

Exploring International Student Academic Discourse Socialization in Canadian Universities through a Deleuzian Lens

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Abstract: As Canadian universities set their sights on increasing their international student populations, a critical re-examination of research approaches to international student language and adjustment to Western higher education is imperative. This paper draws on Deleuzian ontology of difference to better understand the complex and rapidly changing milieu of higher education. More specifically, it critically re-examines the application of the well-established academic discourse socialization framework in view of a changing academic community. It challenges the notion of a uniform, linear process of socialization based on essentialized identities of novice / expert. By introducing Deleuzian concepts of “becoming,” “assemblage,” and “language,” prevailing constructs of identity, academic community, and academic discourse are transformed into interconnected ever-changing entities, working together in potentially unpredictable ways.

Keywords: Academic Discourse, Deleuze, International Education

Introduction

Increasingly, Canada is becoming a more attractive destination for international students, with over 160,735 non-nationals studying in Canadian universities (CBIE, 2013). This trend is not unique to Canadian universities; many Western Anglophone universities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia are actively recruiting international students, welcoming not only the diversity that international students bring to their classrooms but also the increased profitability in non-domestic/international tuition fees (Trilokekar & Kizilbash, 2013). With this influx of overseas students, few have considered how the shift in student demographics will impact the university in terms of teaching, learning, institutional culture, and overall academic experience (Ryan, 2011). This paper begins with the premise that increased international student enrollment will have an impact on the academic learning culture.¹ Nonetheless, that is not the main point of this paper. Instead, based on the presumption that increasing international student participation in Canadian universities will shape its institutional culture, this paper disrupts the view of institutions of higher learning as fixed entities or stable communities (Robinson-Pant, 2009; Ryan, 2011; Ryan & Viète, 2009). More importantly, this paper interrogates academic discourse socialization that has guided much of current research on entry into and adaptation to academic culture.

Academic discourse socialization (Duff, 2007, 2008, 2010; Duff & Talmy, 2012) draws from Lave and Wenger’s (1991) communities of practice (CoP) framework, and has spurred a wealth of research on academic adjustment (Morita & Kobayashi, 2008). However, this paper reconsiders how academia has been theorized by arguing that the academic community is constantly evolving, especially given the unprecedented number of international students enrolling in Canadian institutions. My argument questions the presumptions underlying academic discourse socialization, namely that at the heart of academic learning is academic culture, and that academic success requires integration into this culture. Based on the CoP framework, integration involves acquiring the skills and knowledge to emulate (or at least gain the acceptance of) veteran members (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Arguably, such an approach suggests predictability in norms, expectations, and practices, but given shifting demographics brought on through increased efforts to internationalize higher education, can we assume that academic communities are still as predictable? How might we theorize the changes in Canadian higher education as a result of increased international student participation?

To address this question, the writings of Deleuze (1994) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are deployed. Emphasizing difference, production, and creativity, Deleuze (1994) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offered an ontology and the associated concepts of “assemblage” and “becoming,” which highlight how inevitable interconnection and co-adaptation within a system produces constant movement and flux in both expected and unintended ways. Arguably, these concepts can be helpful in understanding the dynamics of change. By connecting Deleuzian concepts of “becoming,” “assemblage,” and language, prevailing constructs of identity, academic community, and academic discourse are transformed into interconnected ever-changing entities,

¹ Few studies have attempted to measure the impact that international students have had on the host university context. Notable attempts include Sawir (2013) on the contribution of international students to changing higher education curriculum in Australia, Ryan (2011) on the relationship between the presence of Chinese international students and teaching and learning in UK universities, and most recently, Vinther & Slethaug’s (2015) comparison of the impact of international students on Canadian and Danish university environments.

working together in potentially unpredictable ways. With increasing international student enrollment in Canadian universities, Deleuzian perspectives may prove useful in theorizing the changes these students bring to the academy that may disrupt traditional notions of academia and academic discourse as stable, structured, and homogenous.

