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International Graduate Students' Experiences with the English Language and the Impact of Globalization

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There is growing research aimed at understanding the challenges international graduate students (IGSs) face in learning English and applying it to their academic studies in the United States. Most studies, however, focus solely on IGSs and English in the context of U.S. higher education, giving less attention to their experiences prior to entering U.S. institutions. Considering research on English-language learning globally, which points to worldwide expansions of English in media and schooling, it seems likely that IGSs carry a history of interactions with the language. To explore this, I conducted a qualitative study on IGSs' relationships to and values of English language knowledge. Research was conducted at a Research I public institution, interviewing four IGSs from different countries and academic programs. The study's framework combined Bourdieu's ideas on language with theories of globalization, in which English is understood as the language of the global market and necessary for participation in dominant political and economic systems. The framework assumes IGSs will carry similar ideas around English informed by globalization, and differences because of their particular sociocultural contexts. Findings reveal that participants encountered English and pressures to learn throughout formal education, professional environments, and community settings. IGSs named English as a powerful tool for professional advancement and connecting to other cultures. Interestingly, they rarely questioned the dominance of English, despite sharing frustrations with the language on occasion. Ultimately, we see how relationships to English are a key factor in how IGSs make sense of the world and their futures. This study contributes to research by showing how an exploration of English reveals IGSs to be complex actors navigating a globalized world. The study also demonstrates the importance of globalization frameworks in understanding the realities of many IGSs.

Introduction

The global surge in English-language learning continues to be the subject of inquiry and critique in international education research (Ricento 2015). Studies often point to how English's growing dominance, globalization, and the emerging knowledge economy collectively paint English as a necessary skill for opportunity and achievement (Kim 2016; Vavrus 2002). Many governments where English is not an official language have mandated its study in public schooling. Private institutions – both informal and formal – have also increased their English-

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language offerings (Hyslop-Margison and Sears 2006). Shin argues that in places like South Korea the government has pushed English-language knowledge as a key attribute "of a new type of ideal citizen" (2016, 511). These developments have resulted in a growing population dedicated to learning English (Park and Abelmann 2004).

One area of impact is the growing international student populations in U.S. higher education (Austin and Shen 2016). Over the past ten years, international students in the United States have nearly doubled, estimated at 564,766 students in the 2005/06 academic year and now at 1,078,822 students during 2016/17 – a 91 percent increase (Institute of International Education 2017). Most international students come from countries where English is not a heritage language (i.e., a language passed down generationally) nor an official language of the government, such as China who sent 350,734 students in 2016/17 (IIE 2017). The research assessing why students study in the United States, often finds that learning English is a primary motivation (Ferguson Perez-Llantada and Plo 2011; Kim 2016).

Despite the level of research in these two areas (i.e., English as a global system and international student experience), there is less research available that connects these phenomena. The research on globalization and English-language learning often takes a macro approach, analyzing the policies and systems that maintain the power dynamics of the global economy, and the role English has in that network. We less frequently get to the micro level, which would focus on the narratives of individuals navigating changes in their sociolinguistic environments and making sense of the global pressures towards English. Research on international students, more often than not, recognizes them for who they are only in the context of U.S. higher education, rather than making space for their full personhood – the experiences and knowledge they have carried prior to setting foot on U.S. soil. Although there is work on international graduate students (IGSs), the majority of research tends to focus on undergraduates. Considering the challenges faced by IGSs, including lower institutional resources and support, pressures to publish for PhD-track students, and different professional pressures compared to undergraduates, there is room for further inquiry (Cho 2004).

Acknowledging the possibilities of this space led to the research questions of this study: 1) What are the relationships that IGSs have with English? and 2) What values do they place on this knowledge? When referring to relationships, I am speaking to the histories individuals have with a language: when were they first exposed to English, what is its role in their lives, and how has that relationship evolved? By values, I wanted to understand what meaning(s), if any, English has for IGSs. And, as an overarching theme, how does globalization impact student responses to these concerns? If we are to understand the impact of English on a global scale, it is imperative that our research recognizes the diverse experiences, identities, and knowledge of IGSs.

