

Jordanians' Academic Discourse Socialization through Oral Academic Presentations in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study is framed by language socialization paradigm to examine the language socialization of Jordanian NNEs in Malaysian academic context by focusing on one pervasive speech event, oral academic presentations (OAP). It seeks to investigate and understand how Jordanian NNEs in IEP program learn how to participate successfully in OAP related practices of their academic discourse community, that is, how they are socialized explicitly or implicitly into the discursive practices (macro level analysis) and the language difficulties they face while conducting this sociocultural activity. Following the ethnographic approach design, data were obtained from 4 Jordanian NNEs over one academic semester. Results indicated that Jordanians' prior academic experience did not prepare them well for this particular activity and participants were socialized into this sociocultural activity through several strategies namely skilled guidance, observation of others, feedback and practice. Moreover, results indicated that participants faced several language difficulties i.e. vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and the immediacy and interactive nature of spoken language.

Keywords: language socialization paradigm; Oral academic presentations; Jordanian NNEs; Macro level analysis

1. Introduction

Academic discourse or academic literacy refers to forms of oral and written language and communication (e.g. genres, register, graphics, linguistics structures and interactional pattern) that are expected and cultivated and therefore usually evaluated by instructors, institutions, editors and others in educational and professional contexts (Duff, 2010). Academic discourse is usually connected with particular disciplines or professional areas and is embodied both in texts and other modes of interaction. It is typically indoctrinated within academic communities such as school or university programs. Students who enrol in academic institution have different amounts and kinds of prior experience with academic discourse, even when their home language is the same as that of educational institution (Duff, 2010). Both native English speakers (NESs) and non-native English speakers (NNEs) are argued to experience difficulties when enrolled in academic institutions. Ivanic (1998) explains that NESs entering English medium higher education after some years of absence may experience "change, difficulty, crises of confidence, and conflicts of identity" (p.7) and NNEs entering English medium higher education may experience a more complex challenges as most come from disadvantaged or minority language and backgrounds.

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Academic discourse and English academic discourse in particular has been examined from different theoretical perspectives over the past two decades in applied linguistics especially in postsecondary level (e.g. Hyland, 2006). Language socialization (LS) one of the most recent theoretical framework that examines the process of socialization in a particular academic discourse context seeks to answer questions on how newcomers to an academic culture learn how to participate successfully in the oral and written discourse of particular context or setting, how are they socialized, explicitly or implicitly into these discursive practices and how does interaction with their peers, instructors and tutors enhance the process of gaining expertise, confidence and sense of authority over particular period of time (Duff, 2010). LS paradigm had originally proposed by linguistic anthropologist, sociologists, psychologists and sociolinguists (Duff, 2002, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010; Heath, 1983; Morita, 2000, 2004; Ochs, 1986; Poole, 1992; Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Watson-Gegeo, 2004; Zappa Hollman, 2007). Duff (2010) argued that the core theoretical principles of LS paradigm is that language acquired through interactions with others who are more proficient in language and its culture practices and who provide novices explicit or implicit mentoring or evidence about normative, appropriate uses of language and of the world views.

LS framework has been used to explore academic discourse in various education contexts through writing practices (e.g. Blecher and Braine, 1995; Casanave, 1995, 2002; Harklau, 2003; Prior, 1998; Seror, 2008). However, too little attention has been paid to oral academic discourse except for Duff (2007a, 2008, 2009, 2010), Duff and Kobayashi (2010), Morita (2000, 2004), Kobayashi (2003, 2006) and Zappa-Hollman (2007). Following this line of research, the present study examined the academic discourse socialization of Jordanians NNESs through oral presentations in Malaysian context of education by employing language socialization paradigm to better understand how the Jordanians NNESs academically socialized into the new context of education they have just joined through their oral academic presentations (OAP).

Biber (2006) explains that oral and written academic discourses are quite distinctive. While written academic discourse is often prepared in isolation by a writer, oral academic discourse is normally much more spontaneous and public than written discourse. Yet the two modalities are not complete distinct since oral presentations or lecture typically bring about a variety of written texts and may also incorporate visual texts by means of PowerPoint or other media to facilitate communication (Kobayashi, 2003, 2004). It is argued that presently oral communication skills displayed in presentations, mini-lectures group project work and class discussions are highly stressed and assessed by instructors and peers more than before and therefore being researched more by language socialization scholars (e.g., Duff, 1995, 2009; Duff & Kobayashi, 2010; Kobayashi, 2006; Morita, 2000; Tracy, 1997; Zappa-Hollman, 2007b).

