

## English-Mediated Presentations in Pharmacy: Exploring Literacy Practices among Saudi Female Undergraduates

**Noura A. Alghamdi**

English Language Institute  
University of Jeddah  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

### Abstract

Despite the complex nature of language learners' needs, researchers on language use in tertiary education tend to look at these needs through textual analyses associated with written discourse more than any other aspect of language use. Because learners' needs, however, extend to include recognizing the challenges and situated nature of language use among learners (Hyland, 2006), this article adopts a social account of literacy (Barton, 1994; Barton and Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012) to explore the literacy practices surrounding how year-five female undergraduates engage with English-mediated oral presentations in pharmacy at a Saudi Arabian university. The article offers a situated understanding of these undergraduates' views of English as a considerable challenge in this literacy event to provide a more in-depth understanding of how undergraduates address this challenge. The article concludes by offering some suggestions as to how knowledge of the social practices surrounding learners' engagement with reading and writing can help to inform EAP pedagogical practices.

**Keywords:** English-mediated oral presentations, social practices, ethnography, Saudi female undergraduates, language learners' needs

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## Introduction

Genre studies form one of the critical areas of investigations within English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These studies often work to facilitate learners' access to essential functional and technical skills of reading and writing by examining a variety of texts with which learners engage. Research on genres tends to be dominated by textual analyses which usually seek "to 'fix' problems with student learning" by focusing on "surface features, grammar and spelling" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). This focus, however, tends to overlook the situated nature of these skills and ignores the various ways and purposes that shape how people engage with reading and writing.

Most available genre studies tend to favor specific genres over others within language research. Because of its significance in relation to knowledge dissemination and assessment in academic contexts (Lillis & Scott, 2008), written discourse is mostly prioritized (e.g., Giannoni, 2008; Martin, Rey-Roch, Burgess, & Moreno, 2014; Samraj, 2008; Molle & Prior, 2008; Nesi & Gardner, 2011; Sawaki, 2014; Lancaster, 2016). Fewer studies, in comparison, focus on spoken genres, such as presentations, conference proceedings and lectures despite their significance and increasing use in academic contexts (e.g., Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2008; Chang, 2012; Ferguson, 2001; Morton, 2016; Lin, 2015; Webber, 2005).

This general concern with textual analyses of written discourse is also echoed within investigations of English language learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia which often focus on identifying and addressing the challenges and difficulties that English language learners face. In relation to research methodology, these studies tend to rely heavily on quantitative methods, including surveys and textual analyses (e.g., Alqahtani, 2015; Alzubi d., 2017; Javid, Al-Asmari, & Farooq, 2012; Liton, 2012). Fewer studies adopt qualitative methodologies to provide deep understanding of situated uses of language (e.g., Barnawi, 2016; Ababneh, 2016; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Barnawi & Phan, 2015; Nazim & Hazarika, 2017). Many issues, thus, remain under-researched, such as the social practices that underpin learners' use of English in academic settings.

## Statement of the Research Problem

Although approaches to genre analysis have always acknowledged the impact played by social contexts on how genres are produced and used, they have not adequately examined this impact (Charles, 2013). Increasing calls among language researchers draw attention to the need to move "from looking at language use, in general, to the use of language in specific settings and in specific genres" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 347). This article draws on a doctoral thesis and employs a social account of literacy to explore the social practices associated with using English among Saudi female undergraduates in pharmacy while engaging with English-mediated oral presentations. The majority of scholarly research on English-mediated oral presentations by non-native speakers of English generally focuses on English-dominant contexts and formal settings such as academic and conference presentations (e.g., Kim, 2006; Kuniyoshi, Noguchi, Hayashi, & Tojo, 2012; Morton, 2009; Rowley-Jolivet, 2002, 2004). This article contributes to available research by examining how language learners in a non-English dominant context engage with English language use. As useful genre knowledge among language learners exceeds learners' recognition and mastery of specific linguistic features (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008), the article moves beyond textual analysis to highlight some of the social practices that underpin presenters' engagement with this genre.

