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# Negotiating Cultural Identities Through Language: Academic English In Jordan

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National Council of Teachers of English

Anne-Marie Pedersen

## **Negotiating Cultural Identities through Language: Academic English in Jordan**

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This article discusses how a group of multilingual scholars in Jordan negotiate multiple linguistic and cultural affiliations. These writers' experiences demonstrate the varied ways English's global dominance affects individuals' lives. The scholars find both empowerment and disempowerment in English, viewing English as linked to Western hegemony in some situations and as de-nationalized and de-territorialized in others.

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Language researchers have become increasingly interested in the experiences of English speakers and writers who live outside what Braj B. Kachru has termed the “Inner-Circle”—countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom that have been the “traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English” (356). A. Suresh Canagarajah has argued that we need to pay close attention to the varieties of World English used outside the inner circle, as these Englishes are moving quickly across borders: “in order to be functional postmodern global citizens, even students from the dominant community (i.e. Anglo-American) now need to be proficient in negotiating a repertoire of World Englishes” (“Place”). Min-Zhan Lu has also drawn attention to World Englishes, in one case analyzing in great depth the possible contexts in which an English-language sign in China was created in order to demonstrate the

way peoples' "discursive resources" affect how they use and change language to suit their particular needs ("Essay").

This recent move in composition studies to explore linguistic diversity stands in contrast to the long history of privileging English-only instruction and the monolingual writer. Horner and Trimbur have argued that the historical reasons for the reification of English-only instruction in higher education

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continue to haunt us today: "assumptions about language that were institutionalized around the turn of the century, at a high tide of imperialism, colonial adventure, and overseas missionary societies, have become sedimented in the way we think about writing pedagogy and curriculum" (608). These assumptions have led to practices in teaching writing in which identity and language are viewed as clear-cut categories (international student/traditional student, native speaker/non-native speaker), and "writing itself, like language, is understood in reified form, rather than as a set of heterogeneous and shifting practices" (614). Paul Kei Matsuda has further scrutinized composition's tradition of privileging the monolingual writer. Matsuda demonstrates a long history of linguistic diversity and international students in higher education, despite institutions' attempts to "contain" this diversity and to perpetuate the "myth of linguistic homogeneity—the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English" (638).

Reification of the monolingual English user and the corresponding neglect of linguistic diversity have profound consequences. Scholars have investigated how the prestige associated with standardized English has concrete, and often negative, implications for English users across the world. Lu has offered a dramatic example from Korea and China of what some parents will do in an effort to help their children produce standardized English ("Living-English"). Lu described "media reports on the popularity of" a particular type of "tongue surgery" in which a piece of skin attached to the tongue is cut with the hope that this physical modification will help the child speak English without an accent (605–6). Lu has reminded us that language standardization is still a powerful force, despite the creative work of living-English users and the efforts of language researchers to promote multilingualism and World Englishes.

Many other recent studies in composition and applied linguistics have pointed to the disempowerment that can accompany non-native speaker and outer-circle status. Periphery scholars, as Canagarajah has referred to them,

work in a type of borderland among languages and cultures and must negotiate many difficult economic, social, and political forces that inner-circle writers do not confront (*Geopolitics*; “Nondiscursive Requirements”). John Flowerdew has studied scholars in Hong Kong who want to publish in English and found the obstacles they face ranging from “facility of expression” and vocabulary to completing the writing process in a timely manner (“Problems” 254). More recently, Flowerdew has used results from the many studies on publishing experiences of international scholars who use English as an Additional Language (EAL) to argue that journal reviewers often place a stigma on EAL writers that can lead to discrimination (“Scholarly”). Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis have argued that periphery scholars are often “exhausted” not only by difficult material conditions but also by additional demands that inner-circle scholars rarely face, including the need to write for “relatively distinct communities” such as local journals published in their home languages as well as international English-language journals (681). In a later article, Lillis and Curry have pointed to another type of disempowerment, claiming that these scholars may have their intellectual authority compromised by native-speaking “literacy brokers” who change the content in these writers’ texts under the guise of editing for Standard English. A comprehensive review of studies on the publishing experiences of periphery scholars led Sedef Uzuner to suggest that “international publication is more of a challenge to multilingual scholars than it is to others who are endowed with economic, cultural and symbolic capitals, and thus able to respond to the demands of the core academic discursive practices with relative ease” (261).

Despite difficulties and discrimination, EAL writers often have no choice but to write and publish in English, as English has become the lingua franca of international scholarship. This situation seems to support Phillipson’s theory that the current spread of English functions as a form of linguistic imperialism. According to Phillipson, English linguistic imperialism goes hand-in-hand with economic and cultural imperialism. Phillipson has further warned that English’s dominant role comes at the expense of other languages and cultures: “*the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages*” (47; original emphasis). Phillipson’s claim weighs on English teachers who work with students categorized as multilingual, EAL, or non-native speaker, as many composition teachers inside and outside the United States now do.

I first experienced these concerns when I taught academic English at a U.S. State Department–sponsored school in Amman, Jordan, at the beginning of my career nearly a decade ago. Am I perpetuating the dominance of English and the Anglo-American culture that seems inextricably linked to the language, I wondered. It was with this broad question that I began to formulate a study about English's role in the lives of multilingual speakers, especially those outside the United States. To begin to answer this question, I returned to Jordan to interview writers who used English for their academic or research writing, asking about their attitudes toward English. Originally, my research focused on these writers' attitudes about source-use practices and plagiarism, but the more data I collected and analyzed, the more I found the issue of identity dominating the interviews. Overall, the interview data seemed to suggest yet another clear example of English's linguistic imperialism. English in Jordan was reinforced by powerful institutions and sponsors. Of greater interest than this confirmation, however, were the writers' nuanced and individual responses to this dominance, which suggest a complex interaction among English, Arabic, culture, and identity.