Literature Review

Understanding the Power of the English Language in a Global Context

According to Canagarajah (2006), English's spread began through British colonization. As the United Kingdom expanded its empire worldwide, they imposed the English language as a form of domination over existing peoples and cultures (Canagarajah 2006). Policies created legacies of English-speaking in many countries like Tanzania, Nigeria, Singapore, and India, where English remains an official language today (Burns and Coffins, 2001; Imam 2005). The modern or postcolonial spread of English, however, is attributed to globalization and neoliberal

policies enacted on many countries in the second half of the twentieth century (Hyslop-Margison and Sears 2006). Despite colonialism's end, corporate entities based in former colonial powers have transcended national boundaries by taking ownership of major industries and resources. In doing this, the corporations have forged a worldwide market where English-language proficiency is a requirement for economic participation (Imam 2015). One of the key parts of the game of global capitalism is neoliberalism. According to Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006), neoliberalism is an ideological approach that pushes market capitalism principles into all aspects of life. Neoliberalism advocates for reduced investment in public goods, resulting in greater competition between individuals for economic stability and opportunity. Neoliberalism's impact on education is evident with the formation of a pedagogical system concerned with whether or not the skills students learn will benefit them in the labor market. Mastering English creates individuals whom Park recognizes as "the linguistic version of the neoliberal subject" (2010, 23), in that they have gained the language education needed to participate in dominant economic, political, and cultural discourses. A new mark of a country's development within globalization is therefore the proportion of its population with advanced English-language proficiency (Alqahtani 2011; Park 2010; Warriner 2016).

Globalization has led lower-resourced countries to divert capital towards advancing their population's English language proficiency (Park and Abelmann 2004). The number of individuals and nations involved in English-language learning has grown exponentially over the past fifty years, with some estimating that nearly one-third of the world's population is involved in learning English in some capacity (Jenkins 2006; Ives 2009). Shin notes that, in South Korea, the government constructs English "as an essential part of a skillset of the global *injae*" (2016, 514), or citizen, and to be an *injae,* one must have "good" English (i.e., English resembling the English of Western Anglophone nations). The pressure and perceived values attributed to the English language have transformed Korean education from a place of equity into one of competition. Korea's private after-school education industry, or *sagoyuks*, has seen booms in centers devoted to English; now half of this sector's profits, estimated at $15.8 billion, come from their English-language institutions (Shin 2016). Part of achieving good English also includes pressures to study outside South Korea at universities and colleges in the Western Anglophone world (Pan 2010).

Although there is much to gain from Shin's (2016) macro-level analysis of the English-language industry in South Korea, there is room to further explore how this impact manifests at the individual level. What impact is English's growing dominance having on South Koreans' perceptions of who they are, the knowledge(s) they possess, and the cultures with which they identify? With this in mind, this study works to ground the more theoretical and policy-based analyses of the existing literature by adding findings based on personal narratives.

International Students and English

The globalization of English and perceived value of Western education has created an environment where students feel compelled to complete undergraduate and graduate degrees in English-dominant countries, including the United States (Hazen and Alberts 2006; Telbis, Helgeson, and Kingsbury 2014). Austin and Shen (2016) conducted interviews with twenty Chinese students to learn about their motivations to study in the United States. Participants in their study reported that a U.S. education would provide them with a competitive edge in the global job market, and that it was important to study English in the United States because "[it] is the most widely spoken language in the world and important to business" (Austin and Shen

2016, 731). The researchers also noted that the rising middle class in China has begun to send their children to local English language schools in order to provide them with a "better advantage" educationally and professionally (Austin and Shen 2016, 726).