International Students and Language in Higher Education

Academic Discourse Socialization

To contextualize this discussion on international students' academic experience in Canadian universities,² it is necessary to briefly review key findings in the related literature.³ To a large extent, the issue of international students' enrollment and participation in Western Anglophone universities has centered on the linguistic challenges that incoming students may face and how these barriers could be most efficiently and effectively overcome (e.g. Phakiti, Hirsch, & Woodrow, 2013; Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Faculty have reported that language is the greatest barrier in teaching international students (Robertson et al. 2000; Sawir, 2011; Trice, 2003). In response, universities have invested significant resources in developing English for Academic Purposes (EAP) language programs with the goal to improve students' academic language proficiency and teach them the necessary academic skills to succeed in their degree program (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011).

Nevertheless, successful integration into the academic community requires more than linguistic proficiency and academic skill; it requires understanding the practices and norms of the institution, that is, "adapting to new ways of knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting, and organizing knowledge" (Lea & Street, 1996, p. 158). Institutions of higher education have their own established culture, with its own discourse (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994) requiring what Lea & Street (1996) refer to as academic literacies. For the purposes of this paper, this culture can be considered synonymous with academic language and academic discourse (Duff, 2010).⁴ Duff defines academic discourse to include

forms of oral and written language and communication-genres, registers, graphics, linguistic structures, interactional patterns—that are privileged, expected, cultivated, conventionalized, or ritualized, and therefore, usually evaluated by instructors, institutions, editors, and others in educational and professional contexts. (2010, p. 175)

Most importantly, academic discourse includes social skills, epistemological values, and intellectual beliefs that cannot be taught implicitly, but can be acquired through on-going face-to-face interaction (Duff, 2010; Young, 2013). As such, academic discourse is acquired through the socially, culturally, and politically situated process of language socialization—social interactions with more experienced speakers who mentor new language learners either explicitly through direct instruction and (or) implicitly by modeling dialogue. Such demonstrations of appropriate and normative language also reflect "corresponding worldviews, ideologies, values, and identities of community members" (Duff, 2010, p. 172).

Language socialization, linguistic identity, and communities of practice, are connected through Norton's (1995, 1997, 2000) identity framework which defines identity as "how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (1997, p. 410). The role of identity, particularly among incoming/novice international students on academic learning has been well documented whereby language, cultural identity, and social interaction/membership within the host community are central to the academic experience of newcomers (Casanave & Li, 2008; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009). Furthermore, native speakers (including instructors, domestic students, and community members) play a critical role in shaping the target language use, adjustment, and sense of belonging to their new academic community (Morita, 2004; Hayashi, 2013; Robertson, et al., 2000). Overall, these studies support the view that language mastery relates to more than just linguistic knowledge but also to the relational and affective issues in thinking, acting, speaking, and writing to the satisfaction of the community. As with learning any new language, mastering academic discourse reshapes identity; hence

² Though this paper focuses on the context of Canadian universities, it draws on literature that may include research from the U.S., UK, and Australia. These contexts can be considered as comparable as they share the common characteristics of an English medium of instruction and an Anglophone Western socio-cultural context.

³ For a comprehensive review of the literature on international student experience and adjustment to Western Anglophone universities see Andrade (2006) and de Araujo (2011).

⁴ See Duff (2010, p. 171) for a thorough discussion on the compatibility between the academic literacies and academic discourse.

successfully adopting the discourse of the dominant community transforms the incoming international student's positionality to that of a legitimate member (Casanave & Li, 2008).

The concepts of academic discourse and language socialization draw on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice (CoP). Gaining membership into the academic CoP requires adopting the language, practices, and beliefs of academic discourse. All students entering academia as a CoP must adjust to the new norms, values, and practices of the institution. Yet, some students may be better prepared to acclimate. For example, learners less familiar with academia, such as mature students returning to higher education after a prolonged absence, or international students less proficient in dominant linguistic and cultural practices, may require a greater deal of self-adjustment (e.g. Casanave & Li, 2008; Duff, 2010; Morita, 2004). Adjustment is co-constructed with other members in the community as more experienced members assess capability, worthiness, legitimacy, and potential of newcomers (Duff, 2010; Halic et al., 2009; Hayashi, 2013; Morita, 2004).