### Theoretical Framework

To examine the social practices surrounding undergraduates' engagement with oral presentations, the study draws on a social account of literacy as proposed by the New Literacy Studies (NLS) which understands literacy as a social practice that can only be understood in relation to its surrounding social contexts (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; Pahl & Rowsell, 2000; Street, 1984). Unlike traditional views of literacy which consider reading and writing as technical and decontextualized skills, NLS moves beyond the functional values of reading and writing to examine their situated uses (Marsh & Larson, 2005). Two analytic concepts are identified within NLS to examine literacy: literacy events and literacy practices. Literacy events refer to "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes" (Heath, 1983, p. 50). Literacy events refer to what can be observed, seen and documented as people read and write (Papen, 2005). Literacy practices, on the other hand, refer to "the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives" (Barton & Hamilton, 2005, p. 7). Understanding of these practices in any context involves exploration of people's regular activities, hopes, identities, expectations, challenges, values, regulations and relationships while reading and writing.

### Research Context

The investigated literacy event is the second module of one of the mandatory courses in the College of Pharmacy within a Saudi university. The course consists of two modules. The first module, 'Pharmacy Seminars 1' (PS1), is offered to year-four undergraduates to train students to prepare and give formal presentations on general topics that last from three to five minutes. These presentations are followed by general feedback from the teacher. The second module with which this investigation is concerned, 'Pharmacy Seminars 2' (PS2), is offered to year-five undergraduates, and it aims to examine their ability to prepare and give longer and pharmaceutically-oriented presentations. These presentations last from seven to nine minutes each, and students are required to choose medical topics through which they can demonstrate their growing command of pharmaceutical knowledge and practice. Each presentation in PS2 is followed by a thorough discussion between the teacher and presenters in which the teacher gives detailed comments while presenters explain their choices and decisions. In both modules, presentations were carried out in English.

### Methods

The study relies on an ethnographically-oriented case study, employing several qualitative data collection tools, such as observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, research journal and artifact collection. Because they facilitate access "to see how language practices are connected to the very real conditions of people's lives" (Heller, 2008, p. 250), these tools are essential to examine undergraduates' engagement with oral presentations and offer a more in-depth understanding of what English means for participants within this specific context and how it is used. After acquiring the necessary ethical forms, seventeen presentations were observed, and eight presenters volunteered to participate in the study after they had been given detailed information sheets and consent forms. Each of these presenters was interviewed at least once following her presentation.

### Data Analysis

A commonly persistent view among year-five pharmacy students highlighted having a high command of English as the most crucial element of success in seminar presentations. They believed that successful participation in PS2 depended on how good their English was. This view was shaped by the need to only rely on English while making their presentations, and it was also affected by their contrasting experiences in other courses at the university in which it was not uncommon to mix English with their first language, i.e., Arabic, when needed. While they were able to use English with relative ease in relation to scientific terms, the inclusion of Arabic in their interactions with colleagues and teachers allowed them to communicate liberally and effectively without worrying about the accuracy or sophistication of their linguistic structures. This was very useful for these undergraduates while studying for exams, making presentations and working on group projects.

Yet, participants in this case study often spoke of English as the most challenging obstacle in their studies. They repeatedly highlighted their worries about the need to develop excellent English-language skills for various reasons. First, English was a must because their courses were all English-mediated. Some of these courses, however, were slightly flexible in terms of allowing presenters to mix Arabic and English. In contrast to other classes, PS2 was shaped by strict guidelines and a constricting timeframe that surrounded these presentations and required presenters not only to present in English but also to show total control of their use of the language. Arabic was never used during the presentations. It was only used during the discussion with the teacher as many of the observed presenters mixed Arabic with English while addressing the teacher's feedback.

The need to have excellent English language skills was also associated with students' awareness that communicating with other professionals in hospitals while training in their practical courses and internship programs required them to engage in similar activities through which they work with a wide range of professionals who speak different languages. English was, thus, viewed as the indispensable tool needed to engage effectively with these professionals. Furthermore, the need to develop excellent English language skills reflected a socially common view in this context which often assumed that university students in scientific departments had excellent language skills in English. Success in these departments was not possible without excellent skills in English, which should be transferred to actual use beyond their studies and into their everyday lives.

This was a challenging aspect because while presenters in PS2 relied on their thorough preparation and rehearsal to carry out their English-mediated presentations, many did not feel that they could project a similar degree of control over English in other activities. Triggered by feelings of pressure and disappointment that they could not fulfill that expectation, it was not uncommon to hear year-five students repeatedly describe English as "the most difficult obstacle" that they faced while preparing and making their presentations. For them, a high proficiency level in English appeared as a key factor in their success and a sufficient guarantee that their work would be easily facilitated and positively received and assessed.

