study was also conducted in the Canadian context, discussed the challenges and difficulties her participants had and drew the conclusion that some of her participants resisted this socialization process.

This current study’s finding is more in line with the findings by Kobayashi (2005), Mohan and Smith (1992) and Morita (2000). Although the Chinese students experienced difficulties in their language socialization process, in general, most of the participants held positive attitudes towards their language socialization process, as evidenced by their attitude towards the oral presentation activity and toward the English language. Most of the participants in this study except two (Shengrong and Haidong) reported relatively a smooth socialization experience—though it was not an easy one. Shengrong demonstrated some kind of what I would call “passive resistance” to the language socialization process. I call it “passive resistance” because the participant agreed that it was important for him to become a member of this academic community. However, he did not seek opportunities to be socialized into the academic community—as indicated by his socialization progress in terms of oral presentations. Haidong was less resistant to the socialization progress but nonetheless struggled more than the majority of the participants.

At the same time, I am aware that these language socialization results should also be viewed with caution. For instance, I used the OEPT test results to indicate participants' progress, yet I am aware that there are many factors that can come into play such as evaluator bias. Other factors can also affect the test results as indicators of progress, for instance, the effects of repeating the same task or test, student preparation, etc. There are also limitations in using different kinds of presentations presented at different occasions to demonstrate the progress of participants. For example, a presentation for a lab report might be different from a class project presentation for which a student will get a grade.

4.4.2 The Participants' Individual Agency: Case Differences

Human agency, as an important concept in the sociocultural theory, has been discussed by many scholars such as Donato (2000), Lantolf (2000), Morita (2004), Wertsch (1998), and Willet (1995). According to this concept, humans are often described as active agents of his or her environment. Linell (1998) defined human agency as "the ability to think and act freely (under given circumstances)" (p.270) (quoted from Kobayashi, 2005, p.46). In his study, Kobayashi discussed two characteristics of human agency: the first is the ability to make choices among existing options. When there are several existing options to choose from, one's ability to make different choices is part of the human agency. The second is the ability to assign different meanings to the same event.

Most of the participants in this study actively sought opportunities through observation, asking for peer support and practicing to learn the academic discourse appropriate for oral presentations. That is, the participants were not only passively being socialized into the academic

discourse community; most participants actively exercised their agency in the socialization process. They made choices during this process to become members of this academic community. For instance, Anning, Dailin, Enjia took the initiative by enrolling themselves in classes or professional seminars that they thought would accelerate their socialization process and by interacting with peers and practicing their presentations. Anning, who was a geology student, felt comfortable being the only Chinese graduate student in her department. She thought "if you just keep speaking English with your American friends, you would make progress" (Anning, Interview 1, June 2008). She even mentioned that one American friend with whom she worked on projects would compromise almost every time because Anning would insist on her opinions. She was laughing when she talked about this (Anning, Interview 2, October 2008). It seemed that Anning positioned herself as someone whose difference was a resource for her and she perceived the department and her American peers as friendly and that she could benefit from the interaction with them. As a result, Anning was on the way to becoming a confident ESL speaker and enjoyed a much more pleasant and positive socialization process.

The participants also exercised their agency by providing their own distinctive perspectives on their socialization process. For instance, during the process of learning the discourse for making oral presentations, some participants (such as Changkai) thought observations were the most important factor in improving their presentations while another, Buwei, believed practice was the only way to improve oral presentations to become a competent member of this academic community. Enjia thought all of them were important parts of the socialization process.

Compared to the positive academic discourse socialization experience of the most

participants, Haidong and Shengrong, on the other hand, made much slower progress, particularly Shengrong. While there were contributing factors that led to this result, such as much less access to the language or assistance, it should be pointed out that the participants' own individual agency must have played an important role. According to the interview data, both Haidong and Shengrong had more strongly identified themselves as Chinese and lived mostly within the Chinese circle. Particularly Shengrong viewed the ESL class as not terribly important or worth much attention despite it being an opportunity to improve his presentation skills. The data suggested that all the other participants who took the class thought positively of the class including Haidong. Shengrong was the only person who thought differently. His idea that publications in his field were what mattered most also determined his language socialization. Even though he agreed that oral language was important, he had the idea that oral capacity was secondary when compared to publications. During the socialization process, he positioned himself in a way that was harmful for him. Shengrong's choices brought consequences for his socialization into the academic community.

As argued by Schleppegrell (2004), students' language development is shaped by their social positioning and their social positioning in turn will affect the students' language development in a positive or negative way. The participants' own choice about what to do and how to assign different meanings to the same event led to different socialization results. Data indicated that different individuals had different socialization experiences and therefore different outcomes. It is fair to say there is not one standard path for the participants to be socialized into the academic community. Each individual participant's specific socialization experience and the

outcome were influenced by participant's individual agency. The outcome of the socialization is the combination of both the assistance and the access the participants have and their individual agency. It is worth noting here that it is sometimes not possible to draw a distinct line between the participants' individual agency in this process and the socialization assistance from peers, key personnel or departments. All of these factors interact with each other and contribute to the socialization results.

4.5 Summary

This study found that making oral presentations is a culturally loaded activity, confirming the findings of Morita (2000) and Zappa-Hollman (2007). The participants in this study who did not have this particular kind of activity as a regular part of their L1 academic experience found it very challenging. Therefore, these students need to be socialized into this particular way of learning and teaching in academic life.

The study found that most of the participants were being socialized into the academic community through observations, peer support, expert assistance and also practice. However, the study also found that individual agency played a role in the socialization process. While the socialization process emphasizes the influence of social forces on individual development, it cannot be denied that the individual agency is one of the key factors that lead to the different results of socialization or re-socialization as in the case of Chinese graduate students in a new academic community.

To conclude, this chapter argued that the oral presentation is a culturally-loaded activity that Chinese graduate students need to be socialized into to become a member of the host academic

community. The chapter also presented how the Chinese graduate students were socialized during this process at a macro-level and that individual agency might also play an important role in this process. The next chapter will focus more specifically on the language issues that the Chinese graduate students had during this socialization process and how their L2 language progressed over a period of time. An SFL approach is used to analyze the oral texts that the participants produced at different times.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS IN CONTEXT (II)

ACADEMIC DISCOURSE SOCIALIZATION: LEARNING TO USE L2 APPROPRIATELY IN THE NEW ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

5.1 Introduction

Findings discussed in Chapter IV indicate that participants' prior L1 academic experience did not prepare them (or well enough) for academic oral presentations, which is a culturally loaded activity; therefore they needed to be socialized into the academic discourse community. Chapter IV also discussed how the participants were socialized into the academic discourse community in terms of oral presentations. This chapter focuses on the language issues regarding the participants' academic discourse socialization by presenting the findings that address my third and fourth research questions: What language difficulties, if any, do Chinese graduate students have in making oral presentations as required in their academic life? How over time does language socialization result in student progress, if any, in their L2 during their socialization into the academic discourse communities that they wish to be part of?

This chapter consists of two parts corresponding to these two research questions: the first part discusses the specific language difficulties that the participants have, both through their own reports and other data sources. The second part of the chapter uses the SFL approach to track the L2 discourse socialization progress of the participants over time (Halliday, 1989; Schleppegrell, 2004).

5.2 Participants' Oral Presentation Language Difficulties

The literature in general has illustrated that international students, particularly East Asian students, encountered difficulties with the English language as discussed in Chapter II. However, there is little discussion about the specific difficulties these students might face. This section explores some specific language difficulties reported by the participants as well as other data sources.

5.2.1 Vocabulary: Terms in Technical Field

According to the participants, they had all learned English as a foreign language and some had the rare occasion to use it for authentic communication purposes before coming to the United States. According to the interviews, one big challenge with oral presentations was vocabulary, particularly technical terms in their fields. Even with preparation, it still posed a great challenge for them.

> Sue: So what difficulties do you have when you are doing oral presentations?
> Gaomin: Vocabulary. Particularly terms. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]
> Dailin: We learned so many words when we were preparing TOEFL and GRE but we can't say that we learned them [because] we don't know when to use which word. We don't have the situation to use them. Some friends asked me how many years I have learned English, I felt ashamed. I had learned English for more than 10 years, but I seldom had a chance to use it. (Dailin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]
> Even you have the content to say but it doesn't mean you can make sense of your topic you know, because if you talk about your research, there are so many academic technical terms and it's impossible for you, how to say… sometimes pronunciation sometimes how to spell those words, you know exact meaning in Chinese, but since you never or seldom say those words in English, or sometimes you read them in Chinese sometimes read them in English but you seldom you try to use it, when you try to explain something you get stuck because some technical terms, you know, if you don't know, you

just don't know. If you want to use another word that will be a big differentiation and it will destroy your talk. (Dailin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]

Enjia: It is difficult to present in English, particularly at the very beginning, For instance, the terms. At the beginning, for instance, there were some curved lines and diagrams and you saw them but if you wanted to describe them, the lines were not straight but complicated. It was difficult to express it in English, so I just pointed and showed them. This situation became better…after a while. But still there is this problem. Sometimes you just can't explain very clearly.

Sue: So you think you know the terms in mathematics and it can be seen visually but expressing it in English can be a problem.

Enjia: Yeah. For instance, if the diagram is very simple—it increases or decreases—that's easy. But sometimes it is complicated. For instance, it increases first and then decreases and etc… Now I can't remember [the example] clearly but it was a problem for me to present in English. So, I knew there was a tendency but it was very complicated and I did not know how to explain it to others in English. (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Besides the issue of technical terms, there were also some other vocabulary problems with less technical words, such as the incorrect use of words as reflected in their presentation samples:

1. Any *plagiarist* and *cheated* will be punished *serious* so please remember don't *misduct* misconduct (Documents: Dailin, OEPT September 2006)
2. So today we will talking about matrix. I know you guys have seen the movie Matrix. But this really a little *familiar* with that …*similar* with that. (Documents: Buwei, OEPT December 2007)

This problem with vocabulary was also noticed by the OEPT evaluators during the participants' exams. For instance, one evaluator commented that one participant, Dailin, "Would often apply the incorrect usage of a word" (Documents: OEPT, September 2006). On the second test that Dailin took three months later, two different evaluators commented: Sometimes used incorrect words…used wrong words at times (Documents: OEPT December 2006 evaluator comments).

5.2.2 Pronunciation/accent

Oral presentations as a form of oral communication require the presenter to speak clearly

for the benefit of the audience. While for native speakers, this might mean varying one's tone and maintaining a reasonable volume, for L2 presenters, the first challenge they have an accent and faulty pronunciation pattern. This was echoed by some of the participants.

> Sue: So what are some of your challenges with oral presentations?
> Dailin: I think two big things for [me] is… the first is pronunciation, the second is vocabulary. Because you know that …maybe you know what you are going to say and what word you are going to say but because ALL Asians have an accent. It's different from the people from European. Asian people from different countries have different accents.
>
> So if you are going to give a presentation, it is not only presentation, it is also a way to communicate with people and because of your accent you can't make yourself understood, you know that's very frustrated, then destroy your confidence. Then if you don't feel comfortable talk about …to people any more you just get nervous. It's getting worse and worse. So it's pronunciation we must pay attention to it. So if you really want to do a good job or want to stay here or to have a good communication with people, you must have a good pronunciation… I think particularly old people, it's more difficult for them to understand me. (Dailin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Original English]
> Gaomin: When I had just arrived here, there were many words that I didn't know how to pronounce. Well, I knew the pronunciation but once it came out of my mouth, it did not sound right. I repeated it but it was still not right and I felt really bad. Later it got better.
>
> Gaomin: Sometimes [my advisor] can't answer my questions… especially sometimes because of my pronunciation. I can't make myself clear. … Sometimes when my professor didn't know what I was talking, he would turn to another American student. We did lab work together. She is American and she knew what I was doing and what I wanted to say. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]
>
> Buwei: [I didn't pass my first OEPT] because I was very nervous. I did remember that I have a very heavy very strong accent, Chinese accent. I did remember that I had a very heavy accent that's most… because I was very nervous and I lack experience of teaching in English. Because that was almost two weeks from I was here and I did not have any American friends. I spoke Chinese every day either in China or the first two weeks in America so…yeah. I did not know much of the problem that because every one in China has Chinese accent

> so I do not know my problem and I think I was good and I think I can't understand American people, it's their problem, they speak too fast. Now I think mostly is my problem. I did not speak clearly. (Buwei, Interview, June 2008) [Original English]

The problems that the participants mentioned themselves were also evidenced in the comments of the OEPT evaluators. Most of the evaluators regarded pronunciation, accent, and speech flow as problems the participants struggled with. For instance, of Feng who took OEPT in September 2006, an evaluator wrote, "Pronunciation inhibits overall understanding. Pronunciation is a problem". Another participant, Dailin, who took the OEPT twice, also received similar comments from the evaluators. In September 2006, an evaluator commented that Dailin had issues with grammar and also with pronunciation. Three months later, when Dailin took the test a second time, one evaluator wrote, "Pronunciation fluctuates –sometimes good, sometimes very difficult to understand. Flow was chopping at times". Another evaluator noted: "Pronunciation was generally okay, but some words were very hard to understand; at times much better, fairly clear during Section III but needs some work". (Documents: September 2006 OEPT evaluator comments). Obviously, pronunciation was not only a problem identified by the participants themselves but also confirmed by the OEPT evaluators who witnessed their presentations and recorded their opinions. However, it seemed that most participants improved their pronunciation over time.

5.2.3 Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension also emerged as an issue for all the participants, particularly when they were interacting with the audience. Below are some examples demonstrating that these participants had listening comprehension problems. These excerpts are from that portion of the

OEPT where the evaluators pretended to be first year undergraduates asking questions about the class:

> Q: Does the class rely mostly on the book -- the book or the lecture?
> A: It's a book, not literature. (Changkai, Documents: December 2007 OEPT)

Undoubtedly, Changkai heard the word "lecture" but thought it was "literature", which made his answer confusing to the audience. He could not possibly answer the question correctly because he did not accurately comprehend it. There were many other examples illustrating the participants' problems with listening comprehension. It was clear that if the participants did not understand the question at all, it was impossible for them to give a proper answer and keep the interaction going. Additional examples of this type of problem follows:

> Q: What days of the week is this class?
> A: What dates of the class is…?
> Q: What days? Monday or Tuesday
> A: You can have a …maybe it's Monday and Thursday
> (Feng, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)

> Q: For the quizzes, are they… will you give us advanced notice when the quizzes are or they are pop quizzes?
> A: Sorry, what?
> Q: For the quizzes, are you going to give us advanced notice or they are pop quizzes?
> A: I think I will give advanced… ok [laughs]
> (Enjia, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)

Supporting this evidence of listening comprehension issues from the discourse productions are the participants' own comments made during their interviews.