OAP, the focus of this study has been documented as a problematic issue among international students in Malaysian context of education (e.g. Alavi & Mansour, 2011; Billikopf, 2009; Pourfarhad et al., 2012; Radzuan & Kaur, 2011). For instance, Radzuan and Kaur (2011) conducted a qualitative analysis study to examine in depth the source of anxiety experienced by engineering students in delivering OAP. The study reveals that students encounter problems particularly in delivering OAP due to limited technical knowledge and barriers in students' English proficiency. Jordanians like other NNESs are reported to be weak in English (e.g. Al-Saleem, 2011; Farah, 2010; Rabab'ah, 2005). For example, Rabab'ah (2005) pointed out that a substantial number of Jordanians reported feelings of inadequacy and frustration with their English proficiency, particularly when participating in oral classroom activities such as OAP. This may be related to the fact that Jordanians have learned English as required course and seldom have the chance to use it in real-life situations. However, there are not many studies that investigate how the Jordanians socialized into their new academic discourse and the difficulties they find challenging in their academic life. Most of the studies are conducted in the late of eighties and nineties (e.g. Mukattash, 1983; Ibrahim, 1983; and Zughoul, 1987).

2. Literature Review

LS framework has been used to explore academic discourse in various education contexts through writing practices (e.g. Blecher and Braine, 1995; Casanave, 1995, 2002; Harklau, 2002; Prior, 1998; Seror, 2008). However, too little attention has been paid to oral academic discourse except for Duff (2007a, 2008, 2009, 2010), Duff and Kobayashi (2010), Morita (2000, 2004), Kobayashi (2003, 2006) and Zappa-Hollman (2007). For example, Morita (2000) employs language socialization perspective when conducting an eight months ethnographic study to investigate how students are expected to speak in two graduate courses (TESL 520 and TESL 570) offered by an applied linguistics department at university British Columbia in Canada and how they acquired the oral academic discourse needed to perform successful oral academic presentations (OAPs). Samples of this study were 21 students taking either or both of these courses, six of the students are NNSs and the rest of the students are native speakers of English. Data are collected mainly from classroom observations, video recordings of OAPs, interviews and questionnaires. Results showed that OAPs are challenging for both NESs and NNESs for different reasons. While NNESs might encounter language difficulties, NESs especially those who had never taught or had been out of school for some time, also found OAPs extremely challenging due to lack of experience in carrying out formal OAPs.

Kobayashi (2003) examines how a group of three L2 Japanese undergraduate students engaged to accomplish an academic presentation task during their year-long study in content based ESL program at a Canadian university. Findings show that students' preparatory activities outside the classroom include negotiating task definition and teacher expectations and sharing experiences in preparing presentation materials and rehearsing and peer coaching. Kobayashi's study shed useful light on students' contextualization of and orientation to academic presentations, the interdependence of spoken and written language in task preparation, and the role of the L1 as scaffold for L2 task accomplishment. Another study that explores the academic discourse socialization of NNESs is the study by Zappa-Hollman (2007). Zappa-Hollman investigates qualitatively the language socialization of 55 NESs and NNESs in graduate school context of western Canadian university focusing only on one speech event i.e. oral academic presentations where he explores the sociocultural activity and the role it played to facilitate students' linguistic and sociocultural development. Results found that presentations are a complex task in the academic context world and that academic presentations challenged both NNESs and NESs in both linguistic and sociocultural ways. Zappa-Hollman concludes that oral academic presentation provides a vital context in which NNESs can be socialized into oral discourse and culture of their perspective disciplines.

Previous studies examined NESs and NNESs socialization experiences in academic settings where the target language is the dominant language of society and academic setting (e.g. Canadian and American context of education). However, whether such features can also be found in a setting where the target language is used in more isolated or confined contexts such as high school or universities (e.g. second language L2 speakers of English in Malaysia) should be further investigated. In this regard Kramsch (2000) noted that it is not unusual for L2 speakers living within L2 speech community to form their own unique identities and ways of speaking that do not exactly resemble those of native speech community. Furthermore, Morita and Kobayashi (2008) point out that there is an urgent need to explore in detail the research on academic language socialization of NNESs experiences in academic context where English is not the native language such as Malaysia. The current study is an effort to contribute to the knowledge of this area of research.

3. Theoretical framework

Language socialization (LS) framework is originally proposed by linguistic anthropologist Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin with their breaking studies in Western Samoa and Papua New Guinea.

Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) argued that the process of acquiring language is embedded in the core of the process of becoming socialized to become competent member of social group and that socialization practices and ideologies impact language acquisition in concert neurodevelopmental influences. Ochs and Scheffelin (1984) emphasized the need for interdisciplinary and comparative perspective on children's linguistic and social development that could bridge the gap between two separate fields of enquiry that had been developing in very different ways, developmental psycholinguistic research on first language acquisition and anthropological research on child socialization or acculturation. They further proposed that language acquisition and culture acquisition are mutually dependent and that interaction of the two processes needed to be studied to further understand both processes. This proposition was the spark that fuelled the launching of language socialization paradigm as an alternative model to explain language acquisition (Watson-Gegeo& Nielsen, 2003).