With the rise of international students studying in Anglophone nations, researchers are looking at the challenges international students face and the ways that universities have adapted to support them (Jin and Liu 2014; Kanno and Cromley 2013). Andrade (2006) reviewed studies on international student adjustment in Australian universities to identify themes among the literature and found that students across the board needed more support to learn English. She called for universities to put resources into environments that encourage English-language learning and cultural adaptation. Other research reinforces these findings, including a quantitative analysis conducted by Telbis, Helgeson, and Kingsbury (2014), in which they surveyed 137 international students about their challenges in U.S. higher education. Again, students in that study identified English-language adjustment as a key factor.

The literature specifically on IGSs demonstrates unique challenges and pressures that are not as prevalent with international undergraduate populations, i.e., students completing associate and/or bachelor's degrees at higher education institutions (Burkholder, 2014). Park and colleagues (2017) interviewed graduate students from East Asia studying in the United States about their challenges and associated coping strategies in higher education. In addition to reporting more general struggles with communicating in English, the researchers also found that students experienced another stressor, which was establishing relationships with their PhD advisors and program directors. IGSs felt more supported in their studies when advisors were able to acknowledge the linguistic and cultural barriers that IGSs encountered in adjusting to doctoral studies in the United States (Park et al. 2017). The researchers identified this support, or lack thereof, as a critical indicator for students' acculturation, sense of belonging, and academic success. Cho (2004) similarly acknowledged how pressures mounted for graduate students trying to publish, by interviewing four non-native English-speaking doctoral students to learn about their experiences. Even after these students had sought assistance from writing centers and co-authored with native English speakers, the students reported that journal reviewers often criticized and rejected their work (Cho 2004). Although the students did not feel there was bias against them as non-native language researchers, they believed they lacked the insider status of their native English-language peers, and that being new to English-language publication limited their chances. In reaction to this, Cho argues that researchers and journals need to value the "local knowledge" (2004, 66) of non-native language researchers. Through their experience of living in multiple cultures, these international researchers could provide added diversity to mainstream research in English. As such, Cho's research is a call to make room for the diverse voices and full experiences of IGSs.

This collection of studies shows how English fits into IGSs' reasons to study in the United States, the struggles they encounter, and the benefits this learning could provide; however, as Cho (2004) notes, there is more researchers can do to understand IGSs' experiences. Related to my interests, there is little recognition of or investigation into how the global dynamics of English outside of U.S. higher education impact IGSs' experiences. How would the relationship of PhD advisors to their IGSs be different, if they understood their students not just in the context of academia, but also as sociocultural agents working to integrate and succeed in a new system? Looking more intentionally at IGSs' relationships with English and the values they place on English knowledge within the context of globalization could add further dimensions

that increase understanding of their reasons for studying in the United States and the impact English has had on how they make sense of academic and professional decisions.

English and the "Unified Linguistic Market"

The framework guiding this study combines theories of globalization with Bourdieu's (1991) ideas around language. Bourdieu argues that a language only becomes politically legitimized with the establishment of the nation-state, as "It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language" (1991, 45). To establish the legitimacy of an official language, the state utilizes an array of institutions to enforce "linguistic domination" (Bourdieu 1991, 53). This process informs a nation-state's population as to which languages the state recognizes as legitimate and which it does not.

Within a globalization framework, we can see how Bourdieu's framing of official languages has relevance not only at the nation-state level, but also within a global context, which allows us to address transnational modes of interaction and domination. Robinson (2004) describes globalization as an economic transformation that Western industrialized nations have carried out in order to create a global market that ties the financial well-being of lower-resourced countries to their success and stability in the global market. Rossi (2007) complicates this characterization of globalization by exploring economic dimensions along with deep political and cultural structures. The process of coercing lower-resourced nations to adopt capitalist models also imposes certain value systems, leading Rossi to write that developing countries must "play the game according to the rule (and the language and practices) of the West" (2007, 45). Through globalization, English becomes the dominant language of Bourdieu's linguistic market on a worldwide scale.

