ABSTRACT

AMY GRAHAM LEE PIPPI. Informal Research Talk: A resource for academic socialization of international students. (Under the direction of Dr. Agnes Bolonyai.)

English is considered the *lingua franca* of scientific and academic discussions. Recently, academic speaking has begun to play an increasingly important role in those global discussions. For non-native English speakers (NNSs), this may be a source of anxiety, because in order to successfully participate and be recognized as a competent member of one’s research community, a researcher must be comfortable speaking the language of academic English. Although there has been scholarly interest in the role of talk in socializing NNS members into particular discourse communities (Duff, 2010; Morita, 2008; Vickers, 2007), there are relatively few studies that examine informal research talk as a specific form of academic communication in particular academic communities. The main aims of this study are to examine research talk as a resource for academic discourse socialization of NNS, investigate issues affecting whether a NNS researcher—through his or her discourse—is perceived as a competent and authoritative member of the academic community and reflect on how to create an equal playing field for NNS researchers.

The experiences and actual research discourse of both NS and NNS PhD students at North Carolina State University were examined using a survey instrument, a reflective interview and observations of simulated research talk. The data were analyzed using the theoretical frameworks of enactment of expertise (Carr, 2010), academic discourse socialization (Duff, 2010, Norton; and Toohey, 2009; Morita, 2009; Ping, 2011; Vickers, 2007) and “sociolinguistics of mobility’ (Blommaert, 2010). Language Proficiency was found to be closely linked to competence and access to IRT. One important implication of this study is that both NS and NNS
speakers need greater awareness of the variability of English(es) and an understanding of what discourse features are expected and accepted in different local and translocal settings in which English is spoken for academic purposes.