> Gaomin: For me, I worry a lot about understanding the audience's questions when I do the second year talk. It is very strange that I can't understand questions from the audience. I can't understand the questions from the audience. [The second year talk] is a formal presentation; all the questions are left to the end. The presentation part can be prepared and I can manage with the help of PowerPoint but I worry most about the question part. Some Americans, like

Kate in your [looking at Changkai] lab, she talks too fast. Even the Indian students couldn't understand what she was talking about. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008)

Enjia: Actually, there is another challenge. It's about listening comprehension. Very often the audience are some other international students and they have their accent so it was very difficult sometimes to understand their English. I remember once [one student] repeated three times before I understood his meaning. Also there are some Americans who speak fast and not very clearly. They can understand each other but I can't understand them. I think this is also one reason for my nervousness when I have to do presentations.
Sue: When you can't understand the question, you will get more nervous.
Enjia: Yes. When they ask questions, I don't know what the questions are, not to mention how to answer them. (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008)

Sue: Are there other challenges when you are doing presentations in English, for instance, vocabulary or interaction with the audience?
Changkai: We have a lot of Indian students and it is very difficult to understand them. I am more used to it, but she [pointing to Gaomin] is not.
Gaomin: Most of my lab mates are Americans. It is standard English, not like their lab with English with a variety of accents.
Changkai: We have students from Turkey, Sri Lanka, India…. Particularly Indian students; they are very confident with their English. Only after a while and after some thinking is everybody able to understand what they are talking about. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Two participants, Haidong and Shengrong specifically mentioned that their listening comprehension problems were partially caused by their unfamiliarity with American pronunciation because they were taught "British English" in their home country.

Haidong: I sometimes can't understand what are they saying. I think because I learned British English and here when they speak American English, it is difficult for me to understand. Other problems include they use slang a lot, which can also create a problem. (Haidong, Interview 2, December 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Shengrong: I think one reason that I have problems with listening is because here they use American English and I learned British English. For instance, here when they say the word "application" it would sound like /ê/pplication while I

would pronounce like / æ /pplication …different pronunciations make it difficult to understand. (Shengrong, Interview 1, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

It is without a doubt that interaction is part of oral presentations. Yet it was surprising that all the participants considered listening to be one of the biggest challenges in their oral presentations, particularly at the earliest stages of the socialization process. This was also confirmed by the evaluations of those who took the OEPT. Since oral presentations are communicative events, the participants knew they had to be prepared for questions. This put pressure on them because if they could not understand the questions being asked, they would be positioned in an embarrassing situation. Thus, the participants emphasized listening comprehension as a big challenge for them.

5.2.4 Immediacy and Accuracy of Oral Presentations

Besides vocabulary, pronunciation/accent and listening comprehension, participants also mentioned difficulties directly related to the immediacy and interactive nature of spoken language. Although they knew the concepts in their native language, they might still have great difficulties in translating those concepts into English accurately. This challenge was intensified by the immediacy nature of oral presentations.

Sue: As to the language issues, what are some more specific challenges or difficulties that you have during your oral presentations?

Anning: Well, for instance, I mentioned just now you can't find a word to express your ideas accurately. I think maybe one reason is the size of your vocabulary and the other might be your language skills. You might still be able to find the word that you are searching for if you're given enough time. For instance, in writing you can check your grammar and usage, so it could be fine. But when you are doing presentations, you might make grammatical errors and many sentence fragments. (Anning, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Dailin: For delivery, you have time, you are in control… you have plenty time to choose a way to present your ideas, you can prepare and you can choose a way comfortable for you but when an audience asked you a question, you have to come with an answer immediately. (Dailin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Original English]

This part of the chapter discussed the participants' language difficulties that emerged from the interview data and document analysis. In the following section, the progress that the participants made after a period of language socialization will be discussed.

5.2.5 General Progress and Discussion

While participants reported their difficulties and problems, most of them also reported progress with their discourse development. Progress was also reflected in their test results over time. (A more specific analysis on their presentation texts will be discussed in Section 5.3.)

One indicator of the progress is that these participants as a group became more fluent with their oral texts. Most of these participants had an increased production in terms of quantity. It can be found that for almost all the participants who conducted comparable tasks such as OEPT tests produced more words in general in their second or more attempts: there was a steady increase in their language production on the same task within the same time frame. For instance, in September 2006, in the OEPT Section III, Enjia produced 370 words within seven minutes while in December 2006 she produced 707 words within seven minutes, almost doubled what she produced in September. Other presenters such as Haidong also increased his quantity of his oral production. For Section III, Haidong discussed almost the same topic (except for his first presentation where he was talking about Newton's Law; the following three he was talking exactly the same topic: the universal gravitation). For his first presentation, he produced about

466 words within seven minutes; during the second presentation he produced 496 words, the third time, there was actually a downturn in which he produced 399 words, but it should be mentioned that at that time he had some interaction with the evaluators; and the fourth time he produced about 564 words and continued his interaction with the evaluators. It was generally clear that the participant increased his oral presentation rate.

Besides the progress in terms of fluency, there are also other indicators of progress. For instance, all the nine participants took OEPT, Anning and Gaomin passed the test first time, Feng failed the test but he did not take the test again (he was working as a research assistant at the time of the study). The other participants took the test at least twice. The following Table 5.1 shows the scores of OEPT Section III for those who took the test twice. In this portion of the test, the participants were required to "present a concept in an academic manner". Three evaluators independently scored the performance of the test-takers based on seven individual items for this section. The final score is the average of the three scores; four is the highest and one is the lowest.

Table 5.1 Participants' OEPT Section III Score Comparison

Participants	September 2007	December 2007	September 2006	December 2006
Buwei	2.67	3.50		
Changkai	2.00	2.83		
Haidong	2.17	2.67		
Shengrong	2.00	2.17		
Dailin			2.67	2.83
Enjia			2.83	3.33

As the data indicates, all the participants who took the test at least twice (or more) made

progress during the three-month interval between test sessions: The best improvement was Buwei's score which improved from 2.67 to 3.5 and the poorest improvement was Shengrong which improved from 2 to 2.17. Even though there was progress, it is clear that participants like Shengrong still ended up with a very low score, much lower than what most of the other participants began with.

Table 5.2 presents scores for pronunciation for Section III of two OEPT tests. To derive these scores, the evaluators rated the speaker's presentation between one and four at half point increments with one being the lowest score and four the highest. Again, the final pronunciation score is the average of the three independent evaluator's scores.

Table 5.2 Participants' OEPT Pronunciation Score Comparison

Participants	September 2007	December 2007	September 2006	December 2006
Buwei	2.00	2.83		
Changkai	1.83	2.00		
Haidong	2.33	2.33		
Shengrong	1.50	2.17		
Dailin			2.17	2.17
Enjia			2.83	3.00

In terms of pronunciation, we can see that Buwei, Enjia, Shengrong and Changkai made rapid progress from September to December. Haidong and Dailin's pronunciation score did not change over this period.

Besides the progress across cases, significant progress can be demonstrated by looking at all items of two specific participants, Buwei and Enjia. It was clear that progress was made even in a short interval between tests. Table 5.3 below shows Buwei's development.

Table 5.3 Buwei's OEPT Section III Individual Item Score Comparison

Buwei OEPT Section III	September 2007	December 2007
Organization	2.50	3.50
Relevance of content	2.50	3.33
Clarity	2.17	3.33
Interpersonal skills	2.50	3.50
Teacher presence	2.50	3.00
Listening	2.67	3.50
Fielding and responding to questions	2.67	3.33

Within three months, Buwei made impressive progress in every item. It was particularly striking that in areas such as organization, interpersonal skills, listening and fielding and responding to questions, Buwei gained almost one whole point, which was quite impressive. He experienced a relatively rapid socialization process. Enjia, who was also from Buwei's department, experienced similar results. From her two short presentations for OEPT, Section III, it was clear that she had also made progress as shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Enjia's OEPT Section III Individual Item Scores Comparison

Enjia OEPT Section III	September 2006	December 2006
Organization	2.67	3.00
Relevance of content	2.67	2.83
Clarity	2.67	3.00
Interpersonal skills	2.83	2.83
Teacher presence	2.67	3.00
Listening	2.83	3.33
Fielding and responding to questions	2.50	2.83

Enjia achieved higher scores in almost every item on the evaluation list. This progress was consistently shown for most of the other participants who took the test twice with the exception

of Haidong and Shengrong whose progress was much slower and will be discussed separately. Of course, it must be acknowledged since different evaluators conducted these evaluations at different times, there might be subjectivity in scoring. The evaluators' language backgrounds, their exposure to international speakers, their understanding of the issue of ESL, and their familiarity with both the concepts underlying the test as well as the basic principles of teaching are factors that might influence the evaluation results. In spite of that, I would argue that the scores faithfully reflected the progress of the participants in general and therefore should be considered as valid evidence for their progress. This progress can be supported independently through the SFL analysis that follows later in this chapter.

Participants also reported progress with their listening as they continued their socialization in this academic community:

> Sue: Do you think that situation improved the longer you are here?
> Enjia: Yes. Gradually. After listening to different accents for a while, things are becoming much better. (Enjia, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

> Gaomin: I think I improved a lot in understanding lectures. Listening is improved. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 1, June 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

Although all the participants mentioned that their listening comprehension improved as they continued their discourse socialization in the academic community, it is interesting to note that some of their listening comprehension problems could be attributed to the diversity of international students the participants encountered. Since "Standard English", which refers to British English (and American English in more recent years), is most commonly taught on the Chinese mainland, these participants found that they had difficulty understanding "non-standard"

pronunciation—when they were interacting with diverse students with different accents. This was particularly the case for Haidong and Shengrong who were accustomed only to British English. This finding has important implications both for English as foreign language and ESL curriculum and instruction. Both foreign language and ESL curriculum should take into consideration integrating all kinds of accents into listening practice, particularly in today's world where English is becoming a lingua franca and it is frequently used for communication between nonnative English speakers.

5.2.6. Case Differences

While most participants (Buwei, Enjia, Anning, Dailin particularly) made rapid progress in their academic discourse socialization progress, it is clear that there are differences in the socialization processes. To demonstrate this difference, the following is a case-by-case discussion of Haidong, Shengrong and Changkai, students who made less rapid progress.

The first case is Haidong. Although it is true that Haidong made progress in terms of academic discourse development, it cannot be ignored that it took him much longer to achieve a level that would allow him to survive in the academic community. For instance, his scholarship required him to pass the OEPT and he only barely passed it on the fourth attempt one year after he joined his discourse community. Table 5.5 shows his performances in OEPT Section III from September 2007 to 2008.

Table 5.5 Haidong's OEPT Section III Individual Item Score Comparison

Haidong OEPT Section III	September 2007	December 2007
Organization	2.50	3.00
Relevance of content	2.67	3.00
Clarity	2.00	2.67
Interpersonal skills	1.83	2.83
Teacher presence	1.67	2.83
Listening	2.17	2.67
Fielding and responding to questions	2.17	3.00
Average for Section III	2.14	2.86

Haidong OEPT Section III	March 2008	September 2008
Organization and Clarity	2.83	3.00
Relevance of content	3.17	3.33
Teacher presence	2.67	2.67
Intelligibility	2.33	2.17
Language use	2.50	2.67
Listening	2.83	3.33
Interpersonal skills	2.67	2.83
Average for Section III	2.71	2.86

The scores shown here were the average of three independent evaluations from three evaluators on the student's performance. When the average scores are analyzed, it can be seen that from September 2007 to December 2007, Haidong made quite some progress. It should be also noted that there was no progress from December 2007 to March 2008; there was even a decrease in his the scores during this period. As I mentioned in the documents section, some changes were made to the items for evaluation around that time based on evaluator feedback of the rubric. The modified rubric added two categories: language use and intelligibility, while organization and clarity were combined into one category. These changes emphasized the linguistic part of the students' presentation, that is, the ability to use appropriate vocabulary and grammar to communicate. It seemed that Haidong was weak in this area, which partially might

explain why his score for Section III went down in March and then again rose in September. Besides that, with the exception of September 2007, there was not much improvement in his scores for this section (he scored 2.71, 2.86, and 2.86 respectively). However, as will be discussed in the SFL analysis of the texts, a closer examination of Haidong's texts of indicated that he was making progress over time although it was not very apparent in the numbers.

The second case is Shengrong who demonstrated the slowest progress among all the participants. Table 5.6 presents Shengrong's four OEPT test results over time.

Table 5.6 Shengrong's OEPT Section III Individual Item Score Comparison

Shengrong OEPT Section III	September 2007	December 2007
Organization	1.83	2.33
Relevance of content	2.33	2.17
Clarity	1.33	2.33
Interpersonal skills	1.33	2.17
Teacher presence	1.33	2.00
Listening	2.00	2.17
Fielding and responding to questions	1.67	2.17
Average for Section III	1.69	2.19

Shengrong OEPT Section III	March 2008	September2008
Organization and Clarity	2.50	2.17
Relevance of content	2.67	2.00
Teacher presence	2.00	2.33
Intelligibility	2.17	2.33
Language use	2.50	2.33
Listening	2.50	2.50
Interpersonal skills	2.17	2.50
Average for Section III	2.36	2.33

From the four detailed evaluations of Shengrong's oral English proficiency tests, we can see that he made some progress, especially in the first three-month period. His last two tests yielded

similar evaluations, confirming a lack of progress around that time. Along with numerical evidence of Shengrong's progress—or lack of progress—Shengrong's progress can also be seen from the written evaluations he received in his several OEPT tests. From his first OEPT test: one evaluator wrote that this person was

> "Much too quiet—mumbles, Big intelligibility problems. I have to work far too hard to understand this person: it is possible to understand him but it takes too much effort … This student needs to develop confidence in speaking English"

Another evaluator commented

> "Could not understand him at all, Volume was too low, pace was too slow, Pronunciation was very incomprehensible…No teacher presence."

Three months later when Shengrong took the test a second time, one evaluator commented:

> "NEEDS pronunciation work; Needs more confidence; Was very nervous, quiet but nice."

One year later, in his fourth OEPT test attempt, one evaluator wrote

> "Shengrong understands and comprehends very well but needs to improve his verbal communication and teacher presence. He has excellent content knowledge but will do well with courses that focus on verbal and nonverbal communication. " (Documents: OEPT evaluator comments)

As indicated both from the scores and the evaluators' comments, Shengrong was making some progress within a year. It must be pointed out, however, that this progress was so painfully slow that he was not able to meet the requirement of this host academic community by passing the required OEPT test and becoming a teaching assistant.

The third case is Changkai. He was not chosen as a key participant for this study because of data issues, particularly his video recordings were in such a poor quality, making it difficult to transcribe them for the functional linguistics analysis. Still, by analyzing other data available, such as tests results and interviews, it can be seen that Changkai still had many problems in his

presentations. His academic discourse socialization progress was also slow. He barely passed the test on his second attempt and even in his later presentations it was very clear from observation of the tapes that his language abilities still limited his performance and his interaction with his audience.

However, he did pass the OEPT on his second attempt—one quarter after he was here and he has been a teaching assistant in his department since. The current data shows Changkai was able to move along in spite of his low language proficiency. One possible reason was the structured assistance he received from his department, advisor and peers. A detailed discussion of this can be found in Chapter IV.

Among the nine participants, it seems that Haidong, Shengrong, both from the same department, and Changkai from another department were the three with the lowest language levels as evaluated by the OEPT tests. At this point, it seems that the structured assistance (as discussed in Chapter IV) Changkai received strongly supported him. He also actively sought opportunities to be socialized into this academic community through interaction with peers and his advisor. In contrast, Shengrong did not receive any assistance from his department and he did not take the opportunities that were offered to him such as the ESL classes. As a result of this slow language socialization progress, he experienced great difficulties surviving in this academic community.