Challenges to the Academic Discourse Socialization Framework

While the academic discourse/language socialization framework has produced significant insight into the challenges incoming students face in adjusting to academia, Schecter and Bayley (2004) have problematized the seemingly natural and smooth socialization process, thus questioning the utility of the framework to address difference, change and resistance. More specifically, three concerns have been summarized: a) emphasizing homogeneity and sameness within the established community, b) generalizing socialization as a uniform process and the same for all children and novices, and c) viewing individuals as passively complying with academic discourse irrespective of potential resistance (Duff, 2012; Rymes, 2008).

A heterogeneous and non-static community of practice. A primary critique of the academic discourse socialization framework relates to the presumption of a heterogeneous community of practice. Commonality—goals, values, and/or practices—is necessary for a CoP to function. Commonality may be understood as a shared domain of interest and a shared commitment to this domain as well as joint activities and discussions to share information. Further, commonality in a CoP requires a shared repertoire of resources as part of a shared practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner 2015). Commonality acts as a necessary presumption for academic language socialization to occur. Academic discourse socialization begins with the presumption that there is a) a pre-existing university culture made in part through consistency in values, norms, and expectations and following through with predictable behavior which veteran members are familiar, accept, and practice; b) this culture (to a large degree, but perhaps not entirely) is reified through the actions of its members; and c) change in members, and or member's actions, would impact the consistency and coherence within the community. Arguably, the principles underlying the academic discourse socialization framework emphasize sameness, consistency, and predictability, as these elements are necessary for the cohesion and unity of the community.

However, theorists (see for example, Kubota, 1999; Robinson-Pant, 2009; Street, 1996; Zamel, 1997) have observed that higher education is not a homogeneous monolithic entity, but a dynamic, non-stable one. Thus, they question the notion that there is one set of academic norms, practices, and discourse that novice students must adjust to. Theoretically, language socialization theories (e.g. an academic discourse socialization framework) view language learning as highly context-dependent and negotiable. Language socialization theories suggest that social and cultural heterogeneity transform language and language communities (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). Language both presupposes function and meaning, but is also flexible enough to be modified in new ways to address unique cultural contexts and circumstances allowing for fluidity and a multiplicity of possibilities for socialization experiences (Rymes, 2008; Duff, 2008).

Arguably, an unresolved tension persists in viewing academia as a CoP with normative shared practices while at the same time conceding academia as a site open to change and unpredictability. The prevailing language in Western Anglophone academia is standardized varieties of English based on national contexts (e.g. Canadian English or American English) (Jenkins, 2009). Although the language socialization framework affords the possibility for creative language use, empirical examples of new uptakes (words, collocations, expressions, or grammar) are rare (Schecter & Bayley, 2004). In other words, how often are new expressions created by novice members (in this case non-native English speakers), and how often are these new expressions taken up

by veteran members?⁵ How can the academic discourse socialization perspective account for changes to academic culture or language, especially through changes invoked by novices?

Challenges to explaining change relates not only to theory but also to methodology. As language socialization is an inherently complex life-long process, detailed analyses and evidence of individual linguistic outcomes of language socialization is an unrealistic goal for short-term studies (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Furthermore, because of the ubiquitous presence of language, it is difficult to predict which linguistic items acquired in the language socialization process will become part of the learners' linguistic repertoire. Conversely, it is also difficult to decipher when and how creative language use will be taken up by socializers as the emergence and uptake of new linguistic codes is a long and slow process and near-impossible to capture in real-time interactions (Duff & Talmy, 2011). As such, the language socialization framework faces numerous challenges in explaining the dynamics of power, structure, agency, heterogeneity, and change in relation to academic discourse socialization.