How do researchers outside Kachru's "inner circle" conceive of their relationship to English? Do they feel disempowered by the dominance of English

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in academic writing? The participants in my study say that these questions cannot be answered simply yes or no. Participants accepted English as a means to an economic and professional end, but they also tried to resist its overbearing influence on their home language and culture in surprising ways. Participants reported finding both empowerment and disempowerment in English. They valued English and found it closely aligned

with the technology on which they increasingly relied in both their home and work lives; at the same time, they resented how its prevalence and cultural capital affected their relationship to Arabic.

An especially intriguing finding from the study was how many of the participants described a belief that English did not necessarily carry with it Anglo-American cultural associations. Instead, in many cases they viewed English as the language of their culture, or at least one of the cultures to which they described belonging—the culture of international science or their scholarly

discipline. And although English is the language of science and the predominant language of many academic disciplines due to the legacy of British colonialism and current U.S. neocolonialism, the participants often saw themselves as the users and shapers of certain types of English, not as non-native outsiders passively colonized.

Participants

My contribution to expanding our understanding of multilingual writers began with a six-month research fellowship in Amman, Jordan, in 2005 and 2006.<sup>1</sup> My main source of data for the study was digitally recorded, semi-structured interviews with advanced academic writers—graduate students, professors, and professional researchers. In addition to the interviews, other important data included texts that participants gave me on a voluntary basis (mostly samples of published texts or drafts of theses) and observational notes. In total, I collected interviews from twenty-four participants who represented a wide variety of disciplines and levels of advanced higher education; fifteen were female and nine male (see Appendix A for additional demographic information).

Table 1. Participants by Discipline

Biology	8
Education	4
Archaeology	3
Chemical Engineering	3
Architecture	1
Comparative Literature (English/ Arabic)	1
Geology	1
History	1
Management Science	1
Urban Planning	1

Table 2. Participants by Highest Degree Program

Master's degree in process	10
Master's degree finished	3
Ph.D. degree finished	11

When I began my study, I invited writers to participate based on these criteria:

- Had acquired or was working toward an advanced degree (master's or higher)
- Engaged recently in academic writing in English that used textual sources
- Self-identified as an L2 or non-native speaker of English

Although I had originally planned to interview only participants who were affiliated with universities, when a friend suggested I speak with some of her co-workers at a new medical center, I discovered that some private sector workers in Jordan continued to engage in a form of research-based writing. Dr. Yusef, a researcher in medical sciences, is a good example: he had a doctorate in biology and had worked and taught at a university in the United States, but at the time of the interview, he was serving as a director in a private research hospital in Jordan, where he read and incorporated scholarly medical research into his reports. During our interview, we discussed Dr. Yusef's past academic writing and the more hybrid academic/professional writing he was currently composing.

In the end, the majority of the participants were affiliated with a university: eleven students, eight professors, and one instructor. Two of the students

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who were earning master's degrees were also teaching in the public schools. Of these twenty-one university-affiliated participants, all but three were affiliated with the two large public universities in Jordan: Jordan University (the flagship institution) and Yarmouk University. The three participants not associated with

a university included a geologist who worked for Jordan's agency for natural resources, a historian who directed a nongovernmental organization focused on education, and a researcher and director at a medical center—Dr. Yusef. Although I studied only one small group of writers in one small country, their individual experiences span cultures, continents, and countries and offer insights to the changing nature of academic English and how we as researchers and teachers can best respond to this.<sup>2</sup>

## Data Collection and Analysis

To collect detail-rich data, I conducted semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). Although I brought a list of questions to each interview, I often varied the questions slightly depending on the participant. Regardless of specific questions, the interviews always addressed these issues: educational history, attitudes about English, and experiences with and beliefs about writing from sources. In addition to eliciting narratives, the questions encouraged participants to reflect on and theorize about their experiences—moving away from the idea of the researcher as the only expert in the research project. When meeting with participants more than once, I shared my interpretations of the previous interview's data and asked for their responses.

Using a technique from Strauss and Corbin's *Grounded Theory*, I began my analysis by reading the interview transcripts and writing memos about interesting or significant information. As I wrote memos and compared them within and among interviews, I paid attention to repetition in participants' comments and repetition in my responses to their comments. During memo taking, I incorporated microanalysis, a technique that Strauss and Corbin have offered for unpacking meaning in data by paying close attention to "single words" and "phrases" (65).<sup>3</sup> After using memo taking, microanalysis, and other techniques from Strauss and Corbin, I began coding the transcripts based on key concepts that seemed to emerge from the data, such as "identity/Arab," "identity/English," "research in Arabic," "English and technology," "English-language academic culture." Coding the transcripts was most helpful for me in organizing my data into manageable units and abstract concepts that I could use to generate theories about source-use practices and the negotiation of language identifications. Refining key concepts through coding and recoding, and noticing which codes had been assigned more often and in conjunction with which other codes, helped me to identify "linkages" among codes and to begin to "integrate" all my central concepts in what Strauss and Corbin call "storyline memos" (148–49).<sup>4</sup> One of these storyline memos became the rough draft of this article, one in which I saw a narrative about literacy sponsors, transglobal culture, and postcolonial contexts emerging from the data.

In addition, to verify my analysis and my theories, I checked my conclusions with my study participants, emailing them a summary of my conclusions and an offer to send them drafts of my work for their review and response. Strauss and Corbin have described this as one way of "validating the theoretical scheme" (159) of a study. The six who responded agreed overall with the

findings, although a few wanted to contribute additional comments. Only one participant read drafts of manuscripts (including a draft of the dissertation chapter on which this article is based) and offered substantive feedback: Dr. Hasan, a professor of chemical engineering. I have incorporated his and other participants' comments where relevant in this article, most notably in the notes. Dr. Hasan's insightful responses offer not only the valuable perspective of a participant reflecting on my interpretations of the data but also the unique perspective of a reader from outside the humanities and social sciences—the academic schools in which my project is grounded.