The first LS studies have mostly focused on the interrelationship between acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge of children and adults who socialize into specific context or community through the use of their (L1) first language (e.g. Clancy, 1999; Cook, 1999; Gumperz, 1982; Heath, 1983; 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). These studies vary from focusing on interaction between children and their caregivers to interaction at school and later on workplace. Most of them are conducted in small scale societies while other studies are conducted in larger societies (i.e. United States and Japan) and tend to focus relatively on homogenous and monolingual communities (e.g. Cook, 1999; Heath, 1983). For example, Heath (1983) used ethnographic tradition to describe how children in three communities used language at home and at school in southeast America by documenting how Trackton a black working class community and Roadville a white working class community socialized their children at home through language. This study revealed that those categories of people encountered great difficulties when they went to school because the school's way of using language is inconsistent with both Roadville and Trackton's discourse style but in harmony with town's people. As a result both Trackton and Roadville' children did not perform well at school.

Heath (1983) offers a framework of macro-level analysis of discontinuity between home and school socialization. However, Cook (1999) approach language socialization through a micro perspective. Cook (1999) examined the structure of Japanese elementary school classroom interaction and attested how Japanese children develop the skills of listening in classroom interaction. Fifteen hours of audio-taped classroom interactions from 5 classes in 4 schools were analyzed to examine the participation structure and the role of the teacher and of the peers. The result indicates that multiparty participation structure rather than dyadic structure helped to socialize the children into listening-oriented communication appropriate for Japanese culture. This kind of interaction pattern minimized the teacher's role but emphasized that the peers' role served as the primary socialization resource for Japanese children. The outcome of this study suggested that children had difficulties in socialization due to the difference in interaction pattern in American classrooms from that in Japanese traditional classroom socialization pattern.

Although studies of language socialization has traditionally concerned with children's first language (L1) acquisition and socialization, a number of studies have examined the second language (L2) socialization in different sociocultural ecology including home, community, school, workplace and most recently in higher education academic settings (Watson-Gegeo, 2004). For example, Willet (1995) in her year-long ethnography of English L2 socialization students in US schools focused on boy and girl gender socialization in first grade level. Willet described how through socially significant interactional routines "the children and other members of classroom jointly constructed the ESL children's identities, social relations, and ideologies as well as their communicative competence in that setting" (p.473).

In addition, Crago (1992a) also explores young children's language socialization when they are exposed to L2 environment. In the larger ethnographic study of Inuit family socialization of language, Crago argued that differences in patterns of communicative interaction between Inuit families and non-Inuit L2 teachers in Canada generates communication problems between Inuit children and non-Inuit teachers.

Duff (1995) in her longitudinal study video-recorded dual language English/Hungarian classrooms over two years in three schools in different parts of post 1989 Hungary. She examined the changing dynamics of oral classroom discourse as it is connected to English as medium of instruction. Findings revealed that language socialization process is bidirectional process where teachers and students corrected one another in language acquisition process as they were negotiated correct English forms as a way of showcasing their emerging identities as proficient users of English. In L2 workplace socialization, Li (2000) examined the language socialization of immigrant woman in the US immigrant job training program while trying to learn how to frame a request in English as (L2) in appropriate way. The case study of this Chinese woman demonstrates that making a request in second language is not merely a linguistic process but a social one as well. Li (2000) argued that the process of socialization is double layers process where novices in the new working environment are novice in both the new language and the new culture as well.

Linguists have examined the development of L2 literacy skills of NNEs socialization in context of higher education and demonstrated the profound link between the local sociocultural system and the L2 acquisition process (e.g. Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Casanave, 1992, 1995; Currie, 1998; Johns, 1997; Leki, 1995; Prior, 1994, 1995; Riazi, 1997; Schneider & Fujiyama, 1995; Spack, 1997). In this line of research, Prior (1995) demonstrates through a series of qualitative studies the need for contextualized, detailed ethnographic research designs to understand students writing and faculty feedback. He further argued that such an approach is necessary "if we perceive our students as full subjects working to achieve their social, intellectual, and affective goals within complex, emergent streams of situated activity" (p. 78). Following this argument many researchers have employed language socialization paradigm as a framework to understand the process of L2 writing in its sociocultural context (e.g. Leki, 2003; Casanave, 2002).