5.3 Academic Discourse Socialization Progress: An SFL Approach

In the previous section, Chinese graduate students' language difficulties and challenges were examined. While it is important to explore the participants' problems, it is equally

important to explore the students' progress over time. In this section, the participants' progress (or lack thereof) as reflected in their oral texts over time is demonstrated by addressing my fourth research question: How over time language socialization results in student progress, if any, in their L2 during their socialization into the academic discourse communities that they wish to be part of? The SFL approach was adapted as the analysis tool (Schleppegrell, 2004).

Table 5.7 Adapted from Schleppegrell (2004) Grammar and Context of Situation

Contextual Variable	Linguistic Realization
Field (presenting ideas)	Noun phrases/nominal groups, Verbs, Prepositional phrases, adverbial adjuncts, and other resources, etc Resources for marking logical relationship
Tenor (taking a stance)	Mood (statements, questions, demands) Modality (Modal verbs and adverbs) Other resources for evaluative and attitudinal meaning: pronouns
Mode (structuring a text)	Cohesive devices, including conjunctions and connectors Spoken versus Written

As discussed in Chapter II, Schleppegrell (2004) argued that the SFL approach "enables us to see the ways that language, as a semiotic tool, interacts with social contexts in making meaning" (p.18). "It offers, therefore, a theoretically coherent means of describing how and why language varies in relation both to groups of users and to uses in social context" (ibid). SFL is used to analyze oral or written texts from 3 contextual variables: field, tenor and mode. In Schleppegrell's discussion on the language of schooling, she applied the SFL approach mainly to written texts of school language though she did discuss briefly oral language such as "sharing time" (p.33).

The SFL approach was adopted in this study because this approach provides a potentially effective tool to analyze the linguistic productions of the oral presentations. It was adapted from the original model from Schleppegrell (2004) because this model was mainly used to discuss written language, though Schleppegrell did mention some characteristics of oral language, such as intonation, could be included in tenor. When applied to oral presentations, field refers to what is being talked about between the presenter and the audience. It can be analyzed through how the presenter uses the nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions etc to convey the content of the presentations and how logical relationships are elaborated in a way that is clear for the audience. Tenor refers to the relationship between the speakers. In oral presentations, the relationship is between the presenter and the audience. What language resources are used to establish and maintain the relationship between the presenter and the audience? These can be analyzed as well in terms of tenor. According to Schleppegrell (2004), “mood is a major source for establishing tenor.” (p.58) Mood choices (declarative, interrogative or imperative) can reflect the relationships between the speaker and listener. Other sources for establishing tenor include modality (modal verbs or modal adjuncts) as well as other sources such as pronouns. Mode refers to the textual resources used for communication purposes. Different modes require different ways of presenting and organizing a text. For instance, one uses different modes when writing a journal article or speaking to a friend on the phone; each requires making different linguistic choices and text organization. The linguistic resources that realize mode include cohesive devices, clause-combining strategies, and thematic organization (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Schleppegrell, 2004). Making oral presentations not only involves precise vocabulary and

accurate pronunciation, there are many other progress indicators that the participants failed to mention in their interviews but nonetheless showed in their oral productions data over time. The SFL approach can break down oral presentations into meaningful units for analysis. Therefore, it provides a valuable analytical tool for oral presentation texts.

5.3.1 Discourse Socialization in Terms of Field

5.3.1.1 Lexical Choices

In presentations, it is very important that the presenters convey their meanings by choosing the precise, specialized lexis. In the first part of this chapter, this issue was briefly discussed under the vocabulary section (5.2.1). The participants were found to have made errors with their lexical choices, which weakened their communicative competence in presentations. This is shown in the following examples:

1. The purpose of this course is about tell you the rules of *chemical* and measurement (Dailin, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)
2. The characteristics is that the difference between the *successful* terms is a constant. (Enjia, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)
3. So, there are connections between each other so they can work together so they can *cooperation*. (Feng, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)
4. Here is the matrix. Then I will talk about the things we want to do today. First the rule to add matrix…Third one is the transport. …*Transport/ transportation*? *Transport*! (Buwei, Documents: December 2006 OEPT)

From the participants' oral texts produced earlier, it can be seen that they still had many problems with their language use. As illustrated in the above examples, many of them still used incorrect words or word forms in their presentations. At the same time, it can also be seen that for most participants, the incorrect use of vocabulary abated as they continued their socialization

into the community. Data indicated improvement of vocabulary use over time. For instance, when examining Haidong's presentations over time, there was clear progress in this area:

1. Before Newton, a lot of scientists has do a lot a lot of research to summarize the motion of a …of a object. So they tried a lot Newton summarize their work and then Newton ***got*** his law. (Haidong, Documents: September 2007 OEPT)
2. So I think everyone has heard the story of Newton's the law… how he ***discovered*** the law of universal gravitation. It is after he think about it, he ***get*** Newton's law, which is… which is published in 1687. (Haidong, Documents: December 2007 OEPT)
3. So first, I would like to, I would like to go back to talk about some history, about the ***discovery*** of universal gravitation so, so Newton, Newton is …begin to think about this question so he ***discovered*** the Newton's law of universal gravitation. (Haidong, Documents: March 2008 OEPT)
4. And Newton ***found*** this law about 300 years ago. And before we start I'd like to talk about how Newton ***discovered*** this law. And this law is kind of upset to us. Why Newton ***discovered*** it? (Haidong, Documents: September 2008 OEPT)

When discussing Newton's law of universal gravitation in his OEPT presentations, Haidong changed his lexical choices over time. In September 2007, Haidong stated that Newton *"got"* his law. In December 2007, Haidong started to use the word "discover" but then he switched back to "*get*". In the March 2008 presentation, it seemed that he made more progress by using the noun form "discovery" and later used the verb "*discovered*". The first thing we notice is the degree of formality of these two words. "Get" should be more proper in daily conversations. For academic discussions, "discover" is more appropriate and in this case, it is also more precisely described what happened. In the September 2008, Haidong used the words "found" and "discovered" again indicating his sense of vocabulary choice as appropriate for the academic presentation.

There are other cases even though I do not have enough direct comparative episodes of the participants' oral texts over time because they talked about different topics for their oral

presentations; it appeared that some participants were ready to use technical terms more freely in their presentations. They mentioned this in their interviews:

> Gaomin: At the beginning there were so many technical terms I needed to learn, I probably knew them in Chinese but I didn't know their English names. Now sometimes, it is difficult for me to discuss some of the terms in Chinese because I learned them in English and don't know the Chinese names for them…When we were in China when we heard some returnees from overseas mixed English in their Chinese discussion, we thought they were showing off their language, maybe not (laughing)…It was just easier. It's very interesting. (Changkai and Gaomin, Interview 2, October 2008) [Translated from Chinese]

For some participants, their data also seemed to indicate progress in lexis use, for instance, Feng. At his earlier OEPT presentation, he may have understood the "field"; however, he was very much limited by the lexis at his disposal. That is, his understanding of the situation might have been appropriate but it was another issue expressing himself with lexical resources in the "expected" and appropriate ways in the target academic community. When being asked what plagiarism meant in the OEPT, Feng answered:

> "You mean plagiarism? Plagiarism is about academic integrity. You put other …you put… it's like you steal others, it's about knowledge without others' know, from others. So it's kind of steal things, it's not steal in real life so you call it plagiarism in your class. So …" (Feng, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)

It is clear that Feng understood (or at least partially) that plagiarism is related to academic dishonesty: you use another person's work without giving the author credit. However, he did not have the lexical resources to express his ideas clearly and concisely. In a different classroom presentation, after more than one year here in the American academic community, Feng was discussing his research progress with his advisors and his lab mates:

> "After we already reconstruct the …chromosome, since we want to calculate the one D and three D distance, we can …we can first map the genes on the chromosome then we calculate the distance between the cells listed in the table and

> we can also map each genes on the chromosome. “ (Feng, Document: May 2008 Lab Report)

Compared to the difficulties in his OEPT testing, Feng seemed to make quite some progress in using specialized vocabulary to express his ideas.

Other participants were also recorded using such highly specialized vocabulary, particularly technical terms in their classroom presentations. For instance, in the following excerpts, Anning was making a presentation for a course she took on the use of HRC (Hydrogen Release Compounds) enhanced biodegradation.

> Similar to [the previous presenter] like…It’s also kind of enhanced bioremediation of chlorinated solvent but mine is kind of, er, the, the former step of hers, since mine is really about TCE and PCE and [unclear] HRC enhanced biodegradation. HRC can be used as a slow electron release donor to enhance natural biological destruction of chlorinated solvents. Usually, like acid, ammonia chloride, and potassium, other chemicals could be used… (Anning, Documents: June 2008 Class Presentation)

And Gaomin were discussing an article in her research area:

> In this paper the author described the tips of the carbonates tubes are kept by the metal catalyst and often with amorphous carbon coatings, which might deride the CNT properties. So the modification of the surface is very important to get a good signal for the CNT array electrons. And this paper used the tipped opening and purification to get rid of the metal impurities and the amorphous carbon inherent to the carbonates tubes. (Gaomin, Documents: May 2008 Class Presentation)

As discussed in the table in Section 5.3, the contextual variable “field” can be linguistically realized by lexis choices such as the noun phrases, verbs, and adverbs. The above samples illustrated the lexis choices that the presenters made in their presentations at different times. The presenters used more academically appropriate lexis as they continued their discourse socialization in their disciplines.

5.3.1.2 Logical Relationships: Elaboration on the Content

Besides the more accurate choice of lexis in their presentations, the presenters were making progress in elaborating their ideas. That is, most of the participants were able to express more logically sound relationships about the ideas under discussion. The ability to develop logical relationships is also an element of "field". Table 5.8 is one example of Haidong's progress in his use of linguistic resources to develop and elaborate the logical relationships between concepts he wanted to convey.

Table 5.8 Haidong's OEPT Section III Content Elaboration Comparison

December 2007 OEPT	March 2008 OEPT	September 2008 OEPT
So, and Newton become… started to think about. So, why would the apple fall off. So, after he think about it, he get Newton's law, which is, which is published in 1687.	So Newton become to think about so why the apple fall off. So, if that the force, that … mmm, as soon as the force were attracting between the earth and the moon,,,, So, Newton… Newton begin to think about this question… So, he discovered the Newton's law of universal gravitation.	He started to think about why is the apple fall off and so he found later that it's because the gravitation the earth applies to the apple. So there was…there is a force between the apple and the earth. And later, Newton found that this force can be a more general one. So, he found that every subject, every subject with masses, they would attract each other by a force. So, the forces that the earth applied to the apple is just, uh, an example of the universal gravitation.

Haidong's ability to develop the logical relationships over time here could be approached from the discourse level. At the discourse level, in this explanation about how Newton

discovered the law of universal gravitation from December 2007 to September 2008, what Haidong did can be divided into two parts: he described what happened and then he drew a conclusion. In the December 2007 presentation, there is the causal relationship between the two parts on the topic, “Newton started to think about why would the apple fall off”; as a result, “he get Newton’s law”, the two parts were connected by a single word marker “so”. In March 2008, there was some new content added to this description, “if that force that…mmm as soon as the force were attracting between the earth and the moon”. It is very difficult to understand what Haidong was trying to explain. In his interview, he mentioned that he tried to illustrate the law of universal gravitation by mentioning the force between the earth and the moon. In spite of this unsuccessful attempt, it still demonstrated Haidong’s efforts and his potential in terms of progress. In September 2008, he added a lot more new content to this description portion. He even further developed an outcome paragraph after he drew a conclusion, thus making the explanation more elaborate.

Besides the use of connectors to achieve discourse cohesion, we also notice that the words Haidong used changed along the way. In the September 2008 text, he used words such as “gravitation, applied, subject, masses, attract, forces” none of which appeared in his December 2007 test. As a result of his ability to use academic lexis and language in general in a more sophisticated way combined with his logical reasoning, the text he produced in September 2008 was more academically appropriate. The following excerpt clearly demonstrates Haidong’s progress in developing his ideas more logically.

Table 5.9 Haidong's OEPT Section III Logical Development Comparison

September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT
I think, I think what I am going to talk about is Newton's three laws of motion. Yeah, they're very, very famous. Very important in physics. What I am going to begin is the first law of Newton's… yeah	[Newton's law of universal gravitation] is a very important law in mechanic physics, so today I am going to introduce you what is Newton's law of the universal gravitation and what are the applications of it.

In September 2007 he started with "I think, I think", which functioned as fillers but which weakened his authority as a knowledgeable person on this subject. He continued with "Yeah, they are very, very famous. Very important in physics". "Yeah" is used as a transition to his next idea. Also note that this sentence sounded very casual and could be revised more to make it more academic. Then he continued without any logical connectors and introduced a new topic: Newton's first law and then another filler.

In comparison, in December 2007, a modifier "mechanic" was added before the noun "physics", which made the topic more specific. There was also a more explicit logical connection between the two clauses: "the law is very important in mechanic physics and today I am going to introduce you the topic." He followed that with a brief overview of his talk. In the second presentation, he used the phrase "introduce you" which might still sound strange but I argue that it is a positive indicator that he is learning new ways of language use and he is on his way to learning it appropriately. Understandably he is not there yet. This example will also be used in the 5.3.3 Mode Section because logical relationship and the textual resources are very tightly related.

Shengrong also demonstrated a similar process of developing a more logical relationship in

terms of field as indicated both by the lexical choices and also in how he elaborated his ideas. This excerpt is the opening part of the Shengrong's Section III for the OEPT tests which he took six times (his first four were included because the last two were taken after the data collection had ceased).

Table 5.10 Shengrong's OEPT Section III Content Elaboration Comparison

September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT	March 2008 OEPT	September 2008 OEPT
We talk about, er, er, Coulomb's law, er, er. You probably already know the relation between electronic charges is/(as) described by Coulomb's law, er… Q: Could you say that term again? A: Coulomb's law	The purpose of this class is to introduce the methods of Newton's law… laws to describe the motion of bodies.	Now I would like to introduce the law which forms the basis of classic mechanics. The central problem of mechanics is this….	Today I would like to discuss the Newton's law, which formed basis for classic mechanics. Newton's law described the relationship between force acting on a particle and motion of the particle. Er, so let's start, start off by Newton's first law, em….

In his first presentation, Shengrong was supposed to present a term or concept from his field. When he begin with "we talked about Coulomb's law", it was not clear what he was going to discuss for this section. He also mumbled this term so unclearly that the evaluators failed to catch the name of the term, as indicated in the question that followed. In his second presentation, Shengrong was a little bit more focused by using the phrase "the purpose of this class is to…" although what followed was still not very clear. In the third presentation, Shengrong used the phrase, "Now I would like to introduce ..." which made the audience feel he was going to introduce something, which he did. Furthermore, he used a relative clause to define the term he

was going to discuss. Unfortunately, we still did not know what law it might be. He did not mention the name of the law—which should be his focus term. In September 2008, one year after joining the academic community, he opened his presentation with, “Today I would like to discuss the Newton’s law, which formed basis for classic mechanics”. Not only did he include the most important elements in this sentence—the key term he was going to discuss—he was also able to connect the two parts into a more cohesive piece by using the “which” relative clause. His purpose was to discuss something and this time we knew very specifically what that “something” was and the relative clause again emphasized the importance of the term.