Having excellent English language skills for these students was not only directed towards showing control of linguistic and discursual features of the language. Attention was also devoted

to other situated practices that surrounded their use of English language in this context and shaped their view of their language skills and their ability to succeed. In the following sections, the analysis highlights some of these practices, including how presenters maintain the accuracy of their linguistic and discoursal features and how they address the challenges associated with the use of writing and speech in PS2 presentations.

### *Linguistic and Discoursal Features in Oral Presentations*

Because they were required to rely on English while making their presentations, many presenters complained that their English language skills were not good enough to allow them to engage easily with the required task. To work around their difficulties, presenters described their extensive efforts to prepare, practice and rehearse their presentations. They also relied on many strategies and tools which facilitated their efforts and allowed them to improve the grammatical and linguistic accuracy of their speech and writing.

#### *First: Regular Contact with English*

Presenters relied on their regular contact with English-mediated scientific materials, such as articles, books and handouts to represent and communicate disciplinary knowledge accurately. One of the presenters noted that

بعد ما تقرني نفس الكلمات تمسك معاك خلاص. إنتي ترجعي لا إراديا تقولي الجملة تاخديها من الـ **text** ، خلاص كذا تفتكريها.

After you read, the same words just stick in your mind. You unintentionally say the sentence you take from the **text**. That's how you remember it.

Consistent use of these materials helped presenters as they imitated the structures and employed the vocabulary with which they came into contact in these materials. This regular contact made these features an integral part of their linguistic repertoire.

Yet, despite the benefit of this regular contact, its impact did not necessarily radiate to their use of English in other activities. It was not uncommon to hear year-five undergraduates describing their use of English beyond their oral presentations as an act of engaging in unknown territories in which their language skills were not sufficient. While their familiarity with English-mediated discipline-specific materials provided a sense of ownership and control in this context, it was not available in other uses of English. According to Salwa<sup>1</sup>,

اتدربنا. **presentation** لكن إحنا عشان **perfect** هو الانجليزي أنا عندي مو مسألة إنو مرة لكن ممكن كحوار، حوار كثير ممكن شوية صعب. **grammar** - فحاولنا ننطق الكلمات صح نضبط ..... هو هادا اللي خلانا نعرف نتكلم أكثر، لأنه كله إحنا **scientific** لأنو أكثر حاجة إحنا درسناه، فعرفنا إحنا ننطق هادا و نتكلم على هادا و فهمنا.

My English is not really **perfect**, but because we have a **presentation**, we practiced. We tried to pronounce the words correctly, work on the **grammar**, but maybe as a conversation, a long conversation a bit difficult because our use is mostly **scientific**. This is what made us know what to talk about because we studied all of it, so we know how to pronounce this and talk about that and we understood.



Proficiency in English was, thus, directly related to students' regular use of disciplinary materials.

### *Second: Colleagues' Assistance*

Reliance on assistance from other presenters represented another significant source of assistance that presenters used to make their presentations. It was a common practice among presenters to seek help and feedback from each other while preparing and making their presentations in areas, such as choosing their topics, constructing their speech, designing their slideshows and rehearsing their presentations. This was especially important for presenters who were struggling with linguistic accuracy. For these, consulting more proficient classmates provided an invaluable and highly-appreciated opportunity to ensure the accuracy of their speech and writing. According to Samya,

أول حاجة الأشياء اللي أجيب لها أنا الكلام من عندي يعني أنا أألف لها الكلام يعني بيغى لها شوية جلسة، غير الكلام اللي جايته من موقع و أحطه. هادا أخصه و أحط بينه أدوات ربط و أمشي حالي فيه ، و الباقي زي ما هو ..... الأشياء اللي جايته من الموقع، تعديلات عليها مرة بسيطة و ما تأخذ وقت. يا دوب أختصر الكلمات ، لكن هادي أنا جايبة صور. يعني هم ماهم شارحينها في الموقع، فانا بعدين أروح أقعد مع نفسي أكتب كذا كلام و بعدين أروح أوريه لواحدة من صاحباتي أو أحد ثاني يكون كويس في الـ **English**، إذا كان في أخطاء في الـ **grammar** أو شي زي كذا، و بعدين خلاص بعد ما أتأكد إنو الجمل هادي صحيحة أصلا هي أصلا طالعة مني، فسهل إنني أقولها.