Given the small sample of participants, the conclusions I draw are limited and preliminary. In this article, I discuss patterns I saw in the data, which I illustrate with representative examples from the interview transcripts. In addition, I discuss some of the exceptions to these patterns or complications—examples of surprising, and in some cases contradictory, responses that participants had to the dominant position of English in the international academic world. I then offer multiple theories for why and how people negotiate language and identity, recognizing that the possibilities for these negotiations are nearly limitless.

### **Background: Dominance of English and of Western Higher Education in Jordan**

The linguistic backgrounds of academics living in Jordan reflect the strong economic and political influence of the West, which began at the end of World War I when Jordan became part of the British mandate and which continues today with the many political and economic links between Jordan and the United States. After World War II and the end of Britain's "official" authority over Jordan, the United States began to increase its influence, soon making Jordan an important ally—and an important recipient of aid. Since 1952, the United States has given Jordan \$6 billion in economic assistance (United States). During the administration of George W. Bush, when this data collection occurred, the United States promoted Jordan as a key ally in its war against terror (due to Jordan's strategic location bordering Israel/ Palestine, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq) by expanding free trade agreements with Jordan and increasing aid.

Jordan has a long tradition of English literacy. English's position as an important language for economic and intellectual life in Jordan results from the current globalized economy, close ties with America, and the vestiges of earlier British colonialism both in Palestine and Jordan. Traditionally, English has been taught at public schools beginning in fifth grade, with many private schools beginning instruction even earlier; however, at the time of the inter-

views, there were plans to begin teaching English in Jordanian public schools in first grade.<sup>5</sup> A 2004 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) report has confirmed the dominant position of English in Jordanian higher education, describing Jordan as often following the “Anglo-American pattern of instruction,” with English the primary foreign language at universities (Bashshur 51).

As a relatively poor country that depends on U.S. foreign aid, Jordan has few advanced degree programs and very few PhD programs, with many of Jordan’s brightest students leaving the country for advanced training. To study for a PhD in certain fields, students often must go outside the country, often out of the region, and many students prefer to study abroad even if a program exists in Jordan (Bashshur 17). During my study, many participants remarked that PhDs earned from schools in the West held more prestige and were associated with more rigorous training. The historical influence of English and the prestige of degrees from countries in the West, not to mention the prevalence of English-language textbooks, help to explain why so much of higher education in Jordan occurs in English.

Reflecting this pattern, most of the professors who participated in this study were educated at some point in their careers in English in the West and imported practices—including literacy practices—from the West into their classrooms. Regardless of where in the West the participants had studied, English played a far more dominant role in their academic lives than other European languages. For example, all the PhD holders had written their dissertations in English. Based on discussions with the participants and other faculty and administrative members of the higher education system in Jordan, the emphasis on English both in teaching and publishing is representative of wider trends in Jordan, where most master’s students in public universities are required to take the TOEFL to prove English proficiency before they graduate.

Whether or not the participants received their training outside the Middle East, they all spent a great deal of time reading and writing in English. For participants who studied the sciences or applied disciplines (such as architecture and engineering), the majority of their higher education was in English. Even those participants who received part of their education outside of Jordan but within the Arab states experienced English-saturated instruction, doing much of their reading and writing in English. The professors who participated in this study all taught English-language texts in courses because so few Arabic texts existed.

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Participants described a situation in which they needed English to communicate with colleagues in their fields both inside and outside the Arab world. Writing in English helped their work reach a wider audience, while reading texts in English and communicating informally with scholars all over the world

in English helped them to keep up with current research. Dr. Mai, an archaeology professor, said that English allowed her to “be in communication with all the world around me and to [get] to as much information as I can.” All participants described English as facilitating their work in an international academic community. Aisha, a recent graduate with a master’s degree in chemical engineering, discussed

the importance of publishing work in English to reach the widest audience possible. At the time of the interview, Aisha was applying to PhD programs in Germany that would require her to write her dissertation in either English or German, but she said she would write an English-language version regardless:

If you don’t know the English language, or if you didn’t study English, you’ll be . . . somehow a step or three back. . . . I think this is true, and I really do agree with this. And to be honest with you, I’m planning even if I didn’t . . . [get] my Ph.D. in English for a reason or another. . . . I am planning to translate it completely to English and to publish the related papers in English.

Aisha even stated that sharing her research in English was her duty to the rest of the scientific community: “This is a science, and everyone has the right to take a look to this science, and to be sure that it will be available for at least 95% of the people who . . . [are] interested in this subject, I have to write it in English.”

### **Sponsors of English**

English’s dominant role in the academic lives of the participants was due in part to the support of English by powerful—often governmental—institutions, a fact that seems to support a model of linguistic imperialism. Eight of the participants described receiving scholarships or fellowships to study in the West (the United States, UK, Germany, or the Netherlands) from the Jordanian government or from foreign government agencies, such as the Fulbright Exchange. In total, fifteen of the participants had studied at universities in Western countries. These institutions functioned as “literacy sponsors” which,

as Deborah Brandt has defined them, promote literacy resources not altruistically but for their own "gain" (19). For the U.S. government, one benefit was the dissemination of the English language and of culturally American educational practices in a region where the United States hoped to improve its reputation and increase its influence. For the Jordanian government, the benefit was more likely monetary. With English as the dominant language not only in international scholarship but also in business, the Jordanian government benefits from an English-speaking populace that competes in the global economy.