Generalizing socialization as an equitable and uniform process. Additional concerns relate to the presumption that socialization is a uniform process, whereby novices readily accept and emulate the practices, behaviors and norms modeled by veteran members. Such a view fails to take into account the inequitable imbalance between CoP gatekeeper authorities—typically held by the more experienced members of the CoP, such as professors—and the novice learners' agency (Schechter & Bayley, 2004). An academic discourse framework emerges from language socialization theories, which observed that children learning their native language emulate adult members to become active members of their community. This may differ for adult language learners who may be studying and using a language to only to become a temporary member of professional community. Addressing the fundamental differences between child and adult socialization, Duff (2007) maintains the possibility of bi-or multi-directional socialization, as experienced members of an academic discourse community may be socialized by their junior associates. One highly cited example of bi-directional socialization is seen in Talmy's (2008) study of 3 first-year ESL teachers managing a class of "old timer" ESL students. In this study, teachers accommodated the non-cooperative behaviors of the students rather than enforcing pre-established rules. Recognizing bi-directional socialization addresses the taken for granted assumption of local native-speakers as privileged holding inherent academic and linguistic advantage; likewise, socialization may occur in multi-directions between multiple parties (Duff, 2012; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011; Rymes, 2008). Empirical research on the experience of graduate students confirms the multi-directional flows of socialization between novices whereby fellow international students often play active roles in their socialization process by assisting each other through peer-learning and peer social support networks (Hyun & Hung, 2010; Seloni, 2011).

Overstating binary positioning of novice/expert and falsely presuming veterans as the source for socialization troubles the application of the language socialization framework to address heterogeneity and individuality (Duff, 2007). This tendency is reflected in the greater body of scholarship on international students whereby dominant approaches to international student adjustment continue to presume a one-directional process of adjustment where students are expected to adapt to their host culture but not vice versa (Marginson, 2013, Ryan, 2011; Ryan & Viet, 2009). Embedded is the presumption of superiority of norms and standards associated with the host university (typically Western-Anglophone institutions), and that students traveling overseas to attend Western-Anglophone universities are doing so specifically to be trained in these standards (Grimshaw, 2011). Accordingly, adjustment is successful when international students improve themselves to fit the standards and norms of the host university (Marginson, 2013). To a large extent, language education research, including the academic discourse socialization framework, continues to represent incoming non-native speakers as disadvantaged, which perpetuates stereotypes of international students through a "deficit" lens (Al-Youssef, 2013; Grimshaw, 2011; Ryan, 2011).

Research is increasingly showing international students as equally accomplished in their university studies, and in some programs are graduating at quicker and higher rates than their domestic counterparts (e.g. Ramachandran, 2011). Exceptional students might be better skilled in completing the socialization process, or these authors may have only presented examples of successful socialization. These findings caution against positioning international students as an essentialized group. As a heterogeneous group of learners, international students do not begin from the same starting point, do not follow the same process of socialization, and do not end with identical outcomes.

⁵ See Mauranen (2014) for discussion on how non-native English speakers are changing Academic English in English as a Lingua Franca contexts.

Passivity and potential resistance. The third challenge to academic discourse socialization framework is that of possible resistance among novice members to aspects of the socialization modeled by veteran members. As Talmy's (2008) ethnography of language learning in a high school ESL classroom demonstrates, students may actively resist language socialization. Another example of resistance, perhaps more common in the university context, may be choosing to remain passive despite acknowledging that active participation in class is expected (Morita, 2004). Much of the research on international students joining the academic community has centered on the assumption that visiting international students aspire to become "legitimate" members of the CoP, a position that entails a genuine "sense of belonging" (Casanave & Li, 2008; Guo & Chase, 2011; Ryan & Viète, 2009). But as Gardner & Lambert's (1972) research on language learning and integrative and instrumental motivation demonstrated four decades ago, integration into the community should not be confused with the desire for academic achievement. More recently, Curtin, Stewart, and Ostrove (2012) concurred with Gardner and Lambert (1972), concluding that developing a sense of belonging and acceptance into the CoP may not be a concern for all international doctoral students. Other studies that have theorized international students as transnationals, with transnational identities living between worlds, connected to both their host and home universities, and working towards future global academic mobility have expanded the process of academic socialization beyond their immediate geographic circumstance and conditions of the host community (Gargano, 2012; Gomes & Alzougool, 2013; Phelps, 2013).