First, the things that I bring, the talk that I write, these require me to sit down to work on them. This is unlike the parts I bring from a website, I put it down, summarize it and put connectives in it and work on it and the rest remains as it is..... things which I bring from the website have very simple adjustments. They don't take time. I only summarize, but these I brought pictures. I mean they don't explain them in the website, so I go later sit down and write all the words and then I go and show it to one of my friends or someone else who is good in **English** to see if there are mistakes in **grammar** or something like that. Then, after I make sure the sentences are correct, they originally came from me, so it is easy to say them.

These consultations supported Samya's work after building her argument. They appeared as an intermediate and essential, supporting stage that bridged the gap in language construction between her early preparation and final performance.

### *Third: Arabic*

Arabic, as participants' first language, was also a significant source of support that facilitated engagement with English in this event in two critical ways. It helped first while preparing for these presentations when presenters came across new concepts that were too complex to decipher initially in English. Many presenters spoke about starting their preparation for PS2 by accessing Arabic resources, such as books, journal articles and YouTube videos to examine and understand new information in Arabic first. One of the presenters explained that

ترى في أشياء ما فهمتها. تكون معقدة بالانجليزي. أرجع أقرأها بالعربي و اترجمها بأسلوبي ، بأسلوبي. أنا حاستخدم أشياء بسيطة ، بسيطة حتوصل لصاحباتي لأنني عارفة كيف أوصل لهم لأنو لغتنا واحدة

تقريباً. في أشياء كثيرة أرجع لمراجع عربية تكون اللغة العلمية مرة معقدة هنا. أقرأها بالعربي و أرجع أنا خلاص عارفة الأشياء العلمية اللي حاستخدمها.

You know there are things I didn't understand. They are complicated in English, so I go and read them in Arabic and I translate them in my way, in my way. I would use simple things, simple to reach out to my friends because I know how to reach out to them because our language is almost the same. I mean there are many things where I go to Arabic references where the scientific language is very complicated here. I read them in Arabic and then I just know what scientific stuff I am going to use.

Arabic also allowed presenters to engage efficiently with the teacher's feedback after each presentation even though it was never used while presenting in PS2. Considering the detailed nature of feedback in this event, Arabic served as an invaluable communicative tool that came to the rescue when presenters needed to explain their choices, address the teacher's comments and elaborate on their presented information. Knowing that their presentations were never interrupted by the teacher or students offered presenters a sense of safety and helped them to approach PS2 presentations as staged performances, which they prepared and rehearsed well before coming to class to appear as competent speakers of English.

This sense of safety and relief did not extend beyond their presentations. For many, preparing their presentations in English was not the same as discussing their work with the teacher. While they had adequate opportunities to develop and rehearse their presentations in advance, they could not predict how their discussions with the teacher would evolve. Describing the teacher's feedback, comments and questions as "detailed and not always predictable", many were understandably anxious that their English language skills would not support them in engaging effectively with the teacher's feedback. To address this challenge, presenters worked to develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of their topics that would enhance their ability to address any feedback. More importantly, however, was presenters' knowledge that resorting to Arabic was acceptable during these discussions. This was not only relevant to students who struggled with their English language skills. In fact, most of the observed presenters in this event described a sense of relief that they were able to mix Arabic and English while discussing their work. This ability seemed to liberate presenters from worrying about being able to use English accurately. Instead, it allowed them to focus on effectively representing and communicating their knowledge in English or Arabic.

كفاية إنه الـ **presentation** كله بالانجليزي و خلاص الـ **discussion** خليها عربي، لأنو هو أحياناً يسأل عن أشياء مرة برة، برة الموضوع.

It is enough that the **presentation** is all in English, but the **discussion** make it in Arabic because he sometimes asks about things that are not related, are not related to the topic.

#### **Four: Teacher's Feedback**

Although the teacher did not seem to mind minor errors in language structures or vocabulary, presenters worked hard to ensure the accuracy of their speech and writing. Errors, such as subject-verb agreement and adjective-adverb differentiation, were never pointed out by the

teacher. These errors did not seem to affect presenters' ability to carry out their presentations or communicate successfully with their audience. Errors were only pointed out when they affected presenters' ability to make their presentations smoothly and hindered audience ability to understand. Within the 17 observed presentations in this study, the teacher pointed out language errors in only two presentations because these errors appeared to jeopardize presenters' ability to make their presentations successfully.