For instance, Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995) employ language socialization paradigm in their ethnographic study to explore how NNEs writers socialized in two compulsory foundation programs offered by one of the university in US. Results suggested that NNEs are affected by different conceptions of academic writing promoted by two different sociocultural aspects promoted by these two foundation programs. Mohan and Smith (1992) in another ethnographic study described how a group of Chinese students with limited English proficiency developed sociocultural and linguistic knowledge and skills in academic writing with assistance of an expert (i.e. old-timers, instructors and peers) and by engaging in carefully organized classroom activities. Along the same line of research, Leki (1995) explored the reading and writing skills that NNEs are expected to produce in North American University classrooms. In her study, Leki (1995) examined the academic socialization experience of five NNEs in light of strategies they brought with them to their new academic experience in US context of education, and the strategies they developed over time in order to cope with the demands of the new academic culture. Results demonstrated that the strategies they brought to the new academic settings are no longer useful to successfully meet the course writing expectations.

In recent studies of academic writing socialization, Leki (2003) conducted an ethnographic study on a Chinese undergraduate nursing student (Yang) literacy development at an American university. This study investigated the writing development of Yang over five semesters. Yang, the sample of this study was exempted from ESL course due to her high TOEFL score; however she encountered various struggle while trying to communicate orally with her new academic context.

She also had various difficulties in her writing. Results showed that Yang succeeded in writing traditional academic papers for English and history courses, but she was struggled to write comprehensive Nursing Care Plans (NCP). Moreover, Yang's limited social and cultural knowledge also negatively affected her academic literacy development. This study reveals the complexity of L2 academic experience for a NNEs who is already knowledgeable and accomplished in her disciplinary field. Another recent study which addressed the issue of L2 writing socialization process was conducted by Seloni(2008). Seloni examined the academic socialization process of six multilingual PhD students in the field of education as they progressed through their first year of doctoral education. The study suggests that the socialization into the values of academic writing is a complex and multilayered process in which students collaboratively construct meaning and engage in interactive dialogs both inside and outside of their classrooms in order to learn how to become legitimate participants in their academic disciplines. The study demonstrates that the spaces created outside of academic classrooms can enhance students' understanding of academic literacy practices, and empower the students to be engaging practitioners and members of their imagined academic communities.

Although this corpus of research on L2 academic writing has continued to grow, few studies have addressed the issue of oral academic discourse socialization. In response to the relative lack of research on oral academic tasks required by instructors in academic contexts, the present study attempted to address this gap in literature by focusing on Jordanian NNEs engagement in one particular speech event, that is, the oral academic presentations (OAP) and its relation to Jordanian NNEs' academic discourse socialization in Malaysian context of higher learning.

4. Research Questions

- How are Jordanians NNEs being socialized academically through OAPs in the Intensive English Program (IEP)
- What are the challenges do they face while preparing and delivering their OAPs?

5. Methodology

In applied linguistics, there has been an increasing acceptance of qualitative research since the mid-1990s (Duff, 2002b). This is related to the growing recognition that almost every aspects of language acquisition is determined and shaped by social, cultural, and situational factors where qualitative research is ideal for providing insights into such contextual conditions and influence (Dornyei, 2007). Many researchers in the area of language socialization have conducted their studies qualitatively (e.g. Duff, 1995; Heath, 1983; Mohan & Marshall Smith, 1992; Morita, 2000; Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin& Ochs, 1986; Willett, 1995; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). These scholars have embraced ethnographic strategy to provide a "broad description of the cultures, communities, classrooms, and other dynamic social settings in which language is learned and used, based on persistent engagement in and extensive observation of the context" (Duff & Talmy, 2011, p.98).

According to Harklau (2005) the main feature of ethnographic study includes prolonged engagement in the natural setting. The distinction of the participants' meaning cannot be uncovered unless the researcher immerse him/herself in the culture and spends an extended period living there, observing the participants and collecting data. Therefore, "a minimum stay of 6-12 months is usually recommended to achieve the necessary prolonged engagement" (Dornyei, 2007 p.131). Prolong engagement in the context of this particular study i.e. for four months (one academic semester) is essential to understand recurring cultural and linguistic patterns of interactions that constitute the process of Jordanian NNEs' socialization through OAPs in their academic setting that they are a part of.

5.1 Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) one of the private universities in west part of Malaysia. UNITEN has witnessed a rapid of growth of Jordanian international students in several faculties i.e. Faculty of Information Technology, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Business and Finance. Jordanian NNEs have to provide an official language proficiency score from recognized language exams such as the Test of English Language as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Testing System (IELTS) or they can attend English language proficiency test (ELPT) in order to join their respective target program. Failure to meet these requirements would necessitate the Jordanian NNEs to take Intensive English Program (IEP), i.e. English as a Second Language program designed by the English Centre of UNITEN to assist those who did not meet the university language proficiency requirements.