Literacy sponsorships for studying in English in the West had long-range and long-term effects: even students who never left Jordan learned Western approaches to research and education from Western professors or from professors who had studied in the West. Badr, an outgoing young instructor of English and Arabic language with a master's in English/Arabic comparative literature, declared that "all" the professors who taught him in his master's degree program at the University of Jordan had trained in the United States. Abeer, a serious young biologist who recently finished her master's thesis at Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), echoed this sentiment, saying that all the professors in her master's degree program were also trained in the West.<sup>6</sup>

The Jordanian government also served as a powerful sponsor of English literacy not only through scholarships to Western, English-language educational institutions, but also through the public university administration's new rules for academic publication and promotion. According to the participants, these new rules reward publications in Western, English-language journals more than they reward publications in Arab and Arabic-languages journals. In the old system, professors needed to publish for promotion and salary increase, but not necessarily in the most prestigious journals and not necessarily in English. Under the new system, however, professors are required to publish in some journals indexed by international academic databases, which include a majority of English-language, Western publications. Dr. Hasan described the new regulations:

In the old system it did not matter [in which journal a professor published]. There is a new system that is going to be enforced in . . . January 2006. What it says, there . . . [are] two kinds of journals: international journals and local journals. And international journals get twice the number of points compared to the local journals. But they don't take into consideration the impact factor. . . . Mostly what they consider is the American and European journals, something like if you are optioned in Science Direct.

The new publication rules, as the participants understood and responded to them, require that professors contribute to the pro-West dynamic by publishing in indexed journals. Dr. Imad, an archaeology professor in his thirties at a new satellite university in a rural area, explained how this system will force him to publish in English-language journals:

So when you want to publish, you should publish in a refereed journal, and this journal should be listed with the international journals. I searched this one. I found a few related to my field of study. About 70% of your articles should be published in these things. And these are either in English or German or French, and a few are in Arabic, but in archaeology, all of them [are] in English. So if you want to be promoted, I'm assistant professor now, and I want [to be] promoted to be associate professor, I have to publish about 70% of my works in these journals in English. So they don't publish in Arabic. So it's a necessity.

Dr. Sulyman, an architecture professor at JUST with a passion for the conservation of the region's heritage, described the few exceptions to the new rules and his frustration with the system:

The journal you publish in should be an international, refereed, indexed, specialized journal. And a lot of these university research publications, like the ones in Yarmouk [University], University of Jordan, Egypt, they are not approved for publication unless . . . you're in the Arabic literature stream. . . . So from that practical perspective you find yourself, not because you don't believe in some of these journals. . . . There are some of them that are really good, but unfortunately they are not approved for tenure purposes, and they're not approved for promotion purposes.

The new rules for publication privilege Western, English-language research and devalue non-English, non-Western research. This devaluing exacerbates an already difficult situation for non-Western, non-English journals: because scholars who publish in prestigious, indexed journals often devalue and, therefore, ignore non-Western, non-English journals in their research, these publications are rarely cited. And because they are rarely cited, they are rarely indexed, as indexes

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generally include only the journals that are regularly cited in other articles.

This cycle of citation and indexing (which maintains the status quo and prevents the addition of non-Western, non-English journals to international

indexes) illustrates the very real threat in Jordan and much of the developing world of English linguistic and cultural hegemony. Even before the new publication rules, Hazim Najjar, a linguist who has conducted studies on English and Arabic scientific writing in Jordan, described the way English-dominated science training in Jordan created a “closed circle whereby the scientist will find it easier to read, write and teach in English, and hence avoid Arabic as much as possible and in turn never improve his mastery of the native language” (58). The professors with whom I spoke argued that the move of Jordan’s own educational bureaucracy to promote Western journals published in English will further decrease the number of publications in Arabic-language or regional journals.<sup>7</sup> This situation demonstrates how the global economy often perpetuates the hegemony of English: the powerful literacy sponsors of English exert their influence beyond the geographic boundaries of the West.

Technology in many ways functioned as another powerful sponsor of English literacy. Although *technology* is an abstract term and does not fit Deborah Brandt’s definition of literacy sponsor, as it does not “gain” anything from sponsoring literacy, I use it as shorthand for all the corporations that produce, distribute, and manage English-dominated technology products and reap monetary rewards from sponsoring English. Accessing research and communicating with academics from around the world often meant for the participants not only using English but also using technology in English. Basima, a young woman who was finishing a master’s thesis for an education degree that focused on teaching English, described the Internet as “the key connecting people” in her field:

I need to be able to read because my research, my articles [are] from the Internet. It’s in English. Okay? So I have to know, to read, to . . . understand everything in English, the concepts, the whatever, is related to English. I have to know English to be able to write my research, to have, to get my . . . articles.

Similarly, Dr. Ayman associated English with computer technology and with his technology-focused field: “I’m [an] expert in Information Science, and I know . . . the meaning of information sources. . . . The main resources of our . . . subject or field or any . . . subject related with computers . . . they are in the English language.” For Dr. Ayman, both the content of his discipline, involving current research on information technology, and the technologies through which people transmitted and accessed this research required English. The participants’ need to use English resulted in part from the preeminent position of the United States in research and development not only in technology but

also in other types of products and knowledge. The terms used to describe new technology and new knowledge are most often in English. Sabreen, who was finishing a master's thesis for a new urban planning program at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates after graduating from a Jordanian university, stated it even more powerfully: "the knowledge is coming from the West and it is coming in English." Nearly all participants mentioned

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the prevalence of English technical terms as a reason for using English in their academic writing.

While technology facilitated the sharing of knowledge, with participants exchanging information with scholars all over the world, the same technology limited how the participants communi-

cated this knowledge and promoted English beyond the domain of work and research. Dr. Yusef—a middle-aged and self-confident medical researcher who had received most of his higher education in the United States—admitted that he wrote all his emails, both professional and social, in English because he had never learned to type in Arabic:

I don't know how to type in Arabic, and I'm not interested in learning. I don't have time for it. And it will confuse me. My phone is . . . all the settings are in English. You will see a lot of people [with] the settings in Arabic. I can't. I don't understand it, operating systems in Arabic.

For Dr. Yusef, technology limited his Arabic not only in the domain of research and work but also in his personal life. Dr. Yusef used English to email both non-Arabic-speaking colleagues on another continent and Arabic native-speaker friends living in Amman.