### *Social Practices around Writing and Speech in Oral Presentations*

Writing and speech represented two language-related semiotic resources in this event that were not only framed by the need to maintain the accuracy of linguistic and discursal features. Specific situated practices also shaped these resources in this event. Writing in slideshows was used to document information that was considered significant for their work, such as definitions, symptoms and treatment plans through condensed, brief structures. Writing also served as a tool to support presenters' memory and guide their audience throughout their presentations.

The use of writing in slideshows was, however, framed by the teacher's strict instructions to minimize the amount of writing in slideshows. The teacher warned the presenters against overloading their slides with writing at the expense of using other visual semiotic resources such as drawings, charts and photographs. In addition to the teacher's instructions, the minimization of writing was also associated with a common belief that overloading slides with writing had a negative effect on presenters and audience. It threatened presenters' efforts to appear as competent speakers as it would indicate their need to rely heavily on the writing in slideshows to make their presentations. At the same time, the overuse of writing in slideshows was described as a source of distraction for the audience who would be torn between reading the slides and attentively listening to follow the presentation.

Speech, on the other hand, represented a more challenging resource to manage. In contrast to the adequate time available to prepare the writing in slideshows, speech was delivered on the spot. There were always fears and worries among presenters that they would forget parts of their speech or confuse others. Presenters addressed these fears through extensive efforts to prepare their speech and ensure its accuracy. While minor language errors were tolerated as long as they did not negatively impact presenters' performance, certain social practices shaped how presenters approached speech in this event. The first one is related to the importance attached in this community to pronunciation, especially the pronunciation of medical terminology. In contrast to the general flexibility with which minor language errors were treated, pronunciation of medical and scientific terminology was highly prioritized by the teacher. Students worked hard to ensure their ability to pronounce every word in their presentations accurately. Because the teacher's feedback was always given during discussion, inaccurate pronunciation disrupted that consistent practice.

أنا دحين لما أجي أبغى ألقى لازم أتدرب قبلها ، و أحاول أعرف نطق الكلمات ، كيف أقول الكلام صح ،  
يعني الدكتور إذا واحدة نطقت ، خصوصا أدوية أو مثلا كلمة معروفة ، لو نطقها غلط حيوقفها و حيقولها  
هادي غلط

when I come to present here, I must practice before and learn how to say the words, how to say the talk correctly because if a student mispronounces



especially drugs or a well-known word, if she says it wrong, the doctor will stop her and tell her it is wrong.

Presenters did not only consider the teacher's immediate feedback as an unwanted interruption while presenting, but they also feared its negative effect on their assessment. According to Hind,

الدكتور مرة يركز على الـ **pronunciation** في بعض خصوصا في الأدوية. ممكن أغلط في الكلام. نطقي يكون غلط (.....) يعني أنا منقصني درجة لأنو أنا عندي غلط في بعض الكلمات (.). كذا ممنوع، لأنو إنتي دوا نطقته غلط، في حرف واحد فيه غلط، نحسبه دوا ثاني. هو دائما يركز على الأدوية. و حتى لو في بنات لو نطقت دوا غلط يصحح لها، و هي قاعدة تتكلم يصحح لها اسم الدوا.

The first thing is the **language**. This is the most important thing. The doctor also focuses so much on **pronunciation** especially in medicines. I can make mistakes in speech. My pronunciation could be wrong (.....) I lost a grade because I have mistakes in some words (.). It was not allowed, forbidden because you pronounce a medication incorrectly, one letter is wrong, we will think it is another medicine. He always focuses on medicines and even if girls, if she mispronounces a medicine wrong, he corrects it for her. While she is speaking, he corrects the name of the medicine.

Inaccurate pronunciation threatened presenters' hard efforts to project their developing knowledge as pharmacists. However, this threat did not only spring from the teacher's immediate feedback towards incorrect pronunciation. It also reflected presenters' awareness of the potentially devastating consequences of mispronouncing names of medicines. Considering their efforts to appear as competent presenters in their discipline, inaccurate pronunciation of discipline-specific terminology questioned their ability to function as professional pharmacists. For Salwa,

الواحد ..... لازم يكون يعرف الكلمة كيف تنطق. إنو عيب إنو يجي شخص، يجي يقول اسم دوا غلط. One ..... Must know how the word is pronounced. It is shameful for a person to come and say the name of the drug in the wrong way.