Within a neoliberal framework, globalization functions best in a culturally homogenous world, where nation-states are in consensus about the use of one language and the culture that this language fosters. As Norton notes, worldwide communities are not homogenous but rather "heterogeneous and conflicted" (2010, 350). The globalization of language does not replace the existing culture(s) that it impacts, but rather adds another dimension that creates new spaces for contestation and reimagination of what it means to be a member of that society (Rossi 2007). The nature of this conflict leads Rossi (2007) to frame the relationship of globalization with the individual as dialectical – one in which individuals are in a constant process of negotiation, conforming to certain elements of dominant culture, while also forging sites of resistance.

This space of contestation composes a major aspect of this study. Understanding participants as complex and diverse actors in a globalized world requires recognizing how pervasive global knowledge systems, and experiences across different sociocultural and linguistic contexts shape their perspectives. This suggests that participants' responses will have similarities informed by a globalized understanding of English and differences spawning from tensions between their cultural identities and the dominant neoliberal discourse.

Methods

This study was completed as a part of a graduate level course on Qualitative Methods. The setting chosen for this study was a public U.S. Research I institution, with IRB approval. I chose to do a qualitative interview study to center the experiences of English-language learning

IGSs. Criteria for participation were that participants needed to be IGSs studying English at the institution. To be able to gain access to the IGS population, I collaborated with the institution's English Language Institute (ELI). The ELI provides English-language coursework to international students who have not achieved a passing score on English-language admissions exams such as the TOEFL or IELTS. Since students cannot fully enroll in academic programs until they earn the required score on TOEFL or IELTS, their university admission status is temporary while taking coursework through the ELI. The ELI granted me access to an English-language course specifically designed for IGSs. The institute allowed me to share my research interests with the course, which led to six students volunteering to participate; four of the students responded to subsequent email contact and participated in the interviews for this study.

Participants and Data Collection

I conducted audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews that lasted roughly 45 minutes to an hour with each participant. I explained the interview process and received signed consent prior to beginning the interviews. Thus, interview transcripts serve as the primary data source for this research project. All participants represented different countries of origin as well as academic disciplines (see *Table 1*). Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of study participants.

Table 1. Demographics of study participants

Name	Age	Gender Identity	Country of Origin	Academic Program	Master's or PhD	# of Courses Taken at ELI
Al	32	Male	Bahrain	Telecommunications	Master's	3
Sara	28	Female	India	Cybersecurity	Master's	1
Shin	39	Male	Taiwan	Chemical Engineering	PhD	1
Chad	30	Male	France	History	PhD	1

Data Analysis

In reviewing the transcripts, I used two coding strategies – in vivo and concept coding. In vivo coding is an effective method as it can be beneficial "for studies that prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña 2005, 106). In vivo coding assigns labels to sections of the data, using words and phrases from the data – in this case the interview transcripts. Using in vivo codes, I was able to identify common words and phrases uttered by participants across interviews. Concept coding then brought together the themes from the in vivo analysis by allowing me to make connections among the repeated language and ideas I observed in the transcripts. A significant part of the coding process was peer review. To better ensure that the codes I identified made sense to others and were supported by the transcript data, two colleagues reviewed my work and supported me in reflecting on my research. This process supported a more focused and thoughtful manuscript and helped to check potential bias I was bringing into the analyses. In addition to peer review, I shared my manuscript with all participants for their feedback in an effort to ensure I represented their experiences, thoughts, and feelings accurately.

Researcher Positionality

I am white male L1 English speaker from the United States who grew up in a predominantly English speaking environment. My initial exposure to L2 English speakers was through my own family and my local community. My maternal grandfather was a Jewish refugee from Poland who came to the United States speaking Yiddish, Polish, and German, and who learned English in NYC in the 1940s. My neighborhood was one of many immigrant families primarily from India, China, and Korea. I remember as a child my friends often having to work as translators for their families as their own parents began learning English. My interest in the experience of English learners further intensified from two experiences: two academic years spent working as an English Language Assistant working in public schools in Spain and then as a Study Abroad Program Manager at a large Research 1 university in the U.S. Where English was emphasized as the language of access and economic opportunity in the Spanish schools, our U.S. students who studied abroad had next to no requirements to learn the language of the country to which they were going. This is all to say that the power dynamics of English have been a present factor in my life both professionally and personally for many years.