Sabreen offers another example of technology's sponsorship of English over Arabic in both the work world and the personal realm. At the time of the interview, Sabreen was living in Jordan to finish a work-related project but was planning to return to the United Arab Emirates, where as a graduate student and mother of two her life was saturated with English. She illustrates this with a description of a linguistic dilemma she faced with her children. Sabreen encouraged her children to use Arabic and resisted, or at least tried to resist, the children's preference for English. In practice, though, she often communicated with them in English because the children were so accustomed to English-language media:

They [the children] like the Disney channel. I tried the other channels you know in Arabic, the cartoon, the Arabic channels; they don't like it. So it's more funny, attractive and . . . they like to watch . . . Nickelodeon, you know, all in English. . . . And the nanny at home, she is from the Philippines, and she speaks English. So, we have a new member in our family who speaks only English. . . . I'm busy, you know, working until five, full time job, and then studying, part-time student, so . . . she's really helping me a lot. She [is] spending [a] good time with the kids. All in English. I can't come spend the few hours that I spend every day, spend it teaching them talking in Arabic, you know. We want to have fun and go out, and I'll just speak their language [English] to them. 'Cause I spend little time with them.

The popularity of English-language television played a large role in Sabreen's choice to use English at home with her children. The other reason—the domestic worker from the Philippines—is not related to technology but does suggest just how powerful and far-reaching English's global dominance is.

### **English Sponsorship in a Transglobal Cultural Economy**

While much of the participants' data—including Dr. Yusef's and Sabreen's—suggest that English exerts a dominant force in Jordan, the same data suggest a dynamic flow of knowledge and language across national and geographic borders, a flow that can sometimes dissolve a simple oppressor/oppressed dichotomy. Sabreen's situation, for example, suggests the often unexpected movement of English across borders: the domestic worker, a person with little economic or social power, played a key role in promoting English literacy in Sabreen's life.

To describe the complexity of a transglobal cultural economy, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has offered a model of five different "scapes"—(1) *ethnoscapes*, (2) *mediascapes*, (3) *technoscapes*, (4) *financescapes*, and (5) *ideoscapes*—through which cultural knowledge flows. This model emphasizes the dynamic and subjective nature of cultural production and exchange:

these terms with the common suffix -scape also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements (whether religious, political or economical), and even intimate face-to-face groups such as villages, neighborhoods, and families. (33)

Dr. Yusef's use of English with certain technologies can be attributed to a "technoscape" that flows across the national borders that he himself had traveled

while a student. The meaning of these scapes, as Appadurai suggests, is “perspectival,” so that Sabreen seemed to view the English-dominated “mediascape” her children and she experienced as something she could use to facilitate her interactions with her children.

While both Dr. Yusef’s and Sabreen’s experiences suggest that the trans-global flow of cultural knowledge supports English literacy, their experiences also suggest different possibilities for shaping that flow. Dr. Yusef’s experience with his children’s language use was markedly different from Sabreen’s. While Sabreen accepted and in a sense encouraged English dominance in her children’s life, Dr. Yusef fought against it. Dr. Yusef worked in a new medical center in a position that required a high level of English proficiency, which he acquired during his graduate training in the United States. Despite parlaying his English-language training into a Western-like salary in Jordan, he felt a strong resistance to English linguistic hegemony. While he could have made a better living in the United States, where the political, economic, and social situation was much more stable, he had chosen to move back to Jordan so his children could master both spoken and written Arabic, a difficult task to accomplish living outside the Arab world. He described his resistance to English linguistic domination and to a view of language that privileges economic gain over social or personal gain, a resistance that many of his friends questioned:

A lot of my friends, when I left America and decided to come here, thought that I am weird because I always expressed to them the reason I left America is for . . . my kids. I want to give them the gift of Arabic language. Are you crazy? Who cares about the Arabic language? What did it do for you and things like that. I . . . just can’t comprehend such arguments because it’s a beautiful language. I enjoyed it and . . . so . . . so yes I came for my kids, and I came to give them the Arabic language. And, believe it or not, I spend at least two hours a day with them.

The same transglobal cultural economy that sponsored English in Dr. Yusef’s educational and professional life also allowed him to use this knowledge outside the West where he could serve as a sponsor for his own children’s Arabic literacy. And while Dr. Yusef himself could not type in Arabic and rarely used it in his professional life, he identified so strongly with Arabic language and cultural identity that he worked diligently to ensure that his children’s Arabic literacy skills would be stronger than his.

Dr. Yusef’s and Sabreen’s very different responses to their children’s Arabic literacy could be explored in even more depth. We could investigate their responses in terms of gender or age (Sabreen was younger than Dr. Yusef).

What I am most interested in, however, is the fact that participants' responses to English dominance varied, that some participants found ways to work with the situation and maintain their Arabic language and literacy—at least to some extent.

### **Literacy and Culture in a Postcolonial Context**

Participants' comments about the conflicts between Arabic and English and their reactions to these conflicts reflect the complex conditions of literacy in a postcolonial—or neocolonial—world. Homi Bhabha has theorized the colonial condition as a position of both re-inscription of and resistance to the ideology of colonialism. According to Bhabha, mimicry of the colonizer is not necessarily an acceptance of the colonizer's ideology; instead, this mimicry may exist in a liminal position between colonizer and colonized, a space open for a potentially subversive hybrid identity: "interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains differences without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5). Although participants engaged in literacy practices in English, the language of British colonialism and United States neocolonialism, their responses to the forces that compelled them to use English demonstrate that they do have the power to negotiate these forces for their own uses and gains. Thus, in positions marked by hybridity, participants spoke and acted both through and against the dominant language. For Bhabha, a hybrid discourse offers the potential for agency in the face of unequal power structures. Drawing on Bhabha, Canagarajah has pointed out that multilingual writers do not use discourses "passively" but instead "use competing literacy conventions on their own terms" in a way that demonstrates the "benefits of the 'double vision' that is engendered in the interstices of discourses (see Bhabha)" ("Toward" 600). This is not to say that hybridity is a state of utopist multiculturalism. Bhabha has warned that hybridity "is not the third term that resolves the tension between two cultures" (162); instead, this hybridity reflects the conflict of these differences. Although they wanted to limit their use of English, participants could not always control the way English shaped their lives: Sabreen had little control over her children's desire for English-language television, and while Dr. Yusef could emphasize Arabic with his children, he could do little to stem the tide of it in his own

**Participants' comments about the conflicts between Arabic and English and their reactions to these conflicts reflect the complex conditions of literacy in a postcolonial—or neocolonial—world.**

professional life. While participants had options for responding to English's dominance, their choices were necessarily limited.