For other participants who made presentations on different topics over the data collection period, it was more difficult to make comparisons to examine their progress in terms of lexis use and logical relationships. Still, we can see some development particularly in the sense of logical relationship as shown by Feng’s examples:

> So, we can simply define the system as a group of components work together to in order to some specified purpose. Purpose for action is the basic characteristics of the system. System has for that purpose for the function, in order to achieve this purpose so system has function. So, we can give an example about system. The University of X is also a system. They have different colleges, they have hospital, they have health service such as… a lot of things, they just work together do some purpose. One, maybe you know, one purpose is to give our admission, give the people in X (university) the health care or do research for the nation they are the purpose of the university system. (Feng, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)

This first example was produced shortly after Feng came to the United States, his first visit of this country. In this excerpt, Feng was talking about the definitions and characteristics of system and he gave an example to illustrate his point. While the audience could figure out his logical reasoning with some efforts, the textual resources he used were ineffective even confusing:

> Purpose for action is the basic characteristics of the system. System has for ***that*** purpose for the function, in order to achieve this purpose so system has function. So, we can give an example about system. The University of X is ***also*** a system. (Feng, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)

To further explain the characteristics of the system, Feng attempted to say that systems have functions. Yet it was unclear what the word "that" meant. The following sentence, "in order to achieve this purpose so system has function" is also confusing since it is unclear what "this" refers to. After that Feng tried to explain the term using an example. Yet he then said "the University of X is *also* a system" as if he just talked about something else that was a system and now he was talking about another.

The second example listed below was almost two years after, and Feng was presenting to his advisor and fellow students:

> So, the hypothesis of our research is the protein and protein interaction have clear relationship with special genome structure which can used to study mechanical of gene product function or to predict unknown interactions. So, if we can find the protein and protein interactions are related to the genes which produced this protein and their organization on the genomes chromosomes, we can… we can we can predict the unknown interaction by looking at the genes on the chromosome. And it's…at least it can be a very useful predictor power for us to predict the interaction. (Feng, Documents: May 2008 Lab Report)

The logical relationship is clearer. Feng started with the hypothesis and then used an "if" clause followed by the possible results that satisfied the "if" condition. He then continued to argue the usefulness of this relationship. According to Schleppegrell (2004), the ability to develop the logical relationship is an important index of students' ability to use the language in terms of field. Therefore, Feng's oral presentations at different times demonstrated an increasing linguistic sophistication in what was being talked about (field), as a result of his language socialization into the academic community.

5.3.2 Discourse Socialization in Terms of Tenor

As discussed in the literature review section, SFL is a theory that identifies the importance of language use in context. Text and context are key concepts in SFL in relation to the three concepts: field, tenor, and mode. The above section discussed field. In the following, tenor, which refers to the interactive relationship between the presenter and the audience, is discussed. According to Schleppegrell (2004)

> "Tenor is realized in the interpersonal grammatical choices such as mood, (whether statements, questions, or demands), modal verbs and adverbs (e.g., should, could, may, probably, certainly, etc.), intonation (in speech), and other resources for attitudinal meaning that are found through out the grammar" (p.47).

Therefore, in the following section, I discuss the participants' discourse socialization in terms of tenor as reflected in the modal verbs and adverbs, mood (statements, questions or demands) as well as pronoun use.

5.3.2.1 Modality

According to Schleppegrell (2004), modality (including modal verbs and adverbs) can be used as a resource to express the speaker's or writer's stance and attitude. It enables "the expression of degrees of probability, certainty, necessity, and other meanings" (p.60). In this way, the proper use of these modal verbs and adverbs helps the speaker or writer to express his or her attitude on the issues under discussion and maintain a relationship with the audience. However, if used improperly, it can work against the speaker/writer as the following instance indicates:

Q: Do I need the book in class?
A: Yes, *maybe* you can study in library, *maybe*, in library there have some books
Q: If I have a 4th edition of the book, not the 5th edition, is that ok?
A: *Maybe* it's ok. I think there is something in fourth edition they have the 5th edition so if you are not care of the mistake, you can take the book with you. It's

ok. I think most of them are the same…
Q: What days of the week is this class?
A: What dates of the class is…?
Q: What days? Monday or Tuesday?
A: You can have a …*maybe* it's Monday and Thursday.
(Feng, Documents: September 2006 OEPT)

For the purpose of this test, Feng was supposed to role-play an instructor on the first day of the class; the evaluators who asked questions role-played undergraduate students. From these interactions, we are able to see that the poor quality of the answers from the "instructor" would confuse the audience and have a negative impact on his image as a potential instructor. Particularly, Feng's use of "maybe" put him in a very disadvantageous situation and weakened his authority and preparedness as an instructor because instructors are expected to know their teaching materials well and give high quality instruction and precise information. Therefore, the inappropriate use of attitudinal adverbs like "maybe" contributed to weakening the position of the instructor, which meant Feng had not mastered the appropriate discourse in a classroom setting.

Feng also used adverbs like "maybe" to express his attitudes in his lab reports in his later presentations. Here we found he used it more appropriately and together with other adverbs such as "obvious" and adjectives like "possible":

> So as we can see from this figure, it is ***obvious*** there are… some parts of the chromosome are interacting much more often than any other area. In this…I think one ***possible*** explanation will be because the genes are usually clustered in the same area, ***maybe*** they also are controlled the same transcription factor… by one… (Feng, Documents: May 2008, lab report)

Here he was making a presentation in his discipline. He used "maybe" again; yet from the context we can see that he was making assumptions based on the research data he had. Therefore

it was proper reasoning and it did not create problems for him.

A similar situation also happened to another participant. Table 5.11 shows two excerpts from Enjia, in her September 2006 OEPT testing and her December 2006 OEPT testing.

Table 5.11 Enjia's OEPT Section II Use of Modality Comparison

September 2006 OEPT	December 2006 OEPT
First, we will talk about the textbook. We will use the book "*How to be an effective undergraduate student."* And it's written by Smith in 2004 …*maybe* it's new book.	The first one is the textbook. We will use the text the textbook "*How to be an effective undergraduate student"* that written by Smith. You can buy this either in the bookstore or on the website. It is all ok.

When Enjia took the test the first time in September 2006, she was nervous and this was reflected in her presentation discourse. Her use of adverbial words like "maybe" negatively affected her image as an instructor in the initial test. Three months later when she was discussing the same topic, she was able to offer more information (where to buy this book) and she sounded more confident as an instructor.

5.3.2.2 Mood: Questions

Grammatical choices, argued Schleppegrell (2004), such as mood (statements, questions, or demands) can also reflect the interpersonal relationships. The data indicated that as the participants continued their discourse socialization, they were learning to use more mood resources to establish and maintain a relationship with the audience. The first under discussion in the following is one aspect of mood: questions.

Observations of the tape from Haidong's first presentation indicated that he talked only about what he wanted to talk about without asking any questions (other than briefly answer the

questions being asked). Three months later, at the end of his presentation, he asked "So, any questions about it?" He seemed to become more aware of the presence of the audience and the expected ways of doing presentations: checking with the audience about what he talked about. In a third presentation, Haidong was able to produce "as to your question…". By the time of the fourth presentation, he asked two questions and had many more interactions with the evaluators by answering questions.

For another participant, Enjia, who took OEPT test twice, there were changes in how she kept her audience involved by asking questions in terms of numbers, types and effectiveness. In her first presentation sample in September 2006 OEPT testing, she asked four questions: one was a rhetoric question ("what's next?"); the three other related to comprehension checks ("do you understand?"). In her December 2006 OEPT presentation sample, Enjia started with, "First *let's think about a question*: If you are late for school, what do you think is the most possible reason for your late for school?" The phrase "let's think about a question" in December called for the audience's attention and kept the audience engaged. In the rest of her presentation, she also asked many other questions. The following are some examples: "Would you tell me which is the most possible reason?"; "Could you tell me which is the most possible reason for being late and which is the least possible?"; "Which is the second?"; "Which is the third?" etc. The frequent use of questions was very effective in engaging the audience. Also, the questions made it easier for the audience to gradually take in the concept by using an example that everybody could relate to. Engaging the audience was partially realized through her appropriate use of questions. Therefore, Enjia's second presentation became much more effective. Other participants, particularly those

who made faster progress, such as Anning and Dailin, also used this strategy frequently in their presentations to increase their interaction with audience:

> Today my topic is fossil types. Like the other two ladies, I also have questions: ok who knows dinosaur? Ok, you all know dinosaur? Er? Who has seen a real dinosaur? You have seen a dinosaur? On the movie? (Anning, Documents: November 2007 Oral Presentation Skills Class)

> Before beginning, I want to ask you a question how many of you have heard of atom composition? No one? (Dailin, Documents: December 2006 OEPT)

Questions are considered an important part of the oral presentations. As Meyers and Holt (2002) discussed, it is an important technique for the presenters to engage the audience and help make the points clear or more interesting. This technique was explicitly taught to the students in the ESL presentation skills class. In spite of individual differences, there were indications that the participants learned to integrate the question technique in their presentations. As a result of the language socialization, particularly the explicit socialization (teaching) in ESL classes or professional seminars, the participants demonstrated appropriate language use—here the use of questions to maintain interpersonal relationships (tenor).

5.3.2.3 Other Resources: Pronoun Use

Pronoun use can also establish the relationship between the relevant parties in a communicative event. Biber (1988) found that second person pronoun use is one linguistic feature of oral language that contributes to the overall communicative efficacy. This is particularly true when it comes to the oral presentations where the audience is part of the interaction and therefore the appropriate use of pronouns, especially the use of second person pronouns “you, your” and first person plural pronouns “we, us”, helps create a harmonious

relationship between the audience and the presenter.

Table 5.12 contains excerpts taken from Enjia's OEPT, Section II where she was required to role-play an instructor on her first day of class.

Table 5.12 Enjia's OEPT Section II Pronoun Use Comparison

September, 2006 OEPT	December, 2006 OEPT
I want to introduce the undergraduate study course policy and procedures.	Good afternoon everybody! This is *my* first class of this course. *I* will be *your* instructor for this quarter and for the course introduction to undergraduate studies. *I* am very glad to see *you* and *I* hope *we* have happy time for this course in this quarter. Next *I* will say several things important to *our* course. *You* don't need to worry about the content of what *I* say. *I* will put all the content on *my* website so if *you* don't listen clearly *you* can check it on the website.

If we pay attention to the use of pronouns, we find that in September, there is only one sentence with "I", while three months later, in December, she used "I" six times for the same task. What makes these two texts different, among other things, is that Enjia increased interaction with her audience by using more pronouns: she used "you" four times and "your" once. By using more pronouns, particularly increasing use of "you" and "your", she created a better sense of the interactive nature of speaking, making it more relevant to the audience. More importantly, she also used "we" and "our" which further created inclusiveness for the audience.

Another similar example in the change of pronoun use over time can be found from another participant, Haidong. A closer examination of the texts Haidong produced at the following four different times revealed differences. Table 5.13 shows excerpts from Section III of the OEPT in

which Haidong talked about the Newton's Law (September 2007) and Newton's law of universal gravitation. (December 2007, March 2008 and September 2008).

Table 5.13 Haidong's OEPT Section III Pronoun Use Comparison

September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT	March 2008 OEPT	September 2008 OEPT
So, yeah, what I am going to talk about today is Newton's law.	So, my topic today is about Newton's law of universal gravitation.	Hi! So today I am going to teach you the Newton's law of universal gravitation.	In this course, we are going to talk about Newton's law of universal gravitation.

Table 5.13 illustrates how Haidong started his presentations. If we pay attention to the pronoun use in these presentations across time we can easily ascertain one major difference. In the first three presentations he used "what *I* am going to talk about" (September 2007), "*my* topic today" (December 2007) to "*I* am going to teach *you*" (March 2008) while, in contrast, in the fourth presentation, he used "*we* are going to talk about"(September 2008). It is interesting to note that he shifted his focus to what he was going to do to in an attempt to involve the audience ("teach you") and then in the last excerpt he used "we". The change of the pronoun from first person singular to the first person plural makes a great difference in involving audience. Besides that, in the September 2007 presentation, the tone was very casual due to his use of "So, yeah" which made it unprofessional. It provided insufficient minimal information on the topic he was going to deliver. In the December 2007 test, he presented in a more professional way by deleting words like "yeah". Haidong's pronoun use change over time indicated a better sense of audience involvement, which, according to Meyers and Holt (2002), increases the possibility of successful communications between presenters and the audience.

Being interested by the initial analysis of increasing pronoun use, I ran a frequency of his pronoun use across the four sessions; the results are presented in Table 5.14. The sessions are comparable because Haidong is performing the task by talking about the same or closely related topics.

Table 5.14 Haidong's OEPT Section III General Pronoun Use Comparison

Pronouns	September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT	March 2008 OEPT	September2 008 OEPT
You/your	9	1	4 (1 your)	14(1 your)
We/us/our	3	8	7	10
I/me/my	11	3	5	6
Let's			1	3
Everybody/ everyone	1	1		

In September 2007, Haidong used "I/me/my" 11 times, "you/your" nine times and "we/us/our" three times. In comparison, by September 2008, Haidong decreased his use of "I/me/my" to six times and increased the use of "you/your". He particularly increased the use of "we/us/our". By using increasing the number of pronouns, and in particular "you" and "we", he was more successful in fostering a higher level of interaction and also sense of community therefore making the audience feel like part of the discussion. The use of "let's", which urged the audience to align with him, also increased the audience's involvement with the presentation. Therefore, it seemed that Haidong was becoming more effective in establishing a better relationship—establishing a tenor that worked positively to increase the effectiveness of the presentations.

In addition to modality and mood, therefore, pronoun use could also affect the relationship

between the audience and the presenters. The proper use of pronouns can enhance the relationship between the speaker/writer and listener/reader. Besides that, there are also other resources for attitudinal meaning, as shown in Table 5.15 from Dailin's data:

Table 5.15 Dailin's OEPT Section II Tenor Comparison

September 2006 OEPT	December 2006 OEPT
I will tell you please be honest in this class because U… University of X has student code of conduct. We do not permit plagiarism and cheating. Any plagiarist and cheated will be punished serious, so please remember don't misduct… misconduct	Next I will talk about the academic integrity. And I believe all of you are good students and you will have…good conduct in your study. However, I want to emphasize that cheating and plagiarism are not acceptable. If you cheat or plagiarize you will be punished so…

In both excerpts, Dailin was talking about the student code of conduct; yet, we notice the change between her first presentation of this material and her second three months later. As a result, this change led to a different interpersonal relationship. In September she started with "I will tell you" which sounds strange and potentially creates a sense of dissonance with the students because this has a tone of too much authority. In comparison, in December, the phrase "next I will talk about" sounded much more appropriate and she used also the word "next" which, although very simple, functioned as an important transition in topics, thus giving the audience time to prepare for what she was going to cover next. There are also other interaction differences between her first presentation and the second one. In her first presentation, she used "please" twice in a way to soften the imperative sentences "be honest in this class" and "remember don't

misconduct". In her second presentation, she tried to seek common ground by acknowledging and expecting that the students would be good students and they would not "misconduct". After that, she used the word "however" to make a transition and she also stressed her main point by using "I do want to emphasize" thus using a verbal attention-getting device to draw the audience's attention to the importance of the information here. She also followed up with further elaboration that if you are guilty of misconduct, you will face the consequences, thus making it clear and yet not threatening her audience.

In Table 5.15, she delivered the same content; however, how she presented the material made a big difference. Another aspect of her first presentation, she had difficulties pronouncing the word "plagiarism" (Observations) and she was apparently not familiar with the word misconduct as indicated in the transcript. Her second presentation was more natural and fluent. Progress in terms of tenor was evident from these two comparable excerpts tracing Dailin's continued language socialization.