It would be too simplistic to presume that international students seek membership in the CoP; international students may seek rewards such as academic credentials, but this should not be confused with the desire to join, be like, or be accepted by the academic community. The academic discourse and language socialization frameworks' inherent theoretical and methodological weakness coupled with the rapidly growing number of international students attending Canadian universities raises concerns of how to theorize change within the academic community. As a result, I turn to Deleuzian ontology to reconceptualize international students' adjustment to Canadian academia.

A Deleuzian Perspective to Language and Adjustment in Western Higher Education

The application of Deleuzian ontology (Deleuze, 1994; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to language and adjustment to Canadian higher education emphasizes the complexity, multiplicity, and unpredictability, of language, language learning, and a language community in flux. Much of Deleuze's (1994, Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) philosophy is a response to reductionism and linearity in Western philosophical explanations of social and cultural phenomenon. As such, the ontology of difference goes beyond clear cut categories, such as man/woman, international student/domestic student, native English speaker/non-native English speaker, and expert/novice that bind individual and events to what is common, normative or expected. Emphasis is placed on change, difference, and what happens in between presumably fixed constructs (Martin & Kamberelis, 2013). For example, rather than considering the transformation from girl to woman, or novice to expert, Deleuze (1994) introduced the concept of "becoming" to do away with the presumptive starting point, following a linear progress and reaching a pre-determined end-point of what successful adjustment should look like.

"Becoming" in the Assemblage

"Becoming" occurs in the assemblage. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "all we know are assemblages" (1987, p. 25). There are no simple terms for explaining assemblage, but it can best be understood as multiple and diverse heterogeneous elements and objects connecting, entering into relation with another in unpredictable ways, making and unmaking each other, all while working together towards indeterminate outcomes. A student is an assemblage, as is a classroom, a university, and a community. Macgregor Wise (2005) commented that assemblage explains "how institutions, organizations, bodies, practices, and habits make and unmake each other, intersecting and transforming; creating territories and then unmaking them, deterritorializing, opening lines of flight as a possibility of any assemblage but also shutting them down" (pg. 86). This complexity parallels what may occur when international students enter a classroom bringing with them different knowledge, language, skills, and expectations. Variance is inevitable because of the multitude of factors within the classroom assemblage including student demographics, course content, classroom organization, characteristics of the instructor including teaching style, program requirements, and institutional practices. The entry of new entities into the assemblage can lead to new connections and new outcomes. As such, assemblage provides a concept to theorize what might be happening within a rapidly changing Canadian higher education system.

In the interconnected web of the assemblage, "becoming" occurs through deterritorializing and reterritorializing activity. Deterritorialization is the process of being affected by the working of other elements

within the assemblage, and reterritorialization can be understood as the temporary reorganization of the elements. Most important is the ongoing cycle of deterritorialization and reterritorialization with the constant reshaping of entities within the system working towards an undetermined state. The possibility of “becoming” allows for exploration of multiple overlapping and interconnected processes that can break free from the norm. Such breakage offers the potential to go beyond the status quo. Deleuze and Parnet elaborate:

To become is never to imitate, not to ‘do like’, nor to conform to a model....There is no terminus from which you set out, none which you arrive at or which you ought to arrive at. Nor are there two terms which are exchanged. The question ‘What are you becoming?’ is particularly stupid. For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does himself. Becomings are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation, but of a double capture, or non-parallel evolution, of nuptials between two reigns. (1987, p. 20)

Applied to academic socialization, the concept of becoming moves away from the essentialized trajectory of adjustment whereby incoming international students strive to emulate their “domestic” counterparts. Additionally, the concept of becoming recognizes that faculty, administrators, domestic students, host institutions, and the local community might also transform into something new.