Participants were clearly concerned with an increase in English in the Arab world and the effect of this on their own relationship to Arabic—and sometimes they worked to hold the power of English at bay. Participants such as Dr. Yusef and Sabreen clearly believed that English detracted from opportunities to use Arabic. Twelve participants directly voiced their desire to maintain their Arab identity through their use of Arabic, viewing the link between Arab cultural identity and Arabic as quite strong. At the same time, fourteen participants downplayed a similar connection between English and Anglo-American culture. These participants seemed to dissociate English from Anglo-American cultural practices, suggesting that although English literacy was on the rise, it did not

**These participants described the English they used at work as the language of the international scholarly community, one that was not necessarily dominated by Anglo-American culture.**

always carry with it Anglo-American cultural beliefs and practices but instead was an “international” or “global” (to use some of the participants’ own phrases) language that could be used in service of their academic disciplines.

These participants described the English they used at work as the language of the international scholarly community, one that was not necessarily dominated by Anglo-American culture. They associated their English not with the United States or the UK, but with a community of scholars that had no national cultural associations. Dr. Ayman stated this view of English clearly: “I would like to use Arabic language rather than English language [at home], but in science use I would like to use English language because the distance between information seeker, like me, and information source or resources is shorter. . . . I can consider the first language for science is English.”

Especially for the participants who worked in the hard sciences, English did not carry Anglo-American cultural associations with it, at least not when used in academic or work-related research. In discussing his English language training, Dr. Hasan described learning English in the context of chemical engineering, not as a separate subject. After narrating his early English education in government schools, he answered my question about whether or not he had continued his language studies in college: “Yes, but not English as a language. Rather . . . as in the classroom in my field in chemical engineering. I did not study, for example, English language such as syntax or semantics or rhetoric or something like this. Just as an applied language in the classroom.” Like Dr.

Hasan, Aisha characterized her English-language research writing as part of her identity as a scientist. Aisha made this clear when describing the need to learn general English versus the need to practice English for her specific discipline:

I don't think it's important to go to . . . English institutions to study language and then to go to the university. No, it's by time, by practicing . . . if I am in a conference and speaking of chemical engineering, I will be very great. If I'm in conference of medicine, I'm sure that I will understand no more than 40% of these medical idioms. . . . And it will be the same of a physician who attends engineering conference. . . . So even if I want to go for a, for a some kind of councils [such as the British Council] to study language in order to study science in the university, I think this is wasting of time, really.

For Aisha, English was valuable because it allowed her to communicate in the scientific community. English seems to have little practical connection to Anglo-American culture in this example. Here English was associated with the culture of science or, more specifically, the culture of chemical engineering.<sup>8</sup>

The association between English and science was so close in Aisha's mind that she doubted the ability and integrity of scientists who don't learn and use English in their work: "And if someone cannot speak English, I'm talking about the academic people, cannot speak English, I think there is something wrong with his scientific ability." Even participants who described their English proficiency as low characterized English as a tool for communicating their research, including Dr. Dima, a young water scientist: "Of course I do not have perfect English; it's not my native [language], but I can read; it's not very difficult, at least at my field, to, to make your points clear . . . with simple English; you don't really have to go into very complicated sentences."

Aisha, Dr. Dima, and Dr. Hasan seemed to suggest that the English they use for work and research is aligned with the practices of science or their disciplines, rather than with Anglo-American or Western culture. This is not to say that language functions as a culturally or ideologically neutral tool. Language research has proven time and time again that we make meaning through language within a specific social and cultural context. New Literacy Studies research has demonstrated that "literacy is best understood as a set of social practices" that "can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts" and "embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices" (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanic 8). Thus, participants' use of English occurred within a particular culture—the culture of science, according to many of the participants—and this culture has ideologies associated with it. For example,

summarizing research on the rhetoric of science, Charles Bazerman has concluded that “scientific formulations embody ideological components from outside the realm of science” (294). Thus, ideologies about class, gender, nation, and race inflect scientific work. The fact that participants perceived science, or their particular discipline, as having the potential to transcend ideologies associated with specific nations or peoples does not ignore culture or ideology in science or in particular disciplines. Rather, participants’ association of science with a de-nationalized English suggests that science and the ideologies that inflect science, including empiricism and objectivity, are not the sole domain of any particular nation or national culture.

These participants’ comments point to the fluidity of linguistic identity: a person may be identified with multiple and shifting cultural groups depending on the context of the language use. Participants’ comments also suggest that all types of English are a “living English”—to use Lu’s term—changing constantly in response to the users’ needs and context (“Living-English”). This reading of the participants’ attitudes and experiences with English denies neither the hegemony of English in participants’ lives inside the academy nor the effect of this hegemony on Arabic literacy and individuals’ lives outside the academy. The dangers of English dominance are very real and often destructive to local languages. At the same time, people find ways, as Bhabha has described, to

resist—or at least negotiate—forces of hegemony (such as colonization) often through the very language and cultural practices associated with these forces.