5.3.3 Discourse Socialization in Terms of Mode

The previous two sections discussed the participants' discourse socialization process in terms of field and tenor. In this section, the focus will be on how the participants learned to use the textual resources—mode—in the socialization process. The first section presents the participants' discourse progress in learning the structure of a presentation and the second part examines participants' progress in the use of cohesive devices to create a cohesive text. In addition, I will discuss another aspect of mode: participants' oral versus written language features in their oral presentations.

5.3.3.1 Global Structure of a Presentation

In Chapter IV, I argued that oral presentation is not a universal phenomenon around the world; instead it is a cultural activity that is associated with the academic culture of the U.S. academic community. Some researchers regard oral presentations as a genre (e.g., Biber, 1988; Chanock, 2005). Therefore, Chinese students should be socialized into the culture of this specific activity—as with other culture activities—and learn the language or discourse that is considered appropriate by the target audience. Researchers such as Tardy and Swales (2008) argue the importance of cultural factors of genres afforded by the SFL perspective:

> Systemic-functional linguistics views genres as structured in certain ways because the structure serves the social goals of the texts; in other words, the organization is understood as revealing the text's purpose (Martin, 1993) and the social world that is projected in the text (Hyland, 2000). (p.569)

Two points are made here: the first is "genres are structured in certain ways" which is reflected in the textual structure of the text. The second point is "the structure serves the social goals of the texts" which is the social function of the texts because texts are used for communication, to achieve social purposes, and these are often culturally specific. The relevance for oral presentations as examined in this study therefore is also two-fold. The first is how the participants learn the structure as expected in certain contexts: whether it is in a class situation where students are doing a presentation to demonstrate that he or she has learned the required content or working as a teaching assistant who introduces the course policies and procedures on the first day of class. The presentations are supposed to be organized in certain ways that are acceptable and easy to follow for the particular audience. The second is how the participants' texts achieve their social purpose, because, as argued above, particular genres reflect social

practices of certain communities. Different grammatical choices result in texts that are valued differently in the target community. Therefore, for Chinese students, learning to make oral presentations in the U. S. academic community is a socialization process: the newcomers not only need to learn the presentation structure as expected to realize certain social purposes (culture) but also need to learn the discourse for it (language).

In the following section, some of the oral presentation structures that L2 Chinese students need to follow to make their presentations appropriate are discussed: how to start, how to organize the materials in a way that is logical for the target audience, and how to conclude.

How to Start a Presentation. It seems that most of the participants developed a sense of how to start an oral presentation with a greeting and a brief introduction of the presentation as a result of discourse socialization. Table 5.16 is from Enjia, who took OEPT tests twice three months apart, in which she role-played an instructor on the first day of class.

Table 5.16 Enjia's OEPT Section II Opening Comparison

September 2006 OEPT	December 2006 OEPT
I want to introduce the undergraduate study course policy and procedures.	Good afternoon everybody! This is my first class of this course. I will be your instructor for this quarter and for the course introduction to undergraduate studies. I am very glad to see you and I hope we have happy time for this course in this quarter. Next I will say several things important to our course. You don't need to worry about the content of what I say I will put all the content on my website so if you don't listen clearly you can check it on the website.

The first excerpt presented here dates from shortly after Enjia arrived in the United States. We notice that in her first presentation, she opened by simply saying, “I want to…” which was very brief. In a way she was being direct, but at the same time, it sounded abrupt for an audience who might expect her to start with a greeting and self-introduction. They might also expect to see her intentions to establish rapport with the audience, which was what happened in December 2007. She began by greeting the audience and introducing herself. After that she also made an effort to establish rapport with the audience by saying that she was happy and hoped they would have a great time together. According to Meyers and Holt (2002), the first two or three minutes of a presentation are particularly important, so a good introduction will benefit the presenter substantially because there is only one chance to make a first impression twice. By opening her presentation in a more accepted way, she had a better chance to establish herself as a friendly and approachable instructor. Using the conventions of oral presentations, she developed a sense of the differences in and formalities associated with classroom setting presentations.

Haidong also demonstrated progress in how he opened his presentations after a year of language socialization in the host academic community as demonstrated in Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 Haidong’s OEPT Section III Opening Comparison

September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT	March 2008 OEPT	September 2008 OEPT
So, yeah, what I am going to talk about today is Newton’s law.	So my topic today is about Newton’s law of universal gravitation.	Hi! So today I am going to teach you the Newton’s law of universal gravitation.	In this course, we are going to talk about Newton’s law of universal gravitation.

In the September 2007 presentation, he started with “so” and “yeah” as fillers before he introduced his topic. This “so” persisted in December 2007 and March 2008 but it disappeared by September 2008. In the early presentations, the use of “So, yeah” made his opening very informal and casual. Later he seemed to develop a more professional way of dealing with it.

Other participants also demonstrated that they had developed a better sense of how to open a presentation, as indicated in Table 5.18 from Shengrong’s four OEPT tests over a period of one year.

Table 5.18 Shengrong’s OEPT Section III Opening Comparison

September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT	March 2008 OEPT	September 2008 OEPT
We talk about, er, er, Coulomb’s law. Er, er, you probably already know the relation between electronic charges, er, is (as) described by Coulomb’s law, er…	The purpose of this class is to introduce the methods of Newton’s law… laws to describe the motion of bodies.	Now I would like to introduce the law which forms the basis of classic mechanics.	Today I would like to discuss the Newton’s law, which formed basis for classic mechanics.

For the September 2007 presentation, Shengrong started with a term he would discuss. However, the incorrect, grammatical use of the phrase “we talk about” is confusing for the audience. The audience would either expect “we’ve talked about something and, therefore, we are going to talk about something else” or a direct “we are going to/we will talk about something”. It does not make any sense to use a present simple form with the verb “talk” here. Three months later, he started his presentation with “the purpose of this class is to introduce…” This was a great improvement—even without any greetings. In the other two presentations, it seemed that he had learned how to start his presentation using “Now I would like to introduce…” and “Today I

would like to discuss…" getting the audience ready for what is coming next and in ways that are more appropriate to the situation.

Presentation Body Organization. Besides developing a better sense of opening the presentation, data also seemed to indicate that the participants were making progress in the internal organization of smaller units of discourse; for instance, Table 19 documents such changes in Haidong's organization:

Table 5.19 Haidong's OEPT Section III Body Organization Comparison

September 2007 OEPT	December 2007 OEPT
I think, I think what I am going to talk about is Newton's 3 laws of motion. Yeah, they're very, very famous. Very important in physics. What I am going to begin is the first law of Newton's… yeah	[Newton's law of universal gravitation] is a very important law in mechanic physics, so today I am going to introduce you what is Newton's law of the universal gravitation and what are the applications of it.

In September Haidong emphasized the laws of motion as "very, very famous. Very important in physics." Then he introduced his topic. Despite a causal relationship between the two sentences, there were no connectors; he just put them together. In comparison, in December he followed the same thought, namely, he emphasized that it was a very important law in mechanic physics and he was going to introduce this law to them. In between, however, he added a connector "so" which made the passage more coherent. He was also using pronouns as in "it, law, Newton's law of the universal gravitation, it"; all of these cohesive devices helped to create a sense of cohesion in the text. Finally, by reducing words like "yeah" and adding modifiers such as "mechanic" before physics, he made it more academically appropriate.

Another example is from Anning who talked about fossils in two different settings. The first

one was from an ESL class in November 2007 and second was in the OEPT testing in December 2007.

> Ok. Three kinds of the fossils I introduced just now related directly to animals or plants or bacteria. But there are some other fossils. They are not part of the body but they are activities of the animals or plants. They are just preserved in rocks. For example, this is a crab [pointing at the PowerPoint pictures]: and shape one, second… that's his footprint, three, it was looking for food. Each… the next picture, this is an upper part of a beach, this "u" shape is sea worm. They just come out …Other are from sea animals or sea worms. (Anning, Documents: November 2007 Oral Presentation Skills Class)

> The fourth is trace fossil. They are not the… any part of the animals or plants but the activities of the animals. For example, their footprints, dinosaur footprints or a crab walked looking …it looked for food or leaving or rest …any activity (Anning, Documents: December 2007 OEPT)

In both examples, Anning was talking about one kind of fossil: trace fossil. Although Anning used more sentences to describe this kind of fossil in the first description, she did not even mention what kind of fossil she was talking about. In the second example, which was only about one month later, she was able to talk about the name of this kind of fossil and then provide an explanation. She may have used an inductive approach in the first example and a deductive approach in the second example. However, using the second approach made it easier for the audience to understand what she talked about. Therefore, learning to express "what to talk about" (field) using "textual resources" (mode) appropriately is important part of the discourse socialization process.

How to Conclude a Presentation. It also seems that some participants like Buwei, Anning and Enjia developed a more appropriate sense of presentation conclusions over time. The following are the excerpts from Buwei, who came to the United States in September 2007; he took OEPT

twice. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, because of the poor sound quality of his first OEPT video, I could not transcribe it. That is why I used another available video sample—a professional seminar presentation—which was videotaped in October 2007, a month after his first OEPT testing in September 2007.

Table 5.20 Buwei's Presentation Conclusion Comparison

October 2007 Seminar	December 2007 OEPT	May 2008 Class presentation
So that's what I want to talk about.	Any questions? No? Thank you very much.	*Here is the conclusion:* There is an advantage to playing World Series games on one's home field. … There is no significant difference between American League and National League if Yankees is not in the final. If Yankees is IN the final, the Yankees winning percentage is appropriately 60% while the opposite's is 40%.

If we read through the three presentation conclusions, we will see that in October 2007, Buwei stopped his presentations abruptly by saying "that's what I want to talk about". In December 2007, he ended by asking whether the audience had any questions and then thanked the audience. In the May 2008 classroom presentation, after his discussion, he had a clear conclusion, which was signaled clearly by "here is the conclusion". The conclusion was also more substantial because Buwei summarized the major points of the presentation in the conclusion. It seemed that as a result of the discourse socialization, his presentation also sounded more appropriate.

Another good example of a conclusion comes from Anning, who did her in-class presentation in June 2008, after nine months here in the United States.

> After all the examples I have, here are four conclusions: Initially there will be increases in total contamination especially, er... There are increase of VC and

> DCE. Secondly, some of the PCE and TCE are biodegraded… biodegraded to DCE, but some of them resulted to VC. The last page of the handout, that's also the [unclear], there are various chemical biodegradation pass ways. Third, here production concentration will increase if residual DNAPL is present since at…some …in some examples, the contaminant, the PCE and TCE concentrations are even larger than the concentration, so this means there are some DNAPL exists. (Fourth) Total destruction of the chlorinated ethane will proceed if HRC is not depleted. Yeah, maybe …. Half of that will be longer as they are degraded to DCE and VC. As Sherry just now dealt with this DCE and VC, and this may be the next step. [Pointing to the PowerPoint slides] References. Questions? (Anning, Documents: June 2008 Class Presentation)

Notice that Anning clearly stated her conclusions in this excerpt. She specified that she had four points in her conclusions making it easy to follow because she used words like "initially, secondly, third". For the final point in her conclusion, she failed to indicate with a connector but she clearly listed four entries on the PowerPoint (Documents, June 2008, Class Presentation). Therefore, even though she had hesitations, her conclusion was very effective. The conclusion was further strengthened when she tied her presentations to other presenters' topics and also related it back to her introduction, thus making the presentation complete. Finally, she also asked if there were questions from the audience thus signaling the end of her presentation.

The participants also used other strategies in their conclusions. For instance, Dailin concluded her presentation so that corresponded to what she discussed at the outset:

> (Introduction) Good afternoon, and for my presentation I want to ask you what kind of gift you would you choose for your family, lover and friends because Thanksgiving is approaching. …And Or (showing on PPT) are those very beautiful? They are hand-made soap and those handmade soap because they are created by you so they are original and they are very, very beautiful. So today I am glad to introduce how to make natural handmade soap.
>
> (Conclusion) And from this picture we can see, we can use very easy-find materials for our models, so after that we can make our own handmade soaps. I think they are very beautiful and attractive. If your friend get gifts like that, they will be very

> happy. That's the references and questions? (Dailin, Documents: November 2006 Oral Presentation Skills Class)

Dailin started by asking the audience what kind of gift they would like to choose and thus introduced her topic. She was also able to tie her introduction into her conclusion and again iterated her point that making hand-made soap was a great gift idea. At the end, she listed her references and asked for questions.

Though the progress illustrated by all participants seemed to strengthen their presentations, they still lacked some strategies in organizing the body of the presentation, for instance, transitions. Another issue is that although some participants seemed to be developing more substantial conclusions, some participants such as Chang, Haidong and Shengrong still had various problems. For instance, they did not know or did not conclude their presentations with linguistic markers. They presented minimal information in conclusion or, they could not finish within the designated time period, particularly in testing sessions. This was the case for three of Shengrong's four presentations. In other cases, if the participants were interrupted by questions before they had a chance to conclude, they would answer the questions and finish without signaling the end of their presentation.

To summarize this section, the data indicates that most of the participants developed a better sense of opening their presentations. However, they still needed to strengthen their body organization and the conclusion of their presentations. For conclusions in particular, some participants developed a sense of how to finish with some verbal signaling, but most of them just trailed away without a formal ending, very briefly signaled the end, or just ended abruptly without any signals.

This concludes the participants' progress in terms of the global structure of their oral presentations. In the next section, some linguistic features of the participants' texts production are discussed, more specifically, the use of cohesive devices.

5.3.3.2 Cohesive Devices

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesive devices as ways to establish cohesion in texts are important. The five types of cohesion are reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion and conjunction. Reference "occurs when one element of a text points to another for its interpretation" (Crowhurst, 1987, p.185). Halliday and Hasan (1976) classified as reference pronominals such as "he, him, his, it, hers", demonstratives and definite articles such as "this, those, there, the, then (time adverbial)" and comparatives such as "same, similar, different, other, else". Substitution refers to replacing the previous nouns or verbs or clauses with another word or phrase. It was divided into three kinds: nominal substitutes, verbal substitutes and clausal substitutes. Substitution is the replacement of a sentence element with another word or phrase of the same meaning. Ellipsis refers to the omission of the previously mentioned words or phrases. It can be divided into nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis and clausal ellipsis. For instance: What is Tim doing? –Sleeping. Here the nominal head "Tim" and operator "is" are omitted. Lexical cohesion refers to either a repetition of an item or the synonyms, or near synonyms, superordinate, or lexical collocation. Conjunction refers to the use of words and phrases to create logical relations. It includes five kinds: additive (and, nor, that is), adversative (yet, but, however, on the contrary), causal (so, then, therefore, because, in consequence), temporal (then, first, at once, soon) and discourse (well, anyway, surely).

Haidong's cohesive device use over time is cited in the following because of the comparability of his data. It is very interesting to see the changes in his connector use over time both in terms of quantity and variety. In these four excerpts, Haidong discussed the same or similar topics: the discovery of Newton's Law/ the discovery of Newton's law of universal gravitation. The cohesive devices in the following excerpts are analyzed in categories: references, lexical cohesion, and conjunctions—or I used another term: connectors as interchangeable. I did not discuss ellipsis and substitution because Haidong was not found using ellipsis in these presentations. Substitution did appear in his September 2008: "Newton found that this force can be a more general one". "One" here is a substitution for "this force". While this kind of cohesive devices was important, because it was a single appearance, I decided not to discuss this category.