In relation to this project, I had no prior relationship with the four participants who informed this study, and only got to know them through our email correspondence and interviews. While I tried to minimize the impact of power dynamics between us through the transparent research protocols, the peer reviews, and the sharing of manuscripts discussed above, I believe that the interaction of positionalities is always at play, and therefore, my identities as a white U.S. queer L1 English speaking male graduate student influenced how the participants interacted with me, and as to how I interpreted their responses to interview questions (Peshkin 2000). With that said, I believe the efforts I took have produced findings that reflects a thoughtful engagement with the lived experiences of these four International Graduate Students and their connections to English.

Findings

The four themes identified from the data were: *Pervasive interaction with English*; *English language as necessity*; *English's value as a multifaceted tool*; and *Navigating sociocultural identities*.

Theme 1: Pervasive Interaction with English

The data revealed that participants in the study had lifelong exposure to English in both academic and non-academic settings. All the students interviewed had English as a mandatory course as part of their previous education. Chad began studying English in the last year of primary school, receiving instruction for one to two hours a week, and Shin, in his senior high school, had four hours of mandatory English-language coursework. Al and Sara had reported having greater exposure even earlier in their lives. Al learned English as a regular subject in primary school, recalling it as a mandatory class five days a week. Sara had attended a private school where English was the medium of instruction, even though the language of her family and community was Hindi.

The use of English extended to the IGSs' higher education experiences as well. Sara and Al's university programs in Computer Science and Telecommunication, respectively, were both taught in English. Al noted that universities in Bahrain only teach in English, meaning proficiency in English was required for access to higher education. Although Shin and Chad had

less exposure to English in higher education, pressures to learn the language compelled them to enroll in private coursework; Shin attended "cramming schools" in Taiwan to maintain his English and Chad spent close to three weeks in Toronto at a private English-language institute to strengthen his skills. English=language knowledge therefore became a critical part of their educational experiences.

All students had expressed exposure to English via popular media. Participants reported that CDs, books, and movies were readily accessible and advertised in English. Shin cited the show "Friends" as his introduction to U.S. life and culture and had watched it as a means to understand American English. Similarly, Chad often recorded U.S. basketball games with a friend of his and would watch them the next day to follow both the sport and increase his familiarity with the language. Within such exposure, students also had to negotiate different dialects of English – mostly differentiating between British and U.S. forms of English. Sara noted that although she was learning British English in school, there was greater exposure to U.S. media in her community. Chad reported having had a similar experience in France. Both Sara and Chad expressed having had a sense of confusion in their youth as to which version of English they should to aspire to learn. In all cases, exposure to English was constant and varied, requiring them to develop an understanding of multiple dialects across educational and social environments.

Theme 2: English Language as a Necessity

Building off the IGSs' accounts of exposure to English, participants reported that authority figures and institutions consistently emphasized the need for English. While in school, Chad said that his teachers had reinforced English as "a necessity," claiming that "If you want to learn a language at the end of the 20th century, you have to learn English." Likewise, Shin was told that he must learn English because it is "a global language" needed for professional and academic advancement.

The pressures to learn English for employment were ubiquitous across participants' experiences – whether looking at Sara and Al's professional pursuits, or Shin and Chad's time in academia. Al informed me that the Telecommunications field in Bahrain only operates in English, meaning one must know the language in order to have a career. Sara spoke similarly about her field of Cybersecurity in India, noting that the international clientele of companies requires employees to have some proficiency in English as to serve customers – let alone to advance professionally. Similarly, Chad and Shin saw English as necessary for scholarly success in their academic disciplines. Chad's field of Middle Eastern History was primarily centered in the United States, meaning he felt that enrollment at a U.S. institution was necessary to continue his studies. For both students, learning English was required for publishing, presenting at conferences, and building academic networks, in the pursuit of full-time, tenured employment in their home countries.