Human and Non-Human “Becomings”

The assemblage is composed of human and non-human elements; thus, the working of the assemblage is equally dependent on both animate and inanimate entities. Accordingly, material objects, social structures, forms, and expressions, are also in the process of “becoming.” For example, universities are not static stable homogeneous entities. As assemblages, they are composed of their student constituents, staff, faculty, departments, donors, and administrators. Universities create and are re-created by policies and strategies including educational policy, immigration policy, government initiatives, as well as collaboration and partnerships with overseas universities and foreign governments. Their departments are also subject to the innovations and changes within the university including institutional practices and agendas. Faculty members and students also bring their own assemblages shaped by their immediate conditions, personal backgrounds, and future trajectories. In terms of international student language and adjustment to Canadian higher education, the increase in numbers of international students within one classroom or one department shapes the experiences of instructors and both domestic students and international students alike. As such, the instructor is also “becoming,” as are the students, and the department. The language of academic discourse is ‘becoming’ as the course curriculum and the academic community too. From the perspective of academic discourse in CoP, the impact the international student presence has had on the university needs to be taken into account to understand language socialization and the process of “becoming.”

Language as “Becoming”

Understanding language as “becoming” is critical to the rethinking of international students’ language learning and adjustment in Canadian higher learning. At the risk of oversimplifying Deleuze’s complex perspective on language, the discussion focuses on the political and social nature of language, “order words,” and language as heterogeneous (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). First, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained that language is very political and social because language always comes from somebody else. In this sense, language is indirect. Speakers are often repeating what they have heard. Furthermore, speakers use language in the way that it is expected to be used by senior members of the discourse community, in the same that they have heard it. There is a shared definition or meaning to words/language, and this is necessary for intelligibility. A shared language works to connect people in a discourse community.

Accordingly, language produces stability, an essential element for the formation of discourse communities and CoPs. Language is doxa, or a presupposition that people have similar understandings because everyone uses the same language to form, understand, and express ideas (May, 2005). Conformity is reproduced through obedience to a fixed pre-established language. Using language in its intended and expected ways represents a compliance with order (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Language compels order, to which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) define language as an “order-word.” One way that Deleuze and Guattari illustrate the political and social nature of language, and the potential to disrupt order, is by re-creating new definitions and concepts for well-defined terms such as “desire” and “becoming.” In their writing, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) used “desire” to mean something different than its widely accepted definition of wanting. Arguably, Deleuze and Guattari’s creative use of language is to break free from pre-established language. Further, language is political and social

because language is productive. Language causes an action/reaction and works to produce change as seen in the vivid example (used by Deleuze and Guattari to illustrate how language can transform) where a judge declares the word “guilty” to turn a person accused of a crime into a person convicted of a crime. Words encourage action, and in this sense, words are social.

Instead, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argued that “every language is an essentially heterogeneous reality” (p. 93). Language, as a set of systematic rules, is not stable. Because language is always changing, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) reject Chomsky’s notion of linguistic universals, innate grammar, and language as a fixed system. Yet, Deleuze brings a highly political stance to the heterogeneity of language arguing that because language is always changing, the (grammar, semantic, and syntactic) rules governing language are also in constant flux (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). There are countless irregularities and exceptions to what linguistics have (incorrectly) characterized as “rules”; nevertheless, Chomskian linguists seek to maintain and protect the rules of grammar by correcting anything that contravenes their rules. Even more problematic is that with every new rule invented (by Chomskian linguists) the exceptions to the rules increase simply because there are now more rules to break.