> I think everybody's heard about that. Yeah? Before Newton, a lot of scientists has do a lot, a lot of research to summarize the motion of a …of a object. So they tried a lot. Newton summarize their work and then Newton got his law. (Haidong, Documents: September 2007 OEPT)

> So I think everyone has heard the story of Newton's the law… how he discovered the law of universal gravitation. It is that, uh, an apple fall off the tree, it just hit Newton's head so and Newton become… started to think about, so, why would the apple fall off. So, after he think about it, he get Newton's law, which is… which is published in 1687. (Haidong, Documents: December 2007 OEPT)

> So first, I would like to, I would like to go back to talk about some history, about the discovery of universal gravitation so…I think that during this process, apple have play an important role to the discovery of universal gravitation… mmm. About three hundred ago, I think all of you have learned, have know that, known that, that story as the apple fell off and it hit the head of Newton and so Newton become to think about so why the apple fall off so if that the force, that …mmm, as soon as, as soon as the force were attracting between the earth and the moon, so Newton, Newton is …begin to think about this question so he discovered the Newton's law of universal gravitation. (Haidong, Documents: March 2008 OEPT)

> And Newton found this law about 300 years ago. And before we start I'd like to talk about how Newton discovered this law. And this law is kind of upset to us. Why Newton discovered it? And…
> *Eval: He was sitting under a tree and an apple hit him on his head, right?*
> [Laughs] So you know that, yeah, you know that about three hundred years again, ago, Newton was in the garden and you know an apple hit upon his head and he started to think about why is the apple fall off and so he found later that it's because the gravitation the earth applies to the apple… So there was, is a force between the apple and the earth. And later, Newton found that this force can be a more general one. So he found that every subject, every subject with masses, they would attract each other by a force. So the forces that the earth applied to the apple is just, uh, an example of the universal gravitation. (Haidong, Documents: September 2008 OEPT)

Table 5.21 Haidong's OEPT Section III Reference Use Comparison

September 2007	December 2007	March 2008	September 2008
I, everyone that (Newton's law) they (the scientists) their (the scientists) the his (Newton)	I, everyone the He, (Newton) It, (the story) It, (apple)	I, you the This (discovery) it, (the apple) this, (the question) he (Newton)	I, we, you, us the this, 3 times (the law of universal gravitation) it, (the law) that (the story) his (Newton) he, (2 times, Newton) this (force) they, (every subject) each other, (subject)

Table 5.21 shows how Haidong used reference to establish cohesion in the texts. As we can see, from September 2007 to September 2008, there are many changes in terms of using reference to establish cohesive texts. In September 2007 and even in December 2007, Haidong used only very basic reference words such as "they" referring to "the scientists" and "he" for "Newton". In comparison, in September 2008, he continued the use of "he" but he added a lot of reference words to establish and maintain a coherent flow of the text. In addition to references,

lexicons can also be used as cohesive devices as shown in Table 5.22 Haidong's use of lexis as cohesive devices at different times:

Table 5.22 Haidong's OEPT Section III Lexical Cohesion Use Comparison

September 2007	December 2007	March 2008	September 2008
	the story Newton's law the law of universal gravitation apple	history the discovery of universal gravitation apple story The force Newton's law of universal gravitation	Discover (this) law The apple the force the earth the gravitation every subject The universal gravitation

Table 5.22 shows how lexical cohesion developed over time in Haidong's discourse productions. In September 2007, Haidong did not use any lexical cohesion devices. In December 2007, he started to use words like "the story", "Newton's Law" and "the law of universal gravitation", repeating these lexical resources to describe the concept and create a sense of cohesion. In September 2008, he was able to use more lexical cohesion devices. For instance, in talking about the discovery of the law of universal gravitation, he used to word "apple" twice in December 2008, three times in March 2008, and five times in September 2008. Moreover, in September 2008, words like "the earth" and "a/the force" are also very important in describing this concept and the repeated use of them also helped to create a more cohesive text. As Haidong continued his language socialization in his new academic community, he was made evident progress in his language use.

Table 5.23 Haidong's OEPT Section III Connector Use Comparison

September 2007	December 2007	March 2008	September 2008
before	that	so	and
so	so	first	before
and	why	as	so
then	and	and	that, (found that…)
	so	why	why
	after	if	that, (the forces that)
	which	as soon as	it
		that	because

Table 5.23 shows the third kind of cohesive devices, the connectors (conjunctions interchangeably used) that appeared in Haidong's presentation texts. As Haidong continued this language socialization in his academic community, he produced longer texts and used more cohesive devices both in terms of variety and quantity. Initially, Haidong used four simple connective words. Among these, "before" functioned as a preposition to indicate time; "so" was used as a summary of what was just being done; "and then" means "as a result". In comparison, it is noticeable that Haidong introduced a "which" clause in December 2007. He also started to use more kinds of connectives such as "if" and "as soon as", though not very successfully. In September 2008, Haidong still used "and" as a loose connective, particularly at the beginning, but he was also able to use "and so" and "and later" more appropriately. He used "because" and "that" clauses appropriately in the text. The ability to use more variety in cohesive devices is definitely a sign that Haidong was making progress with the increasing linguistic resources at his disposal. I took Haidong's cohesive devices use over time as an illustration because, as I have mentioned earlier, he was discussing the same topic. Therefore, with the same topic and under the same circumstances, the only change would be his linguistic productions.

Examining his four OEPT testing texts reveals there is also an interesting increase in the numbers of “and” and “so”. To my knowledge, there is no specific literature on oral discourse development available to explain this phenomenon. Yet there is some literature that discusses the thought patterns of easterners and westerners that might shed some light on this in terms of the cultural influence and first language influence on the cohesive devices use. The argument is that the difference in eastern and western thought patterns determines differences in organizing ideas. Studies in second language writing and contrastive rhetoric have disclosed some different patterns in writing for native speakers and non-native speakers. Most literature has been focused on writing (Conner, 1984; Grabe, 2002; Reid, 1992). The most prominent scholar is probably Kaplan (2001) whose work has been carried forward by a number of other scholars.

Tardy and Swales (2008) conducted an overview of the research on “organizational properties of written texts” (p.565). The authors discussed the macro-level discourse structure analysis. For instance, Martin (1993) classified instructional genres into recounts, procedures, descriptions, reports, explanations, expositions; Grabe (2002) distinguished between narrative and expository texts; Bhatia (2002) distinguished texts into narration, description, explanation, evaluation, and instruction. These studies offered theoretical supports for macro-level analysis. Other studies focused more on more specific or more micro-level analysis such as cohesion and coherence. Jin (2001) was such an example on cohesive devices. He argued that the different usage of cohesive devices in writing by native speakers of English (NSE) and non-native speakers of English (NNSE) might be related to some more general areas, which he summarized as thought pattern, writing organization, writing style, language and writers’ perception of

cohesion. He quoted Young (1982) noting that Chinese students tend to use sentence connectives such as “because”, “as”, “so” in place of “in view with the fact that”, “to begin with” and “in conclusion” (Young, 1982, p.79, quoted in Jin (2001)). The five areas Jin summarized are as follows:

Table 5.24 Cohesive Device Differences in Writing by NSE and NNSE

	Westerners	Orientals
thought pattern	Linear	Non-linear often circular
writing organization	Seven-part	An inductive pattern in overall structure
writing style	Linear and hypotactic Main point at beginning	Non-linear and paratactic Main point reveal at the end
Language	Subject-prominent language Formal connectors	Topic prominent language Rely on notional connectivity rather on formal connections
writers’ perception of cohesion		Notional or logical connectivity between interclausal connection

Along this same line, A. He (2002) conducted a study specifically to explore the use of “so” by Chinese students who learn English as a foreign language. Using a corpus of both native speakers and non-native speakers, He found that Chinese students used “so” in their writing seven to ten times that of native speakers. As to the position of “so”, initial “so” occurred about 22% for natives’ written English in contrast to the 78% of the corpus from Chinese middle school students and 44% for Chinese English majors. The native speakers used “so” 78% in embedded position and the Chinese middle school students 22%, and the English majors, who might be advanced in their proficiency level, 56%. The author also attempted to investigate reasons for the overuse and misuse of “so” in Chinese students’ writing. Learners’ unawareness

of spoken and written style, limited exposure to English, learners' learning/performing strategy, and negative transfer of mother tongue were listed as the four major reasons.

Therefore, it might be possible that participants like Haidong were using more notional or logical connectivity between inter-clausal connections (Jin, 2001). The limited use of several simple connectors in the earliest sample (OEPT, September 2007) might be due to the negative transfer of mother tongue as discussed in A. He (2002). This might be indeed the case as Haidong mentioned in his interviews that he thought a lot in Chinese and then translated his ideas into English. If there were no connectors in his Chinese, he would not be inserting them in English. As he continued his language socialization in this academic community, it seemed that he developed the sense that there should be some connectors between the clauses or sentences. The increased number of the connectors, particularly "and" and "so", might be an attempt to set some form of connection between his ideas. Of course, in some cases, "so" is used to express the ideas of "as a result, therefore"; but in many cases, it worked simply as a filler or transition to the next mini-topic unit.

As discussed in Hinkel (2001), ESL writers use cohesive devices with different frequencies when compared with native English writers and the ESL writers tend to have a more limited repertoire of usage when compared with native writers. Data showed that the participants used some logical connectors in their presentations to create a sense of cohesion. However, logical connectors as basic as "and, then, next, so" are among the most frequent. The participants seemed not to have a large enough linguistically appropriate repertoire to make the text more coherent. Participants sometimes still do not use logical connectors between topic units or they

lack of the linguistic strategies to interact with the audience, particularly during OEPT. In spite of the absence of comparative groups, this exploration with the oral discourse seems to draw similar conclusions to what Hinkel (2001) found. That is, the participants as presenters tend to have a very limited repertoire and they could only use limited linguistic resources—in this situation, a limited number of cohesive devices—to create cohesive texts.

5.3.3.3 Mode: Speaking versus Writing

The above section discussed one dimension of mode: how the textual resources of grammar were used in realizing the mode. At the same time, another dimension of mode is the "distance and availability of feedback between speaker/hearer or reader/writer" (Schleppegrell 2004, p.48). Schleppegrell argues that the differences between everyday interactional texts and the school written language are due to linguistic choices, which means different modes lead to different linguistic choices.

For academic oral presentations, in spite of the high formality, it still belongs to spoken genre. Yet some of the participants seemed to lack the awareness that they were supposed to speak in a formal way and not to read their written scripts as some participants did. This was especially the case in their earlier socialization stage into this academic community. For example, Table 5.25 presents this in Shengrong:

Table 5.25 Shengrong's OEPT Section III Sense of Mode Comparison

December 2007 OEPT	September 2008 OEPT
Newton's first law of motion is often stated as an object at rest tend to remain at rest and an object with moving tends to stay at the same velocity and in the same direction. Er, there are two part to this statement predict the behavior of this stationary object and the other part predict behavior of moving object. Newton's law…Newton's first law tell us that most of the bodies will remain the same state.	Newton's law described the relationship between force acting on a particle and motion of the particle. Er, so let's start, start off by Newton's first law. Em. This is also stated as it is possible to select a set… a set of reference frame called inertial reference frame. Observed from this, a particle moved before without any change its velocity. If one… it's also simplified into the sentence "a particle will stay at rest or as a constant velocity unless …acted upon by an external unbalanced force", so the first law is also called the law of inertia. The first law tell us how the particles move before force on it.

In Table 5.25, Shengrong presented the concept "Newton's laws". However, from observations of the tapes as well as the transcripts, it was clear that Shengrong was reciting some materials that he had memorized. As spoken forms, oral presentations should have the features of natural oral language including false starts, hesitations, incomplete clauses, depending on the context, etc. (Eggins, 1994). The sentence, "There are two part to this statement predict the behavior of this stationary object and the other part predict behavior of moving object", it was difficult to understand because he talked about there being 'two parts to this statement' which was, in fact, a further explanation of the statement. However, we do not see words like "*the first part*". It should be "there are two parts to this statement: the first part predicts the behavior of stationary objects and the other (second) part predicts the behavior of moving objects." His apparent memorization might partially explain this. Shengrong did better in the September 2008

test, where he used phrases like “let’s start off…” It seemed that he was more aware of the spoken characteristics of oral presentations. However, again from the observations of his videotapes, it seemed that he was still memorizing his heavily prepared scripts. For instance, he went on without explaining the meaning of some terms, such as “inertial reference frame”. It seemed that he was speaking from memory by stopping talking and looking like he was thinking hard about what to say next, particularly when it came to the body part of his presentation where he was supposed to present the ideational bulk of it.

Another example that reveals the participants’ sense of the distinction between written and spoken language is found in the following passage. This passage was quoted from the written documents of University X. It is used here as part of the syllabus that students who took the OEPT were required to present in their instructor role-play on the first day of class. The students were supposed to present this message orally as an instructor would. The original written material is as follows:

> Academic Integrity
> “The University Rules, including the Student Code of Conduct, and other documented policies of the department, college, and university related to academic integrity will be enforced. Any violation of these regulations, including acts of plagiarism or cheating, will be dealt with on an individual basis according to the severity of the misconduct” (University of X Faculty Senate 2001, May 10).
> (Document: OEPT testing packet)

This short paragraph has characteristics of the formal written language: passive voices (will be enforced; will be dealt with), embedded clauses (policies …related to academic integrity), nominalization (violation, severity). When the participants who took the test presented their interpretations on the written passage, it is clear that there were great differences among

participants on how they dealt with this passage. Some participants had a better sense of transforming this written document into oral language, for instance:

> In the whole process of study, I highly value academic integrity. Don't cheat or commit any plagiarism. If you do this, you will be dealt with severely depending on the level of the misconduct. (Gaomin, Documents: September 2007 OEPT)

> Ok, there are also some rules and regulations from your department or from the university. Don't try to challenge that. Remember that *NEVER* [emphasize] plagiarize or cheat in exams. Important: Remember one thing: if you do not write it yourself, just cite the source. That's really important. Remember that. (Anning, Documents: December 2007, OEPT)

Here Gaomin and Anning explained the policy and emphasized the importance of students to abide by the regulations using a language that is appropriate for oral presentation. Although Anning used very simple phrases, she was able to convey the meaning with a spoken language.

There were also some changes in participants who took the test twice and did the same task twice. The following are the two versions of the same written documents Enjia produced for her OEPT tests.

> And next we will talk something very… We will talk some serious issue, that is, the academic integrity. Any university rules that related to the academic integrity… NO matter the department, the college, and the university….will be enforced. And NEVER try to violate any regulations, no matter, in form of cheating, plagiarism [difficulties pronouncing it] or any other forms because the punishment is very severe. The punishment, the results of that will according to the severity of misconduct. (Enjia, Documents: September 2006, OEPT)

> And next we talk about the very serious topic, that is, the academic integrity. I think this is the most basic requirement for students, so, and you know there are several kinds of rules: the department rules, the college rules and the university rules. You should comply all of them. And, also you don't need to worry about it, if you don't know it I will give the link on the website. And NEVER try to violate any of the regulations, because you will be punished if you try to do this. (Enjia, Documents:

December 2006, OEPT)

As shown here, like Gaomin and Anning, Enjia was able to transform the written documents into academically appropriate spoken English in a simulated classroom setting. In her first presentation, she used some of the written format such as “will be enforced” and “according to the severity of misconduct”, indicating that she was still using the original written structure. For the second attempt, she interpreted these using her own more colloquial words. She paraphrased those written sentences and added a lot of interaction words like “you”, indicating a better sense of oral communication with an audience rather than reading from a prepared script.