Students did not speak of these pressures to learn English as overwhelming, but rather as facts of their circumstances. Only one student, Sara, reflected on the role English played in her professional pursuits. Specifically, she felt that people exaggerated the need to know the language:

> I have planned within a specific domain, restricted to my knowledge in cybersecurity or my knowledge in computer science. So, I think it is not that important that people exaggerate that you need to know English. You need to speak fluently in English […] I

> don't think so. As long as you can communicate and the people understand you, I think that is more than enough.

Even with this rare instance of agency and resistance, the idea of English as a necessity was relatively uncontested, and strongly supported by the IGSs' professional circumstances.

Theme 3: English's Value as an Intercultural Tool

All participants depicted learning English as a mechanism for intercultural understanding and growth. Participants wanted to improve their English as a way to know other cultures and individuals on a deeper level, with some students registering this value as the most significant skill English has provided them. Al said that interacting with people from the United States allowed him to know U.S. culture, and that this knowledge was more beneficial to him than his graduate program. Shin also had similar sentiments when he said, "I need to become American!" His goal was to better understand U.S. culture and saw achieving this as tied to his ability to advance his English-language proficiency. Chad wondered what it meant to have an "American life." For him, answering this question was key to engaging with and understanding the diversity of the United States.

One fascinating aspect of such thought processes was how participants saw English as an intercultural tool beyond the United States. Sara believed that English needs to expand in "countries where it is not native," in order to expand international communication and what she labeled "friendliness." Al brought such beliefs to a more global understanding when he discussed his experiences with English in his travels:

> We don't use any other language even if I go to France. I know how to speak in French, and I know how to communicate with the French people, but I use English because English is the common language in this world.

The IGSs in this study wanted to connect with different communities in the United States and abroad, and they saw English-language knowledge as a necessary tool to do so – in some cases naming and reinforcing the idea of English as the global language.

Theme 4: Navigating Sociocultural Identities

Within these globalized understandings of the value and necessity of English, students are constantly navigating their sociocultural identities. Although IGSs in this study rarely question the systemic power of English, they shared reflections and concerns about the relationship between English and their heritage languages and cultures. Shin said that his brothers noted more errors and odd phrasing in his Mandarin since he began attending the university and taking English courses, which he was concerned would have lasting effects. Although Shin recognized the personal and professional importance of his Mandarin, his overarching concern was to improve his English. Chad expressed frustration that his knowledge of five other languages besides English had received little acknowledgement from his university colleagues. He felt that a large piece of who he was went unnoticed. Al, on the other hand, expressed less tensions around English. He saw English as being so intertwined with Bahraini culture that it was normal for people to intermingle Arabic and English words in their common speech. In contrast, Sara was notably clear in how she separated English into particular spheres of her life:

> It is very important to know your grassroots language, because English will help you personally, professionally, in your work, outside your home, outside the atmosphere you live in and breathe in. But back when you are yourself, I think you tend to speak…in the language in both of you are comfortable…So I still continue to respect my native language, I still continue to talk in that.

Sara's reflection demonstrates how English is strictly one dimension of who she is. This form of identification creates a clear line between the values and purposes of English and her "grassroots language" and community. Collectively, these examples show how participants' sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts affected IGSs sentiments about the relationship between English and their heritage languages.

Chad was the only student to exhibit concern about the future of the languages he knows – in particular, French,

> This is in my case terrible, cause just imagine you are born in a country and you speak a language for thirty years of your life, and you don't know for the next 20 years if you're gonna speak, write, dream in this language.

This sentiment expressed a fear of losing one's culture to English, due to a potential perceived loss in the future utility and purpose of speaking, operating, and existing in other languages. What we find in these expressions are students working to define who they are, how they relate to others, and the impact that the English language as a cultural system is having on that process.