It was not considered appropriate for a presenter to stand in front of her teacher and colleagues and mispronounce discipline-specific terms. This was not about mispronouncing a word, but rather about the questions it raised regarding their knowledge, responsibility and competence as professionals in pharmacy.

The accent with which English was spoken represented another socially-valued aspect of speech in this event. Having a native-like accent was considered as an indication of language proficiency and competence. Its presence created a powerful impression that the speaker had excellent language skills. Although the teacher had never pointed out this issue within the observed presentations, the accent appeared for some presenters as an independent asset that seemed at times to outweigh other aspects in making these presentations. For some presenters, a native-like accent determined how a presenter was valued in this community as an English language speaker. According to Fatin,

في بنات أنا عارفتهم، مو مرة في اللغة الإنجليزية، بس ما شاء الله وقت الإلقاء، ماشاء الله صارت تتكلم إنجليزي (.....) يمكن لو أنا هم ما أعرفهم و اسمع حاقول هادي إنسانة ما هي عربية أساسا.

في بنات وصلو لهدى الدرجة (.....) في ناس عندهم الانجليزي بس ما عندهم الـ **accent** ، في ناس عندهم. أنا أشوف أخواني الاثنين عندهم انجليزي، بس واحد عنده الـ **accent** ، لما يتكلم أحسه، أقوله اللي يسمعك يقول أمك أمريكية و لا حاجة. أخويا الثاني لا، نفس المستوى هم توأم نفس الشيء. بس هذا سبحانه الله عنده الـ **accent** . يقول أنا ما أعرف أنطقها زيها. هدولا البنات اللي زي كذا عندهم الـ **accent** مرة كويس.

Some girls I know them, they are not very good in English, but when she presented, she spoke English well (.....) Maybe if I didn't know them and heard them, I would say this girl is not even Arabic. Some girls were that good (.....) Some people have English, but don't have the **accent**. Some people have. I see this with my two brothers. They have the same level. They are twins, it is the same, but one has the **accent**. When he speaks, I tell him that he sounds like he has an American mother or something. My other brother no, they speak well, they are twins, it is the same, but the other one does not have the **accent**. He says he can't say it like the other one. Girls who are like that, who have the **accent**, it is very good.

The significance attached to this aspect was rarely affected by the accuracy of the presenter's language or the depth of her knowledge. In one of the most successful observed presentations in this case study, Salwa received very positive feedback from the teacher because of her thorough preparation and in-depth knowledge. While describing her experience with engaging in this event, Salwa talked about her hopes that she could improve her language skills beyond her studies, as mentioned above. Her hopes for improvement included her pronunciation skills and a wish to speak like Americans or British.

Despite the positive feedback that Salwa received from the teacher and her friends and her pride in her efforts and hard work, not having a native-like accent had an impact on how some of her classmates viewed her. While Salwa viewed the accent as an aspect that she wished to improve in the future, other students viewed Salwa's accent as an obstacle that negatively impacted their view of her performance. Lamar, for example, looked at Salwa's presentation through her accent more than anything else.

كان الإنجليزي مرة سيئ، و كانت مرة سريعة، لكن هي ما شاء الله عندها معلومات، و قارية مرة كويس. حصيلتها العلمية شفعتها، إني الدكتور تغاضي عن اللغة الإنجليزية و أداها **full mark** لأنو هي تعرف المعلومة، تعرف الـ **dose**، تعرف السعر، تعرف كل شي كأنو كل شي قاريتها محطوط في بالها، مع إني أنا أشوف لأ.

Her English was really bad and she was so fast, but she had information, and she has read really well. Her knowledge made the teacher overlook her English, and he gave her a full mark because she knows the information, she knows the dose, she knows the price, she knows everything as if everything she has read was in her mind, but I don't agree with that.

For Lamar, the accent was vital to the extent that she framed her assessment of her colleague's language in relation to her Saudi accent, regardless of her proper language use, which made her speech accessible and had no effect on the quality of her work. In fact, the accent issue was disturbing enough for Lamar that she thought the teacher did Salwa a favor by ignoring her accent

and paying attention to other aspects. Although the accent had no impact on the teacher's assessment of Salwa as a presenter, it was important for some participants because of the impression it created about the speaker's command of the language.