**Participants’ comments associating English with international scholarship and dissociating it from Anglo-American culture reveal a complex and nuanced relationship among language, power, and culture.**

Participants’ comments associating English with international scholarship and dissociating it from Anglo-American culture

reveal a complex and nuanced relationship among language, power, and culture. In a review of studies about the English practices of non-native speakers, James Alatis and Carolyn Straehle have critiqued Phillipson’s characterization of linguistic imperialism. For them, English does not necessarily import Anglo-American culture, even if this does sometimes occur. Alatis and Straehle have concluded that “English is no longer tied to any particular culture, nation, or other group of English speakers” (7). Canagarajah has written that with increasing communication in World Englishes, we should “think of English as a plural language that embodies multiple norms and standards. English should be treated as a multinational language” (“Place” 589). Rather than an Anglo-American culture effacing the cultures of other groups, we have people all over

the world responding to influences from the West and in doing so transforming these cultural practices. Appadurai has described this local shaping of cultural practices, contending that "at least as rapidly as [hegemonic] forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to be indigenized in one or another" (32).

The situation in Jordan as described by the participants reflects the type of cultural dynamics that Appadurai, Alatis and Straehle, and Canagarajah have described. In one case, an English user in Jordan turned the tables on English, choosing the language of past colonizers to challenge the current government's oppressive policies. A professor in the study (who asked to for this comment to be as anonymously reported as possible) found a political voice in English unavailable in Arabic and hoped that by using English, his criticisms would reach a larger audience and not have a negative effect on him: "My writings are a bit political and as long—and this is a fact in the Arab world—as long as you write in English, nobody will harass you. But the moment you start writing in Arabic, and you are saying these things, you will be a subject of harassment by the government." This professor used his English-language texts to criticize Western neocolonialism, specifically arguing against a Jordanian government policy that allowed the tourism sector (dominated in Jordan by Western corporations) to take over a local heritage site.

Participants found additional ways to use their education in the West to conduct research of benefit to the local context of Jordan. Dr. Samir, a well-respected geologist, had studied only up to the master's level (in the UK), but in Jordan he held a position in the National Resources Authority and published widely in both regional and international journals. Dr. Samir described cooperation with Western researchers that allowed him access to the lab equipment he lacked in Jordan: "We need to send our samples abroad . . . [and] this is quite expensive, but we have a lot of cooperation with German universities, universities from France, from [the] States. So, and from these cooperations, we can make . . . studies and . . . analyze . . . samples." Dr. Samir's actions again point to global English users' power to shape the forces of economic hegemony from the West, exploiting Western resources to help them contribute their voices and research to conversations in their disciplines. In the case of Dr. Samir, his experience in the UK allowed him to build relationships with researchers who had the money and resources to help him perform and publish his work: while he depended on money from the West, he used it not only to advance his own research interest and career, but also to increase knowledge about Jordan's local geology.

## Conclusion

Although literacy practices associated with the Anglo-American West exerted significant influence on participants' lives, participants were not passive subjects of these forces. Instead, they actively negotiated these forces in different ways for different reasons: economic, personal, and political. Dr. Yusef chose to translate his success in the United States into a lucrative position in Jordan, where his children had access to Arabic instruction, and Dr. Samir used connections in the UK to improve his economic and professional experience in Jordan. The participants' decisions reveal some of the many possible outcomes of English's linguistic and cultural exchange across borders. This article outlines only some of the ways these exchanges may function. Certainly many other elements of identity—including gender and class—affected the participants' experiences with language and offer rich areas of study outside the scope of this article.

The richness of people's experiences reminds us that monolithic linguistic and cultural categories simplify a complex situation. If we want to understand how and why people use English, we must remain open to contradictions and to new definitions of what language and culture mean. The participants' experi-

**If we want to understand how and why people use English, we must remain open to contradictions and to new definitions of what language and culture mean.**

ences also suggest that English in the disciplines is not a standardized English emanating from the center. This conclusion reinforces Flowerdew's call at the end of his

discussion of stigma and EAL writers for us to "take the view that English belongs to everyone and that this includes the particular disciplinary communities (very often made up of more EAL than L1 writers) which have their own particular varieties of language" ("Scholarly" 84). Flowerdew also argues that English as a lingua franca should be governed not by rules associated with traditional standardized Englishes but by intelligibility studies.

This openness to different understandings of English is especially important to us as teachers. The English our students need to learn may be very different from the English we are used to teaching. Those of us who still teach composition courses with the objective of introducing students to college-level academic or research-based writing should avoid teaching these types of writing as though the rules about them emanate from traditional centers of English use, such as the United States. Instead, we should expose students to the way English is practiced and understood by academic writers around the

globe, making students aware that academic Englishes are dynamic, plural, and often controversial. By addressing the issues surrounding World Englishes in our classes, students can become more critical users of English. In our classes, students can study situated examples of World Englishes, perhaps from their own countries if they are international students. We can ask students to explore the controversy of English linguist imperialism. In advanced WID (Writing in the Disciplines) or WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) courses, students can research the position of English in the scholarly publications of their discipline and the contributions to the field of multilingual writers. We can invite students to experiment with writing for multilingual audiences across the globe.

Our students—whether multilingual international students, monolingual English speakers from the United States, or multilingual U.S. students—will need to negotiate changing expectations for English in the future. By providing students with opportunities to explore and question English as practiced in multiple global contexts, we help them to become more critical users of it and, perhaps, to discover how to effect change in the language practices of their own discourse communities.