The researcher argues that OAP may not be a routine in the Jordanian NNEs' previous academic experience in Jordan. They come from different social and academic backgrounds where English is considered as a foreign language rather than a second language (Al-Saleem, 2011; Farah, 2010; Rabab'ah, 2005). Jordanian NNEs need to acquire this oral skill when studying in Malaysian academic context since OAP is being stressed and assessed by instructors and peers (Koo, 2009). This emphasis reflects the amount and quality of collaboration and communication that are required in real world knowledge building and knowledge sharing in a variety of professional and academic fields (Koo, 2009).

IEP exposes students to 30 hours of English per week, or 6 hours per day and covers all the language skills including reading (4hours/week), writing (4hours/week), listening (4 hours/week), and speaking (4hours/week). The IEP comprises of two modules spread over two semesters, module one (14 weeks) for students at elementary to lower intermediate level proficiency, and module 2 (14 weeks) for students at intermediate to upper intermediate level proficiency. OAPs are intensively done in the second semester. Based on the IEP syllabus, the Jordanian NNEs will have to go through a series of OAP throughout semester two. Thus, for the purpose of the study the data collection was conducted in the second semester 2012/2013 of IEP.

This study employed purposive and theoretical sampling particularly homogenous sampling strategy in order to conduct an in-depth analysis (Dornyei, 2007). Thus, for the purpose of this study, the researcher had recruited four Jordanians NNEs from the pool of Jordanians students who were engaged in IEP at UNITEN. The following table is a brief demographic summary of the participants in this study. Their specific department information is not mentioned to protect the participants.

Participants	Gender	Age	Came to Malaysia	Level of study
Bashar	M	25	07-2012	G
Rand	F	26	08-2012	UG
Mohammad	M	30	08-2012	G
Ayman	M	27	08-2012	G

Table1: Demographic summary of the participants

5.2 Data Collection

The researcher conducted a class room observation for four months (one academic semester) by focusing on the context of OAP (e.g. participants' location, formality, description of presenter, audience and classroom environment). These observations were conducted to explore how Jordanian NNEs socialized in the context of the study in order to perform this particular sociocultural activity. At this stage, the researcher made use of observation form adopted from Cummings (1992).

The researcher's observation mainly focused on four fields: context and organization of the presentation (e.g. beginning, body and conclusion), interaction between presenter and audience (e.g. timing, quality, using visual aids, and eye contact), platform skills (e.g. volume, tone level, and speed) and general language use (e.g. vocabulary, listening, grammar, and pronunciation). During observations, descriptive field notes had been taken and typed immediately (Silverman, 2001).

During these collection processes, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with selected participants in an attempt to determine the issues these Jordanian NNEs face in relation to oral presentations and to record their perceptions and progress that they made in their academic socialization process. Interview is the most often used method in qualitative inquiries. It is regularly applied in variety of applied linguistics contexts for diverse purposes (Block, 2000). These interviews were conducted in university where participants felt most comfortable. A set of pre-structured questions was prepared by the researcher (e.g. what difficulties do participants have when they are doing OAPs, what participants do to improve their OAPs, prior OAP experience in Jordan, and perception of OAP in Malaysian context of education). It is worth mentioning that the format of the interview was open-ended where the interviewees were encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner (Block, 2000).

5.3 Data Analysis

In qualitative research there are several suggested ways of analyzing data (Zappa-Holman, 2007). This research followed Huberman and Miles' (1994) way of identifying patterns, themes and cluster that emerged from the data. Huberman and Miles' analysis technique was adopted in this study since it facilitates the researcher's thinking about relationships between data and make the ideas and analysis generated more visible and retrievable. To answer the research questions of how are Jordanians NNEs being socialized academically through OAPs in the Intensive English Program (IEP) and what are the challenges do they face while preparing and delivering their OAPs. The interview data recordings were transcribed first and then the researcher went through the data to find the salient themes that participants repeat over interviews. These themes were coded into initial categories using the inductive approach suggested by Huberman and Miles' (1994). For instance in the following excerpt:

Researcher: So what are the challenges do you face while preparing and delivering your OAPs
Bashar: Vocabulary, particularly terms. You can prepare your OAPs in advance by looking into dictionary, but the problem if one of the audiences asks you something you have to answer them in spontaneous way. That time you have to recognize your idea in Arabic then translate them into English. I do not like to be in this situation at all, since absolutely I will be confused and disturbed.