In comparison with the above participants, other participants were still unable to change this written document into the spoken format. Feng, for instance, talked about the rules as well.

> Ok, the third is about academic integrity. The university rules include the student conduct. College and university will be enforced. Everyone who violate the regulations including plagiarism will be dealt with. (Feng, Documents: September 2006, OEPT)

It seemed that Feng did not fully understand how to present these written materials in an orally appropriate way. There should have been no problem for him to read and understand these written materials. In his presentation, he used the passive voice as in the original written documents. He did make an attempt at presenting some written materials orally when he said “everyone who violate the regulations” as compared to the original nominalization “any violation of these regulations”. He changed the nominalization “violation”, which is one common feature of written language, into the verb form “violate” and added a subject. However, in general, he was still following the syntax of the written documents, and it sounded rigid and a lot of information was not presented.

While participants such as Feng relied heavily on the written features in their presentations, it was also obvious that some other participants like Buwei acquired everyday oral language during the socialization process and then transferred it into academic settings. Compared to the explanation of the above, Buwei paraphrased the same written message into a brief one sentence:

> Another, academic integrity. Just want to tell you guys that do not cheat. (Buwei, Documents, December 2007 OEPT)

While simply reading the written materials made the presentations rigid and boring, the oversimplified interpretation of this serious matter into one sentence downplayed the importance of the matter to a great extent. The use of informal phrases of "just want to tell you guys" further added to the informality—which would be inappropriate for the seriousness of the topic in a college classroom setting.

5.3.4 Discussion

This part of the chapter explored the discourse socialization progress (or lack thereof) of the participants using the SFL approach. It is clear that most participants were becoming more competent presenters as they continued their language socialization in the host academic community. They made progress in terms of field—they became better acquainted with the technical terms in their field. They also made progress in terms of establishing and maintaining rapport with their audiences in a number of ways as well as making progress in terms of textual resources used in achieving their purposes. It also should be noted that different participants experienced different degrees of progress.

According to language socialization and communities of practice, the theories that framed this study, newcomers or children learn culture through the language of a community and also

learn to use the language appropriately in the target community. Through SFL analysis, it appeared that participants like Haidong learned to use the language more appropriately during the continued socialization in the target community. However, as argued by Ochs (1988), language socialization is a lifelong process, and even the participants who made faster progress in comparison are still facing challenges and difficulties in terms of language use. Therefore, it is important to examine the language socialization process to see why some participants made faster progress in their discourse socialization and how can ESL curricula be designed to assist the ESL students to be more aware of their language issues and collaborate to find ways to improve their oral academic discourse socialization. In other words, what are the factors that help the ESL students better adapt to their new academic community?

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, the findings related to language issues of academic oral presentations were presented. The first part of the chapter focused on the general language challenges that the participants had when they were making oral presentations, according to the participants' own reports and other data sources. Most participants identified vocabulary, particularly technical terms, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and immediacy and accuracy as the top factors that caused problems for their oral presentations. The evaluators in the OEPT tests confirmed some of these issues noting particularly pronunciation and vocabulary.

The second part of the chapter analyzed the oral presentation discourse the participants produced over time. Using the SFL approach, this part of the chapter presented data that revealed the progress of the participants' oral presentations in terms of field, tenor and mode. The

findings revealed that some participants made faster progress during their socialization process and made progress in every aspect of their presentations. These participants became better at presenting the ideas (field), developed a better sense of maintaining rapport with their audience (tenor), and were able to draw on linguistic resources to achieve those purposes (mode). Those participants who made immediate progress seemed to adjust to this environment very quickly and adapted very well. Participants in this category include Anning, Enjia, Dailin, Buwei, Gaomin. In contrast, other participants seemed to make much slower progress or little progress in their one-year or two-year period of discourse socialization in their academic communities. Participants like Feng, Changkai and Haidong, who, through great effort, continued their studies with slower progress, which means that they might still be confronted with the immense difficulties caused by the English language on a daily basis, particularly Changkai and Haidong who were working as teaching assistants at the time of the study. Another participant, Shengrong, who failed the OEPT testing so many times—an important indicator of his slow language development—made the least progress in his language socialization and, therefore, can be considered the least successful in discourse socialization into the target academic community.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study explored the oral academic discourse socialization of 9 Chinese graduate students who pursued their studies at a Mid-western U.S. university by focusing on one particular activity: oral presentations. This chapter presents a summary of the study, a discussion of the major findings that correspond to the research questions formulated for this study, and the implications for current practice and future research. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. In what ways does prior academic experience with oral presentations impact the ways in which Chinese graduate students are socialized into the discourse appropriate for oral presentations?
2. How are the Chinese graduate students socialized into the academic discourse related with oral presentations as required in the academic community they have joined?
3. What language difficulties, if any, do Chinese graduate students have in making oral presentations as required in their academic life?
4. How over time does language socialization result in student progress, if any, in their L2 during their socialization into the academic discourse communities that they wish to be part of?

6.2 Summary of the Major Findings of this Study and Discussion of these Findings

6.2.1 Impact of Prior Academic Socialization Experience

The first finding of the study was that the participants' prior academic socialization in China did not prepare them for such academic oral activities as oral presentations, which are frequently required in their new academic community in the United States. The simple lack of experience might already put L2 students; in this case the Chinese graduate students, at a great disadvantage. Furthermore, they were required to do a task that was unfamiliar to them in a second language over which they did not have complete mastery. Oral presentation itself as a task is stressful for many native-speakers; it would only be more stressful for those who had little experience and had to perform this demanding task in another language.

What are the reasons for these challenges? Some studies on language socialization illustrated that when students' primary socialization at home is different from secondary socialization at school, problems often arise. For instance, Heath (1983) demonstrated the differences of using language at home led some children, not others, performed poorly at school because of the incongruence between what was expected at school and what they brought from home. Moore (1999) also explored the conflicts that the elementary school students were confronted with between the language practices at home and those at school. These studies found that the discontinuity between primary socialization at home and secondary socialization at school was the main reason for students' difficulties in their continual socialization at school.

This incongruence can be applied to the Chinese graduate students in their L2 socialization. When students' primary academic socialization in their home country is different from academic socialization in another country, problems might arise. As novices in the American university learning community, Chinese ESL students need to adjust to the different ways of doing things in

different academic communities. Like the participants in my pilot study, most of the student participants in this study had little or no oral presentation experience before they pursued further education at a U.S. university. Hence, it is very possible that these students encountered difficulties in a different academic setting where oral presentations are frequently used in instruction. This is consistent with the findings of Zappa-Hollman (2007). This finding is also supported by the work of Shi (2006a) and Li (2000). Shi argued that language socialization should be considered as intercultural language socialization and she called for using intercultural language socialization as the more inclusive theoretical framework for L2 socialization studies. Li put forward the concept of double socialization and argued that compared to the continual L1 socialization (for instance, novices continued their language socialization in professional settings), L2 learners would face double challenges: both linguistically and culturally. Both arguments emphasized the importance of culture in the discourse socialization process and our findings support these arguments.

6.2.2 Participants' Academic Discourse Socialization Process/Progress

The study also found that the participants socialized at different rates into the academic community, of which they were to be members. This finding was supported both from the macro level analysis about how the participants were socialized to conduct this particular activity of oral presentations and from a micro level analysis on how the participants learned the structure and the discourse of oral presentations in this socialization process.

On the macro level, the participants were socialized to learn this particular activity through observations, expert assistance, peer support and practice. Morita (2000) found that the

participants “gradually become apprenticed into the academic discourse by negotiating with instructors and peers as they prepared for, observed, performed, and reviewed OAPs throughout the courses”(p.302). Similar to what Morita found, this study also found that observations were considered as one important feature during their academic discourse socialization process. In this study, however, observations entailed more than those in Morita’s study. For the participants in this study, the observations were more extensive in that they covered more academic areas such as ESL classes, professional seminars and classes in their disciplines during their discourse socialization process in the broader academic community. The observations, therefore, were cross boundary and multi-level with exposure to novices and experts alike.

Another difference is while the several studies on academic discourse socialization such as Kobayashi (2003), Morita (2000) and Zappa-Hollman (2007) explored the importance of instructors in the process, they did not explore the possible and important roles other expert assistance might play in this process, for instance, department, professional seminars, ESL classes, and key personnel such as advisors. As to the role of peers, the above three studies had different findings. Kobayashi and Morita found that peer support is important in the discourse socialization while Zappa-Hollman did not find it as important. The findings of this study support the findings by Kobayashi and Morita. That is, peer support played an important role, particularly for the more successful participants. Their peers not only set examples of good presentations but also provided constructive feedback and worked as one of the socializing agents for many of these participants. At the same time, although the language socialization studies generally assume that the native speaker(s) would assume the role of experts and work as

socializing agents (A. W. He, 2000; Poole, 1992), this study found that not only can native speakers play the role of socializing agents, non-native speakers can also play the role of socializing agents as well. Morita argued that the academic discourse socialization is not "unidirectional process of knowledge transmission from the expert… to the novice…" (p.304). Kobayashi also questioned Lave and Wenger (1991)'s concept of apprenticeship. How to define expert and who can provide the expert assistance and the sufficiency of non-native speakers as models might also be worthy of future investigation.

Besides exploring how the Chinese graduate students were socialized into their new academic community, the current study also presented the findings about the language difficulties the participants had. The participants in this study reported difficulties with the English language when they made their oral presentations as required in various situations. They reported that their difficulties lay in the areas of vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and the immediacy and accuracy of oral speech, which are similar to the general problems with speaking reported in literature (Wan, 1999). In addition, the participants found it was particularly challenging to interact with the audience on the spot, because they were sometimes constrained by listening comprehension issues or by language difficulties to organize their ideas to respond with a coherent impromptu answer. Morita (2000) and Zappa-Hollman (2007) also discussed some linguistic problems such as vocabulary, pronunciation, or "lack of fluency and limited ability to elaborate" (Morita, 2000, p. 298). But the participants in this study reported other difficulties, such as listening as a challenge particularly when they were interacting with other non-native speaking audience.

6.2.3 Discourse Socialization Progress: SFL Approach

At the more micro level, the findings indicated that the participants progressed in this discourse socialization process over time in spite of differences in their rate of progress. The use of the SFL approach to analysis proved to be very helpful in demonstrating participants discourse progress over the course of a one or two-year span. There are not many detailed studies on the actual language used in the L2 oral texts so far except Kobayashi (2005) who briefly discussed some linguistic data in the participants' learning process. It was the purpose of this study to explore language progress, if any, of the Chinese participants in their discourse socialization.

Studies that examined the L2 texts were often found to compare L1 written productions with L2 written productions and they failed to examine the overtime progress (if any) of the L2 learners. For instance, Silva (1997) found that L2 writer' texts were less fluent (fewer words), less accurate (more errors) and less effective (lower holistic scores) when compared with L1 writers. That is not surprising when we compare L1 written texts with L2 written texts. However, while it is important to compare L2 productions with L1 productions, both in terms of writing and speaking, it is also meaningful for us to track the longitudinal development of L2 learners, no matter if it is L2 writing or speaking. As discussed in 5.3, the findings showed that most participants had made some progress over a year in their discourse socialization. Here I borrowed Silva's terms to describe L2 speakers' progress in their oral presentations. The following are some features of the participants' oral presentation texts found in this study.

6.2.3.1 More Fluent

As discussed in Chapter V, most of the participants became more fluent with their oral texts.

The increased oral production per minute indicated the increased fluency of the participants as well as their ability of a more accurate and elaborated description as discussed in the earlier chapters. At the same time, it is also worth mentioning that the participants' speaking speed still fell behind the average speed of native speakers. Even though speed does not equal fluency, it can still be an index of fluency and thus a concern for these participants. According to pertinent literature, the native speaker's average speed in conversation (the average speed of spoken English, including pauses, is about 180 words per minute (Chafe, 1982). The tendency was that the longer the participants extend their language socialization, the more they produce per minute. On the other hand, it is still a great concern that the speaking speed was so far behind: the fastest presenter in the study (Dailin) was able produce about 100 words per minute. Despite the progress, the participants might face tremendous challenges to function properly in the target community. This is particularly the case for the participants who showed slower progress such as Changkai and Shengrong.

6.2.3.2 More Accurate

Besides the increase of text productions in terms of quantity and therefore increased fluency, the oral texts of the participants also showed the tendency of becoming more accurate as they become part of this academic community in general. The increased accuracy could be reflected in their lexical choices, elaboration of their ideas and more idiomatic use in their language.

Using more specific lexis. As the participants continued their language socialization in the host community, it seemed that they increased their vocabulary repertoire, particularly the technical terms in their field. As a result, they could use more specific and therefore more accurate

vocabulary when they were talking about the academic topics in their own field.

More elaborated The participants in general not only increased their vocabulary repertoire, they also improved their ability to develop their ideas in more elaborative ways. For instance, they became better in spelling out their processes before they reach their conclusions more clearly. This trend was illustrated using Haidong's case as an example. Other participants who had higher levels of English proficiency such as Enjia and Haidong also demonstrated a similar progress.

More idiomatic Another aspect is that the general oral presentation texts analysis indicated that the participants had a better sense about what made the text more idiomatic by using words and phrases and expressions that were idiomatic in nature. It is obvious that some of the discourse, particularly earlier productions, were influenced by the participant's first language; for example, Haidong and Shengrong mentioned in their interviews that they needed to translate what they thought in Chinese into English. This phenomenon might partially explain why they said they had difficulties not only because of the vocabulary but also the way of thinking—because there were some differences between the ways of thinking, according to them. When they literally translate from one language into another, it is highly possible that it does not sound idiomatic for the target-language audience. As they continue their discourse socialization, they become better users of the language as reflected in their more idiomatic use of the language.

6.2.3.3 More Effective

By examining the oral texts that the participants produced, there is a tendency that the Chinese graduate student participants are becoming more fluent and more accurate as a result of their continual discourse socialization in their new academic community they have joined. As a

result of that, most of the participants are becoming more effective presenters over time, though individual case differences must be acknowledged.

6.2.3.4 Case Differences

Studies such as Kobayashi (2005), Morita (2000) and Zappa-Hollman (2007) examined the academic discourse socialization of its participants in their new academic community. While these studies discussed the individual differences in their academic discourse socialization process, case differences did not appear as an important theme. For the current study, the findings indicated that the participants' socialization process varied from case to case, depending on both individual agency and institutional assistance available to them. While some participants such as Dailin, Enjia and Buwei progressed rapidly, participants like Haidong, Changkai, and Feng made slower progress and Shengrong was the one that seemed to be making the least progress to a degree that it had a strong negative impact on his academic success. It might be generally assumed that after the ESL students came to the target-language speaking communities, they were socialized into the academic community and learned to use language rapidly and appropriately. The findings indicated that reality was much more complex than this assumption. Some participants did make very fast progress while others made very little progress even after they had been in the U.S. for almost two years, which was very unfortunate both for the individual participants and for the whole academic community.