### Appendix A: Participant Chart

Name	Gender	Discipline	Highest degree (or current program)	Most current institutional affiliation	Country of study for highest degree	Position
Abeer	F	Biology	MA (writing thesis)	JUST	Jordan	Student
Aisha	F	Chemical Engineering	MSc	University of Jordan	Jordan	Applying to PhD Programs
Aliyah	F	Engineering	MSc (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Student
Dr. Ayman	M	Management Science	PhD	University of Jordan	U.K.	Professor
Badr	M	Comparative Literature English/ Arabic	MA	University of Jordan/ Amman University	Jordan	University Instructor
Dr. Bashar	M	Education/ TEFL	PhD	University of Jordan	U.K.	Professor

Basima	F	Education/ TEFL	MA (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Teacher/ Student
Diala	F	Biology	MSc (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Student
Dr. Dima	F	Biology/ Water Science	PhD	University of Jordan	Nether- lands	Researcher
Ghadda	F	Biology	MSc (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Student
Dr. Huda	F	Archaeology	PhD	University of Jordan	U.S.	Professor
Dr. Hasan	M	Engineering	PhD	University of Jordan	U.S.	Professor
Dr. Imad	M	Archaeology	PhD	Rural College	U.K.	Professor
Dr. Leila	F	History	PhD	Educational Foundation	U.S	Director, Educational Organization
Lena	F	Biology	MSc (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Student
Luma	F	Biology	MSc (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Student
Dr. Mai	F	Archaeology	PhD	Yarmouk University	Germany	Professor
Dr. Munir	M	Education/ TEFL	PhD	University of Jordan	U.S.	Professor
Rana	F	Education/ TEFL	MA (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Teacher/ Student
Rehab	F	Biology	MSc (writing thesis)	University of Jordan	Jordan	Student
Sabreen	F	Urban Plan- ning	MA (writing thesis)	Sharja University	United Arab Emirates	Student
Dr. Samir	M	Geology	MSc	National Resources Authority	U.K.	Administrator in Government Agency
Dr. Sulyman	M	Architecture	PhD	JUST	U.S.	Professor
Dr. Yusef	M	Biology	PhD	Medical Center	U.S.	Director at a Medical Center

**Appendix B: Interview Questions**

1. Please describe your educational history.
2. In which languages do you write academically?
3. What do you consider your first academic language?
4. Do you prefer to write in Arabic or English? Why?
5. Flowerdew (1999b) writes: "In this era of globalization, to publish in a language other than English is to cut oneself off from the international community of scholars, on the one hand, and to prejudice one's chances of professional advancement, on the other." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
6. A linguist, Hazem Yousef Najjar (1990), wrote that in "the Arab World, and in the sciences in particular, we find that English is the overwhelming language of scholarly publication." Do you agree or disagree? Why? There are lots of opinions about why there are so few scholarly publications in Arabic. Why do you think this is? Is it political? Economic? Geographic? Something about Arabic grammar/rhetoric?
7. What do you consider your first academic piece of writing in English?
8. Can you describe it?
9. What made it "academic"?
10. What was the hardest part about writing this piece?
11. The easiest part?
12. Do you remember how you cited or documented sources? Did you follow a style?
13. Can you describe the sources you used and how you used them?
14. What kind of academic writing are you currently doing or have recently been doing? Can you describe your most recent piece of written scholarship in English?
15. What was the hardest part about writing this piece?
16. The easiest part?
17. How did you use/cite sources?
18. If it was a refereed article, what was the most negative/least helpful comment you received from reviewers?
19. The most positive?
20. Have you ever written academically in a language other than English?
21. What was the easiest part of writing the piece?
22. The hardest part?
23. What was the most positive/helpful comment you received from reviewers/graduate advisor?
24. The most negative/least helpful?

25. Are there differences between using sources in English and using them in your other academic language/s?
26. Can you describe the differences?
27. Do you see any other significant obstacles to your ability to publish/write for international English-language scholarly journals?
28. When was the first time you heard about plagiarism?
29. Can you describe the context and how you felt?
30. Do you worry about plagiarism? When? Why?
31. For senior scholars: Another linguist (Swales) says that the distinction between native and non-native English-speaking scholars is not as important as the divide between junior and senior scholars. What do you think?
32. Would you like to stay informed about my data analysis and research findings and have an opportunity to respond to them? If yes, how should I contact you?

## Notes

1. This study was approved by the University of Louisville Human Subjects Protection Program Office, and all participants signed a consent form that explained the study. I received funding for the research project from the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, Jordan.
2. In this article, I include the participants' voices through excerpts from the interview transcripts. I use pseudonyms when referring to them unless participants requested that I use their real first names. Those with PhDs or a great deal of expertise are referred to as Dr., followed by a first name (as they would be in Jordan). In the excerpts from the interview transcripts, I have deleted filler words (such as "um"). In some cases, I have added words in brackets to clarify the excerpt's meaning.
3. In microanalysis, a researcher might write a whole commentary on the possible significance of one word in order to think creatively and discover new possibilities for what the data might mean. Microanalysis can also involve comparison of words or even of a word and its opposite.
4. Storyline memos are descriptions of the "gist" of what is going on in the data, a narrative that answers such questions as "What is the main issue or problem with which these people seem to be grappling? What keeps striking me over and over? What comes through, although it might not be said directly" (Strauss and Corbin 148).
5. I learned about the plan to begin teaching English earlier in the public schools during an informal interview with an administrator at the Ministry of Higher Education.
6. In his response to this chapter, Dr. Hasan described the situation as even worse, with clear discrimination in favor of Western-trained scholars: "The job offers for

hiring faculty members stress their ability to communicate in English as well as clearly stating that only graduates from the U.K. and the U.S. are encouraged to apply!"

7. Dr. Hasan had an interesting reaction to Najjar: "Using a similar metaphor here, it is like one being imprisoned in an island but this is not necessarily the case for many. I would think of it as two islands that are connected by a two-way bridge. If you can utilize them well then you are in a . . . [better] position than many others to have synergism between the use of both languages rather than this antagonistic perspective."

8. Although I read Aisha's comments as suggesting that she did not associate English with Anglo-American culture, Aisha reminded me in her response to my analysis that the de-culturing of language happens sometimes but not always. As Aisha pointed out, "learning other's language is a major factor for cultural understanding. . . . We could not break the walls if each [person] used his language knowledge for scientific purposes only, since in science there is no walls! . . . Also, in my academic surrounding there are always many discussions and debates about things which are far away from the scientific field I work in/with."

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