For an excerpt like this, the researcher categorized these interviews excerpts into three kinds of difficulties namely: vocabulary, interaction with the audience and the requirement to respond immediately. After the initial categorization, categories were put into data display to find the major themes and patterns at higher level. This process of data reduction was very important in order to make the data more feasible (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For instance, the above initial category "vocabulary" would be under the category of language difficulties and "interaction with audience" would be under the category of presentation skills difficulties and "the requirement to respond immediately" would be under immediacy of oral presentations category. Some categories generated from the interview are as follows: personal background information, participants' prior OAPs experience in Jordan, perceptions of OAPs in Malaysian context, challenges in OAPs including language issues and presentation skills difficulties. The themes generated in this process from different cases were compared and contrasted to find the major themes across cases.

Interview data in this research were most helpful in minimizing the researcher bias and provide the possibility to re-access the information in its raw form.

As explained by Silverman (2001) “interviews share with any account an involvement in moral realities, they offer a rich source of data which provide access to how people account for both their troubles and good fortune”(p.114).

During this coding process, connections were made between the initial codes and the theory guiding the interviews questions to make sure they are in line with each other. For instance, when the interviewees talked about how they improved their OAPs, answers were by watching others, attending extra English courses, seminars from different departments, faculty advisors assistant from peers and practice. The researcher aligned these categories with the theory of language socialization.

Field notes generated from researcher’s observation described the physical setting of IEP context, procedures of the OAPs and provided a contextual information of OAPs that Jordanian NNEs produced during this socialization process. For instance, in the following field note:

Jordanian NNEs had serious problems in English pronunciation, for instance in Bashar’s OAP that was conducted on 13th of October, 2012. The word “people” was pronounced as “beoble”. The bilabial voiceless stop “p” was pronounced as bilabial voiced stop “b”. While another participant Rand pronounced the word “game” as “kame”. The velar voiced stop “g” was pronounced as velar voiceless stop “k”.

By using Cumming’s observation form (1992), the researcher categorize pronunciation problems under general language use field. Categories which were generated from observation form were compared to those from interviews to generate larger categories. In general, the field notes in this research were used to supplement the data from interviews and worked as a source to confirm or disconfirm the themes generated from the interviews.

6. Findings

Findings revealed that Jordanians NNEs were gradually socialized through OAPs in IEP context of education via four strategies namely, skilled guidance, observation of others, feedback and practice. Data showed that most Jordanian NNEs made efforts to observe other students particularly those who were familiar with OAPs activity. For instance, Ayman in his second interview stated the following:

Researcher: what do you do to improve your OAPs skills?

Ayman: I found a good Iraqi presenter who did his master in university of Melbourne, Australia and I kept observing his OAPs and try to imitate the way he open his presentation and ended it. He is a perfect ideal for me that I should observe to learn how to be good presenter. (Second interview Saturday 11th, October, 2012. Translated from Arabic to English language)

While Rand in her first interview stated the following:

Researcher: what do you do to improve your OAPs skills?

Rand: Sometimes I watch other Jordanians who are same level as I am. For example, when they did presentations, I would listen for good presenters, and pay more attention to the way they pronounce words so I can avoid some of the mistake they made, sometime they repeat a lot using a lot of fillers such as “you know”. (First interview Saturday 13th, October, 2012. Original English)

According to researcher’s observation, skilled guidance in the context of this study was very effective strategy in facilitating Jordanians socialization process. This structured assistance from the academic community can make a big difference in the socialization process of the participants. For instance in the following field notes, researcher stated the following:

I accidentally met two participants Mohamad and Ayman in their faculties while they were attending defense seminar for one of their colleagues, once I asked for the reason beyond attending this particular seminar, the answer was “to acquire more skills on how to do proper OAPs”. (Field note taken on Monday, 5th November, 2012).

The same theme was generated from interview data; Bashar in his first interview stated the following:

I think lecturers in IEP are very nice. If I stumble a lot in my presentations they are always patient and encouraging. Naturally, you will feel encouraged. Had not been this kind of skilled guidance, students might face various problems in conducting OAPs.(First interview Monday 15th, October, 2012. Translated from Arabic to English language).

Also, feedback was one of the strategies that facilitate Jordanians socialization process in Malaysian academic context. For instance, Mohammad in his first interview stated:

Whenever I do any grammatical mistake during my presentations, the lecturers in IEP program correct me straight away. This is was great since I can recognize my mistakes on the spot and hereafter I will not repeat the mistake again. This feedback is very important since I have to present my PhD proposal in 7 months' time from now.

Researcher's observation acknowledged this feedback which was mainly generated by IEP's instructors. For instance:

Ayman was asked to present his PhD proposal, although he did several mistakes during his OAP, the instructor did not interrupt his presentation, but kept listening and writing down some comments. Once Ayman got through his presentation, the instructor start giving comments on the content of OAP to correct almost every fault he did during presentation. (Field note taken on Monday, 3rd December, 2012)

Jordanians NNEs acknowledge the role of practice in this socialization process in improving their OAPs. In fact all of the participants considered practice as an important part of this social activity. For instance, Mohammad stated in his second interview the following:

The time I came to Malaysia, I start recognizing the importance of practicing English with others who are more proficient in language use. First I was not daring enough to speak with Malaysian students in the same faculty and even in different faculty as well. But I managed to break the ice and start talking to people around, till I discover that my English improved step by step. I think practice is the key to acquire the language. (Second interview Saturday 3rd, November, 2012. Original English).