Language as fluid and changing extends beyond the discrete components of grammar, phonology, and lexis that make up a linguistic system to how language is used, particularly in contexts such as academic discourse. This becomes more evident when considering codes of academic integrity on textual borrowing. Rules governing citation practices are clearly defined and demand strict adherence, yet the scholarship on plagiarism in academia has suggested variance within and between disciplines on what constitutes appropriate citation, and conversely, what qualifies as plagiarism (e.g. Polio & Shi, 2012; Shi, 2012). Clear-cut criteria of what makes strong academic writing, literature reviews, research proposals, dissertations, or grant applications follow pre-established rules based on the expectations, ideologies, and values of the community gatekeepers. In response, Deleuzian-inspired scholars have urged creativity and experimentation to challenge the structures in academic discourse (and broader educational research) that reify the status quo (e.g. Masny, 2016; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013).

Returning to the issue of language as a system, for Deleuze and Guattari, grammar acts as a marker of power and is nothing less than a “violent imposition” (Lecerle, 2002, p. 157). These strong statements do not mean Deleuze and Guattari reject genre norms, rules, and logical forms (Johnson, 2014). Language needs to be comprehensible. However, a Deleuzian approach is more interested in the fluid, immanent ways of thinking than the rigid, fixed, and transcendental (Johnson, 2014). Given that uniformity and conformity in language exists for scholars interested in furthering research, it is fundamental to understand how language is learned, used, and reproduced, yet simultaneously changed in an ever changing unstable environment as language is inherently connected to the social and political.

Socialization as Unique and Unpredictable “Becomings”

Deleuze (1994) explained learning processes by providing an analogy of a person who is learning to swim. In this example, the movement of the swimmer does not mimic the wave, and the swimmer’s movements are not the same as the motions demonstrated by the instructor and practiced on land. In the water, the swimmer will intuitively move his/her arms in response to the sea’s currents. The swimmer moves to the water and the water moves to the swimmer, each making and unmaking each other. Applied to the messiness of language learning and adjustment, each act of learning impacts not just the learner but also the learning community. Each utterance, whether grammatically correct and linguistically appropriate, impacts the interlocutor and the linguistic context.

Given that learning is inherently unpredictable, imitating ideal speakers, modeling appropriate language use, or even developing the requisite target language identity does not predict how learners will respond to unforeseen circumstance they may face in their academic journey (Johnson, 2014). Rather, “learning a foreign language is a perpetual process of becoming in which learners bring their own hybrid personalities, cultural dispositions and learning styles into contact with the problems they encounter” (Johnson, 2014, p. 65). From a Deleuzian perspective of “becoming” in the assemblage, it is not surprising that concept of adjustment is not discussed Deleuze’s works. One cannot predict how one will learn, or how one’s learning will affect their learning community.

Conclusion

For institutions of higher education, attracting international students is considered the hallmark of internationalization and diversity. As Canadian universities set their sights on increasing their international

student enrollment, a critical re-examination of research approaches, namely reflecting on the academic discourse socialization framework of international students—in relation to language and adjustment—is critical. Is it possible for the university's standards, norms, and practices to remain unchanged despite the growing number of non-Western, non-Anglophone, and non-Canadian students in attendance? How will the language and genre expectations of academic discourse evolve when a growing percentage of its speakers are themselves experimenting with the language? Such questioning disrupts the stability of Western Anglophone academic tradition, creating space for alternative approaches to the internationalization of higher education, approaches that embrace the multi-directional transformations experienced by students and faculty alike.

This paper critically examines the dominant academic discourse socialization framework, disrupting embedded assumptions of a static and homogenous CoP. It further challenges the presumption of academic identity development from novice to expert, and the concepts of “fitting into” and “belonging” to the dominant group. In proposing a reconceptualization of international students' language adjustment to Western higher education, Deleuzian (Deleuze, 1994; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) ontologies of difference, namely the concepts of “becoming” and assemblage, are put forward. The application of Deleuzian concepts of “becoming,” assemblage, and language troubles prevailing constructs of identity, academic community, and academic discourse, and proposes a novel approach to theorizing change. As institutions of higher education progressively pursue internationalization, perhaps now is the time to disrupt conventional thought, to create new thinking, and to imagine how international students might impact changing Canadian universities.

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