As to the reasons of these case differences, individual agency and the support available to the students seem to be two important factors. The assistance they received from the department, ESL center and institution seemed to help participants such as Anning, Enjia, Buwei, Dailin

becoming part of this academic community on a fast track. Even Changkai who had a low language proficiency level seemed to benefit from the strong support from his department, his advisor and peers. At the same time, it is also clear that these participants were also more motivated to become members of their respective academic communities. That means that individual agency also played an important role. In contrast, participants like Shengrong who did not get this kind of support and who did not work actively for his own socialization, ended up with a very negative outcome of the socialization process.

6.2.4 SFL Approach: An Effective Tool for Oral Discourse Data Analysis

As argued in Chapter I and Chapter II, language socialization consists of two parts: learning culture through the language and learning to use the language appropriately in a society or community. So far, language socialization studies have been mostly focused on the socialization part of learning (Kobayashi, 2003; 2005; Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). To fill the gap in the literature, therefore, part of the current study addressed the language part, namely, to examine how the language develops in the language socialization process. This is particularly meaningful because language progress is the ultimate goal for L2 learners and ESL professionals.

One problem with language socialization studies in terms of methodology is how to analyze the linguistic data. That is, what data analysis tool can be chosen to ensure the vigor of the study? Watson-Gegeo (2004) called for more vigorous methods in data collection and data analysis. For L2 socialization, Duff (2002) put forward ethnography of communication to analyze at a micro-level the language socialization. However, this method is more focused on the "socialization through the language". That is, it was very effective to examine the socialization

data. How to examine the second part of the language socialization? That is, what research methodology should be used to examine this? SFL approach seemed to be a useful tool to analyze the oral language data collected in this study. Particularly, the SFL data analysis method employed by Schleppegrell (2004) was adapted to this study. It worked as an effective tool to analyze this set of oral language data.

6.2.5 Linguistic Features of the Participants' Oral Texts

6.2.5.1 Oral versus Written Language

As argued by Schleppegrell (2004), dividing text types according to whether it is speech or writing has its limitations because there are other important factors that come into play such as text types. For instance, a personal letter might be in the form of writing but could be very colloquial. The dividing line between spoken language and written language is very often too blurring to draw a clear distinction line. From the spoken to the written, it would be a continuum. This is going to become the tendency in today's world where technology is redefining the traditional speaking and writing dichotomy. As to academic oral presentations, it is a type of oral language; yet it is not as casual as the daily conversation because of the nature of the presentation. At the same time, it is not as formal as academic writing, particularly when there is an interaction between the audience and the presenter component involved.

To date, there is not much literature available on the linguistic features of L2 speakers' oral productions, though there is some literature on L2 writers' linguistic productions, such as Hinkel (2002) and Schleppegrell (1996) who both found that L2 writers draw heavily on oral language features in their writing. It is interesting to note that L2 writers rely heavily on oral language

features in their writing because of their greater exposure to oral language. In contrast, the oral texts that the Chinese graduate students produced in this study, seemed to draw heavily on written language features because of the heavily reliance on the written texts as the focus of foreign language instruction in China. It is true that academic oral presentations might be read like writing. Still it is an oral genre which distinguished it from the written genres and therefore requires the presenters to be freely switch between the oral language which they were supposed to use like they would in a conversation and switch back at any time when necessary to the language that would be more like writing to describe academic issues under discussion. This concept is challenging for those who have learned the English language as a foreign language and who have not had so many opportunities to use the language for authentic purposes. Their oral language might sound like written language, which is mostly their contact with the language—learn through reading and writing of the English language---limited opportunity for interaction—particularly using the language for real communication purposes. This task of making an oral presentation, which requires appropriate positioning on the speaking and writing continuum, poses a tremendous challenge for the participants.

When examining the participants' language production in oral presentations, some of them showed evidence of being too oral and too informal, particularly with regard to their earliest productions (Haidong, for instance). Others sounded rigid as a result of reading memorized written language generated prior to the session. This was particularly true of the oral production of students who had lower language proficiency (Shengrong, for instance). It seems that the participants did not had sufficient awareness of the spoken and written style differences for their

appropriate use in their oral presentations or, as some indicated, that they might just be vaguely aware of this issue yet still lack the resources to change or improve their productions. Therefore, while it seemed that the participants did indeed progress from a more scripted to a more naturally delivery of their presentations as they immersed themselves in the academic discourse community, it is still an issue that they need to raise their awareness about the distinctions between proper oral and written language. Currently the participants, particularly those with lower language proficiency level, were found to draw heavily on writing language features in their speaking, as a result, often making their speaking difficult to follow and sound rigid.

6.2.5.2 Use of Cohesive Devices

Hinkel (2002) compares 68 linguistic features of texts produced by L2 writers with those of native speakers of first year composition courses. She found that many L2 writings had the oral features such as frequent use of conjunctions, especially causal conjunctions, exemplication markers, and establishing text cohesion with demonstrative pronouns rather than lexical ties. For the cohesive devices, L2 writers also used more conjunctive and fewer lexical ties. In general, L2 writing showed less lexical control, variety and sophistication. Hinkel concluded that many L2 texts over rely on simple phrase-and sentence-level conjunctions and exemplification. Even advanced L2 writers were still found to have these problems. The situation seemed to also apply to L2 presenters who also over rely on several simple logical connectors to maintain the text cohesion. For the L2 presenters in this study, it was found that these participants still have various issues with cohesive devices. It did seem, however, that the participants were making progress in terms of cohesive devices usage. Using Haidong's case as an example, it was found

that he not only increased the number of cohesive devices, he also increased his use of a variety of cohesive devices over time. However, in general, the presenters were found to over rely on several simple connecting words for transition or cohesion such as “and”, “so”. Participants sometimes still do not use logical connectors between topic units. This also seems to indicate that learning to use the language appropriately during L2 discourse is a long and complicated process.

6.2.6 Oral Presentation as a Complex Activity

The findings of this study added to the literature on academic oral presentations by further illustrating that oral presentations are a complex activity (Kobayashi, 2005; Morita, 2000). This study found that academic discourse socialization not only occurred within a classroom. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the students’ academic socialization outcome is determined by several factors including their prior academic socialization experience. Schleppegrell (2004) also pointed out that effective participation of speech events, including oral presentations, are determined by the participants’ understanding of cultural elements of the event and the participants’ linguistic capability to articulate appropriately their ideas:

> Participating effectively in any speech event requires understanding the purpose of the event and the expected role of the participants, and being willing and able to make the linguistic choices that enable success in that speech event. The more familiar the event and the more purposeful the task, the easier it is for participants to understand the parts they are to play. (p.36)

6.2.6.1 Oral Presentation as a Culturally Loaded Activity

When an instructor in this particular academic community assigned the task of oral presentations to the students, he would have certain expectations of how the presentation should

be organized, how it should be presented and how the presenter should interact with his audience. There might be some slight variations depending on the specific requirements of the particular presentations such as purpose, time, and location of the presentations. But there are certain expectations to be met by the presenters such as putting the central point at the beginning, followed by three to five major points organized in a logical way (Kobayashi, 2005; Meyers & Holt, 2002; Morita, 2000). For the L2 learners who just joined the academic community, it should not be taken for granted that they would automatically know how to make presentations, particularly as we have illustrated that for many of the Chinese students, this is a new learning activity for them.

6.2.6.2 Language Related Challenges

Along with the unfamiliarity or not having enough exposure to this particular kind of endeavor, the findings showed that language also poses a great challenge for L2 presenters. One language related challenge is probably the unique language nature of formal academic presentations. As discussed in Section 6.3.1, most participants seemed not aware of the particular linguistic feature of oral presentations. Studies such as Morita (2000) and Zappa-Hollman (2007) described the linguistic difficulties the participants experienced in their oral academic discourse socialization pertaining to oral presentations as vocabulary, pronunciation, or overall fluency or the ability for elaboration. Besides those linguistic difficulties, this study also found that oral presentation as an oral activity has the oral features of language such as false starts, repetitions, the use of demonstrative pronouns, just name a few (Eggins, 1994). On the other hand, academic oral presentations have the features of academic writing: that is, it might contain dense

information and the topics might be highly specialized thus require specialized vocabulary and even grammatical structures to get the message across. The unique nature of formal presentations was discussed by Tanskanen (2006), in which he used the term prepared speeches.

> "Prepared speeches occupy a position between spoken dialogue and written monologue, in that they are prepared (i.e. at least partially written) monologues delivered through the spoken medium to an audience which has to interpret the speech in real time. The spoken monologue thus shared preparedness and a more varied cohesive profile with the written monologue, while its temporal demands (at the interpretation stage) and reliance on simple repetition bring it close to the dialogues, especially spoken dialogue. (p.162)

Therefore, for the Chinese students who are still struggling to figure out how to make themselves understood, it might be very challenging to fulfill all these challenging tasks in a short period of time. That is exactly why it is expected that it takes time for the ESL students being socialized into the academic community, and also there are ways that relevant parties might be able to assist to accelerate or facilitate this process.

6.3 Limitations of the Study and Future Research

6.3.1 Data Set

For this study, I collected the oral presentation samples at different times for different participants. However, due to the availability of presentations for individual participants, I ended up with different kinds of presentations, so some data were analyzed in much more detail when compared to others. For instance, the participants' testing data were more often used than some other sources of data mainly because the comparability of within cases and/or across cases. The situation was even more complicated because these participants were from different academic disciplines and at the different stages of their study. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the

variability of the data set impacted the analysis and the results of the study. To document the ESL students' language development of their oral presentations over time, it is necessary to have their oral presentation samples at different times. Having their samples over equal intervals for at least a year or two years would be ideal especially if they were on the same or comparable topics. It would be even more valuable if comparative data could be obtained for different participants to make cross-case comparison possible. Future studies on this topic would shed more light on the topic if longitudinal data could be collected from one individual who will be doing oral presentation in the discipline. It would be also very interesting to compare case differences between participants within one discipline.

6.3.2 Oral Presentation as a Complex Activity and Future Research

In this study, the oral presentation was found to be a culturally loaded activity and the ESL students needed to learn the grammatical and contextual resources that are appropriate to conduct this activity. In other words, it is important to familiarize the ESL students with this particular activity and raise their awareness of the cultural aspects and linguistic features for oral presentations. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that oral presentation is a very complex activity and there is a lot more to explore for future research. For example, non-linguistic areas of oral presentations were not discussed in this study. Oral presentation as a comprehensive activity can be studied from multiple perspectives and the paralinguistic cues play an important role in the face-to-face communication including oral presentations. I left out the paralinguistic part because of the scope of the study.

Future studies could focus on the non-linguistic aspects of oral presentations. For ESL

presenters, it is particularly valuable to probe into the body language or gestures. These areas could be approached from a sociocultural perspective because one's culture can determine to a great degree of one's body language or gesture. For instance, Asian students tend to use fewer hand gestures for emphasizing their points, or make less eye contact with their audience—which is also very culturally bound since some Asian cultures view eye contact differently. What impact will non-linguistic aspects make in performing the task for L2 learners? How about other factors such as the non-verbal interactions between the presenter and the audience? There are many questions remaining to be answered.

Another direction for future study is phonetics-related area. I discussed briefly the pronunciation in Chapter V; yet issues such as the speech flow, intonation, word stress and rhythm were not discussed. As a Chinese-speaker myself, it is relatively easy for me to understand the presentation of the Chinese students. Therefore, I decided to study areas in which I am interested and that are more salient to me. Furthermore, my status as a second language speaker makes it difficult to discern the nuances in phonology related issues. It is a very important issue, and future researchers both native speakers and nonnative speakers researchers who are interested in this area should pursue this direction.

Other than non-linguistic aspects and the phonology related issues of oral presentations, multi-modality is another very important aspect into which future studies can probe. Some researchers have started to research this area (e.g., Hu & Dong, 2008). How would visual aids affect the oral presentations of ESL students? What roles do the other resources such as video and audio files play in this process? All these would be very interesting topics for future studies.

6.4 Implications for Pedagogy

6.4.1 Raising the Students' Awareness of the Cultural Aspects of Oral Presentations

One of the findings of this study is that Chinese participants' academic experience did not prepare them for the activity of oral presentation. If this is the case for all Chinese graduate students, when this activity is designed as part of the curriculum, this group of students might need more assistance than those who are familiar with this particular activity. For ESL professionals, this information is particularly useful for designing curriculum to address this particular need with this particular population. Other international population who share similar academic experiences might also benefit if ESL curriculum would take the students' background into consideration.

While the ESL professors need to take their ESL students' prior academic socialization experience into consideration, the findings also indicate that it is important to increase the ESL students' awareness of the cultural aspects of oral presentations. For some, by simply immersing themselves into the target language community, ESL students' awareness of the culture related with oral presentations might improve. But for others, it needs to be made more explicit to accelerate their socialization process. In the ESL curriculum, it should be made very explicit that the students know exactly what is expected of them. The current ESL oral presentation skills syllabus at the university where the study was conducted stressed the oral presentation skills for students yet it was not approached from the cultural perspective. It might be more helpful to raise the students' awareness of the cultural perspective in learning making presentations to make their L2 presentations possibly more successful.

6.4.2 Raising L2 Learners' Awareness of Their Linguistic Productions

The findings also indicate that the participants, particularly those with lower language proficiency level, were often unaware of how their linguistic productions might affect their performance in their presentations. Therefore, it is important to raise L2 learners' awareness of the expected linguistic productions of oral presentations to accelerate or facilitate L2 academic discourse socialization. Discourse analysis can be used as a way to increase L2 learners' awareness of their own linguistic productions. In this way, L2 learners might self-monitor their own productions and ESL students may need to be taught more specifically, particularly about the linguistic features that are more commonly used by native speakers/writers.

Based on the findings of this study, for instance, ESL students might need to pay more attention how the conversational style should be blended with the academic written style appropriately in their oral presentations. They might also need to conscientiously develop their use of cohesive devices to make coherent texts. This task might be very difficult as indicated by Hinkel (2002) when talking about L2 writing.

> "Thus, if NNSs are expected to attain advanced L2 writing proficiency to succeed in their studies, they are required to learn to construct written academic discourse and text according to the norms of the L2 discourse community (Swales, 1990a)…this is indeed a very difficult process" (p.41)

It might be equally challenging to attain advanced L2 speaking proficiency as required in oral presentations. Even though we are aware of the difficulties, it is still possible for L2 learners to acclimate to the norms of L2 discourse community and work towards the goal of becoming advanced L2 proficient speakers, performing demanding oral tasks such as oral presentations.

6.4.3 Oral presentation in ESL/EFL Instruction

In spite of the difficulties that the participants reported experiencing with oral presentations, the findings indicate that participants in this study expressed very positive attitudes towards oral presentations as a way of learning. This activity required the students not only know the words and sentences but they also needed to develop a capacity to organize and deliver their ideas clearly using a second language. It is very challenging for all ESL students particularly in terms of appropriate language use. For the same reason, it can work as an excellent venue for the students to learn detailed area knowledge and demonstrate their learning in a great way. In this sense, oral presentation can work as the final step for the project-based learning/instruction (Beckett, 1999; 2005). Project-based learning required the students to take the initiative in their learning and usually the participants were required to present their projects in one way or another. Therefore, oral presentations can be integrated into the curriculum that embraces exploratory learning such as project-based instruction.

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