While Bashar stated the following:

Having many Indian students in UNITEN, is one of the privileges that I had during IEP course, I start talking to them in regular basis, my English had improved. Just like walking up toward the last step in a stair, you have to pass step by step... practice is the best strategy to be good English speaker. (Second interview Monday 22, October, 2012. Translated from Arabic to English).

Findings showed that OAP is a culturally loaded activity for Jordanian NNEs because this particular activity is not part of their prior academic experience. Therefore, participants need to be double socialized into Malaysian culture and academic settings as well in order to acquire the required skills to conduct this sociocultural activity. Jordanians were being socialized into academic community through observation, skilled guidance, feedback, and practice.

Findings also showed that Jordanians faced some specific language difficulties. According to participants of this study, they had all learn English as a foreign language and hardly use English previously. Based on observations and interview, one of the biggest challenges with OAP is the lack of vocabulary, particularly technical terms in their fields. For instance, Mohammad in his second interview stated the following:

*Researcher: what are the difficulties that you usually face when you do your oral presentations?
Mohammad: vocabulary. Particularly terms, we learned so many words when we were preparing for IEP program but we still cannot use them in the context of OAPs. Even if we translate the content of our presentation to our mother language (Arabic) sometimes you cannot detect the exact word in English.. (Second interview Saturday 3rd, November, 2012. Original English).*

Another participant stated the following when asked about the difficulties of doing oral presentations:

Rand: It is difficult to present in English, particularly at the very beginning. For example, I have to describe a diagram during OAP. I could not do it because of lack of terms in English. I felt ashamed and I kept stumbling in my presentation. . (Second interview Thursday 11th, October, 2012. Original English).

Lack of vocabulary in English affect the platform skills and the organization of the OAPs for almost all Jordanians. For instance in the following field note:

While Mohammad was presenting his PhD proposal, he could not find the suitable words to express his gratitude to IEP instructors, the speed level and time was gradually decreased; he stated "first I will thank all of you for listening to me today". (Field note taken on Friday, 23rd November, 2012).

A week after Mohammad's presentation, he start again his presentation with "Alslam Alekom brothers and sister, first I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for all of you for the support you gave during this English program". The speed level and the tone of were consistent with the whole context and organization of the presentation. (Field note taken on Friday, 30 November, 2012)

It is very obvious that lack of vocabulary expose Mohammad to this kind of situation where he could not organize the beginning of his OAPs. He was forced to reduce his tone and speed level in opening section. However, a week after his presentation, the beginning of his presentation was organized and clear.

Moreover, OAP is a form of oral communication that requires the presenter to speak clearly for the benefits of the audience. Jordanian NNEs reported that their accent and faulty pronunciation pattern are among the difficulties that they have to overcome when speaking to the audience. For instance, Ayman in his third interview stated that:

I had problems with audience when I'm doing my OAPs, audience cannot understand my English accent I could call it Jordanian accent, honestly I'm working hard to improve the way I pronounce English words and mostly depend on oxford online dictionary to get the exact pronunciation as native speakers do. (Third interview Thursday 22nd, November, 2012. Original English).

Based on researcher's observation and interview data, Jordanian NNEs had listening comprehension problems particularly when they were interacting with the audience and IEP's instructors. For instance the following field note was taken:

Instructors in IEP: Well... we have emphasized in our lecture last week the importance of eye contact with audience once you are doing your presentation. What do you think Rand?

Rand: literature what literature, I cannot understand what do you mean? (Field note, taken on Thursday, 1st November, 2012)

It is very obvious that Rand heard the word 'lecture' but mistakenly she thought it is "literature" which made her answer confusing. Interview data also spotted this difficulty which was echoed by the participants during their interviews:

Researcher: Are there other challenges when you are doing OAPs in English?

Bashar: Yes, we have Chinese classmates who were engaged in the same class with us. It is very difficult to understand the way they pronounce words in English. Only after a while that I could follow them and understand them properly. (Second interview Thursday 11th, October, 2012. Original English).

Besides vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension, participants also mentioned difficulties related to the immediacy and interactive nature of spoken language. For example, Bashar stated in his third interview the following:

My major problem is the size of the vocabulary I have. For example, during writing tasks, I can check my dictionary finding the words I wish to insert in my essay; however issue becomes more complicated during presentation. Time is not sufficient to make any changes since it is naturally spoken task, so I might make many grammatical errors and many sentence fragments. (Third interview Monday 26th, November, 2012. Translated from Arabic to English).