### Discussion

As language researchers, there is an urgent need to help learners to "learn about the boundaries of a genre, and develop a nuanced understanding of how a genre (or a set of genres) organizes a particular sphere of life" (Morton, 2016, p. 61-62). These form part of learners' needs which represent a major aim of EAP research. While these needs are often associated with identification of linguistic and discursive features of the language, there is an increasing awareness that language learners' needs represent "an umbrella term that embraces many aspects, incorporating learners' goals and backgrounds, their language proficiencies, their reasons for taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situation they will need to communicate in" (Hyland, 2006, p. 73). Needs are, thus, seen as a complex and essential aspect of language learning that moves beyond decontextualized linguistic features and include the social practices that underpin learners' use of any genre.

This article highlights how examination of social practices sheds light on learners' use of English in academic settings. The main concern in this article was not to examine the linguistic features necessary for successful participation in oral presentations. It was rather to see how English was approached by learners as they prepared and gave their presentations. Informed by a social view of literacy to examine how year-five undergraduates in pharmacy engaged with English-mediated oral presentations in the College of Pharmacy, this study highlighted how participants consistently described English as the most essential and challenging aspect of participating in PS2. The analysis above has shown that this view was not only concerned with achieving mastery of linguistic and discursive features of the language. It was also associated with a complex set of expectations and requirements that shaped presenters' engagement with English in this literacy event. Effective engagement with English required presenters to recognize and address these practices that provided them with an invaluable sense of control and enabled them to make their presentations. Although this control seemed at times momentary, it helped presenters to participate successfully in this event.

In this case study, managing the linguistic and discursive features of English did not seem to present a major concern to presenters who relied on a wide range of strategies and practices to achieve that while presenting. These strategies and practices were not always directly related to the teacher's formal assessment. Some were, for example, related to the values that presenters appreciated, as in their appreciation of having a native-like accent and some reflected common practices as in their reliance on Arabic while preparing and discussing their presentations.

The analysis also brought to light the role that participants' first language played in facilitating their engagement with this literacy event while preparing and giving their presentations. In addition to facilitating their access to new concepts in English, Arabic allowed presenters to engage effectively with the teacher's feedback. Exploring what Arabic meant for presenters highlighted the momentary nature of some presenters' control of English in this event. Although that control could not be equally extended to other activities in which English was

needed, it was sufficient enough to address the boundaries of this event. It, thus, brings to surface the need for researchers in EAP to re-question common understanding of language proficiency among language learners whose use of English is mediated by the specific contextual demands that they face. Proficiency in language use should be considered in relation to the common situated social practices that learners engage with as they use English in different contexts, rather than clear-cut features or rules that language learners either have or lack.

In relation to EAP, investigating the social practices that underpin learners' use of English in various contexts is important to provide better pedagogical plans that support language learners in tertiary education according to their actual needs. These plans should take into account of what Matusiak (2013, p. 1579) describes as "nonvisible elements, including social relationships, values, ways of thinking, skills, and structured routines and pathways". One way to do this is by raising learners' awareness towards common social practices that shape their use of the language. This would be helpful, for example, in helping learners to engage with practices considered necessary for any genre such as the focus on pronunciation in this context. It can also be used to encourage learners to question the value of some of their strongly-held views as in the significance that some presenters attached to a native-like accent in this context. Although these practices are not always directly related to linguistic and discursal features, they should be examined because they shape how learners view and use English.

### Conclusion

This article relies on an ethnographically-oriented case study to examine how Saudi female undergraduates engaged with English-mediated oral presentations in pharmacy. Adopting a social view of literacy, the article highlighted some of the social practices that shaped how participants managed their use of English as a vital factor of success in their presentations. Rather than focusing only on linguistic and discursal features of genres, the article brings to light the need to deeply examine the social practices that underpin how language learners use English in different literacy events.

### About the Author

**Noura Ali Alghamdi** is an assistant professor at the English Language Institute, University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include qualitative research methodology, literacy studies, multimodality, identity and computer assisted language learning.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9294-1443>

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**Transcription Conventions**

<p><b>Bold</b></p>	<p>Bold font is used to indicate a word that was spoken in English in the original talk.</p>
<p>(.....)</p>	<p>A longer series of full stops between round brackets indicates that some of the interviewee's talk has been removed due to irrelevance to the point under discussion.</p>

<sup>1</sup> All names of participants are pseudonyms.