Reflections and Conclusion

The results of this study reinforce the globalized nature of English-language learning. English has been an integral dimension of the educational, professional, and personal experiences of the IGSs who participated in this study. The depth of responses that came from the four participants indicate that additional interviews with other IGSs or even multiple interviews with participants could have deepened findings further. Interviews with IGSs were conducted in English, rather than in the students' heritage languages, and it is possible that IGSs may have expressed themselves differently if done in this way. Finally, this study treats identity in a relatively general manner. The study did not address specific areas of social identity (i.e., religious identity, race, ethnicity, or gender identity), and their impact on individual experiences. Through questions addressing social identities, IGSs may have shared experiences that show how other pieces of who they are also inform their relationship and value of English (Zuñiga, 2000).

Despite these potential limitations, much was gained from this study and analysis. As predicted, the participants attributed similar values and shared corresponding relationships with the English language, albeit in respect to different countries and cultural contexts. The comparable recognition of English as conducive to individual success and access to opportunity reflects the neoliberal environment under which the language and its teaching has continued to flourish worldwide. As noted, the participants rarely questioned the power and place of English, despite being asked directly about their thoughts on the language and its relationship to other languages and cultures they carry. Their responses often involved verbs like "have to" and "should," suggesting pressure or even conformity to the idea that English is the dominant mode of discourse. The IGSs in this study also alluded to English's role in the global sphere, attesting to its ability to connect people from distinct cultures and in some cases, a need for communities

lacking the language to learn it. Such pervasive exposure to and reinforcement of English makes it seem that knowing English is not just a sign of personal merit and skill, but rather a necessity for navigating our current global system.

What also became clear from these interviews is how negotiating one's relationships to English is an ongoing process. The evolution of how English fits into definitions of self appeared as a reflection of the changing sociocultural contexts and individual circumstances in which IGSs exist. Such an understanding allows us to think about IGSs' relationship to English not as a fixed entity, but rather a growing system of values and beliefs. This understanding seems critical for higher education professionals in areas like international student and scholar services, counseling, and academic advising. Knowing more about IGSs relationship to English could support professionals to make sense of and support the goals of IGSs. It helps professionals to avoid condensing IGSs into a singular population and reminds us of the complex lives they possess.

These considerations make space for future directions of research related to the concerns of this paper. In thinking about IGSs specifically, future research could include a longitudinal study that explores how the relationship to English evolves before, during, and after graduate programs. As this study was primarily concerned with academic and professional involvements, research could look more at the social relationship IGSs have to English such as in extracurricular activities and other commitments on campuses. A study of IGSs from a particular region or country could shed light on trends and themes related to English in that geopolitical context. Finally, we also can look at how English language instructors, such as those at the ELIs, make sense of and acknowledge the English experiences of their IGSs in the classroom. How does this recognition of these relationships fit into their pedagogy?

This study of course only captures one segment of the dynamics of the English language learning complex. The participants in this study have had the resources necessary to learn English and pursue higher education in an Anglophone environment. While there is notable forced exposure to English, there is also choice and privilege in making learning English a priority. As Ives (2009) notes, we can see the spread of the English-language in terms of what Italian scholar, Antonio Gramsci, would label as a tool of hegemony. In a Gramscian model, the growth of English and its framing as a necessity exacerbates existing inequalities by creating an environment that benefits those who learn English and ignores those who do not (Ives 2009). By working with IGSs, who by nature of their identity have had access to extensive English education, we see only one part of the larger English-language picture, when compared to the experiences of individuals who lack this access and social privilege.

Nonetheless, this study furthers the dialogue around international student populations. Seeing IGSs in a globalized context allows educators to better understand the power dynamics between industrialized Western Anglophone countries, like the United States, and non-heritage English-speaking nations in the areas of education and knowledge production. In this manner, international students are more than just students; they are a microcosm of the global forces interacting in our world.

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