Discussion and Conclusion

Findings revealed that OAPs as a sociocultural activity provided a context in which Jordanians were gradually socialized into the discipline-specific discourse. The feature of OAPs as a process for academic discourse socialization was expressed through observation, skilled guidance, feedback, and practice. This study revealed that OAP is a culturally loaded activity, confirming the findings of Morita (2000), Kobayashi (2003), and Zappa-Hollman (2007). Jordanians who did not have this particular kind of activity as a regular part of their prior academic experience find OAP very challenging. Thus, these participants need to be socialized and immersed into the context of IEP in order to acquire the skills needed to conduct OAPs as part of curriculum in Malaysian context of education. Moreover, the findings of this study confirm the findings of Leki (2003) who conducted an ethnographic study on a Chinese undergraduate nursing student literacy development at an American university. The nursing student encountered various problems while she was trying to communicate orally with her new academic context due to limited social and cultural knowledge which negatively affected her academic literacy development. The same case can be applied to the participants of this study, since Jordanians prior academic experience did not prepare them well to conduct this social academic activity i.e. OAP. This simple lack of experience put Jordanian NNEs at a great disadvantage situation for they are required to fulfill task that is unfamiliar to them.

Moreover, findings revealed that Jordanian NNEs faced several language difficulties namely: vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension, and difficulties related to the immediacy and interactive nature of spoken language. In this regard Rabab'ah (2005) argued that Jordanians have difficulties in using English for academic communication specially when engaged in oral activities (e.g. OAP, seminar, conference) because they lack the necessary vocabulary needed to get their meaning across.

Mukattash (1983) divided problems that Jordanian face in acquiring English into two types, firstly, university students continue to make some basics errors in pronunciation, spelling, and syntax and secondly, they are unable to express themselves “comfortably and efficiently either when dealing with academic topics or common everyday topics” (p.169). Findings of this study were consistent with the above arguments. The researcher observed and recorded similar errors when observing the Jordanian NNEs perform their oral presentation. The researcher argues that this deficiency stemmed from the fact that Jordanians rarely had the chance to use English in real life situation in Jordan.

OAP as an academic activity is almost non-existent in Jordanian higher education context (BaniAbdo& Breen, 2010).BaniAbdo and Breen (2010) argued that there is a serious gap and deficiency among Jordanians to use English language in formal communicative tasks such as OAP due to the considerable difference between Arabic and English in terms of alphabetical characters, grammar, syntax and the overall linguistic logistics of the two languages. Moreover, they argued also that EFL instructors in Jordan are not sufficiently educated and fail to apply effective EFL teaching methods. The findings of this study is important for it provides an insight of the importance of oral presentation when studying abroad and thus suggest that the EFL curriculum planner in Jordan should consider making OAP as part of the curriculum in Jordan.

Morita and Kobayashi (2008) pointed out that there is an urgent need to explore in detail the research on academic language socialization of NNEs experiences in academic context where English is not the native language such as Malaysia. The current research was an effort to contribute to the knowledge of this area of research. In this regard, Duff (2010) problematizes the concept that NES as experts can apprentice and accommodate other novices to become experts and provide them access to target practices by giving an example from her research in Hungary (Duff, 1993) where many international speaking teachers had been imported to teach physics, mathematics, and other subjects in English medium dual language schools. These native English teachers did not have their contracts renewed after one year because although the fact that they were proficient, they were not able to adopt using English with NNEs compared to local Hungarian trained teachers. The findings of this study were consistent with Duff’s (2010) argument in that socialization process of Jordanian NNEs through OAPs was successful although the fact that IEP’s instructors were mainly Malaysian NNEs. Jordanian NNEs employed different strategies namely observation of other NNEs (e.g. Chinese, Indians and other Arabs), expert guidance, feedback and practice with other NNEs as well.

To summarize, the themes emerged from field notes and interviews had been coded and organized in a way that they would portray logic and serve as an argument to sustain the claims made as a result of this study. Based on researcher’s observation and interview data this study revealed that OAP is a culturally loaded activity for Jordanian NNEs in Malaysian academic context of education. The academic socialization process through OAPs was successful where participants adopted different strategies namely observation, skilled guidance, feedback and practice. Moreover, findings showed that Jordanian NNEs faced different language difficulties i.e. vocabulary, pronunciation, listening comprehension and immediacy and interactive nature of spoken language. Researcher argued that Jordanians prior academic experience did not prepare them well to perform OAPs in English language context which put Jordanians in a negative situation where they were asked to fulfill task that was unfamiliar to them.

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