

Preparing for English-speaking professional communities: Navigating L2 learners' linguistic identity in L1-dominant professional communication courses

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Abstract

The present study investigated how L2 students in L1-dominant upper-level undergraduate professional communication courses self-identify their needs in undertaking collaborative tasks such as writing professional documents and preparing for group presentations with L1 students. A survey was conducted on L2 students in these upper-level professional communication courses to explore how they negotiate the role of English as an international language and self-perceptions of their linguistic identity in communicative contexts in which they prepare for English-speaking professional communities. The results showed that L2 students in this study plan to pursue careers in English-speaking environments post-graduation, however, have a certain degree of anxiety in an L1-dominant environment. Many L2 students indicated in the results that they were self-conscious about their “non-native” status, which might have accounted for the kinds of support (e.g., more support from domestic students) wanted by L2 students as shown in the survey. This was further discussed in relation to the notion of “imagined communities” (Kanno & Norton, 2003) and native speaker model was revisited to discuss the results from critical perspectives, along with “functionalist polymodel approach” (Berns, 2006; Kachru, 1981; Van Horn, 2006) as a potential resource to consult to teach multilingual students in an L1-dominant environment.

Keywords: English as an international language; linguistic identity; imagined communities; native speaker, upper-level, professional communication

Introduction

The global economy has produced more internationalized workplaces, which contributed to the internationalization of higher education in English-speaking countries. Higher education has become more internationalized and this has led to greater internationalization in the classroom, and multilingualism is increasingly becoming the norm. Terms such as globalization, internationalization, and diversification have become keywords in higher

education, designing academic programs and developing curricula. International students who do not speak English as their first language have become part of the student body in numerous academic programs in campus settings, which has resulted in the wide presence of multilingual and multinational classrooms. Thus, classroom interactions have become one of the major ways for both groups of students to gain exposure in the environment in which they can interact and learn together and provide platforms where students can prepare themselves for the globalized professional world. While multilingual classrooms have become more widely present, multilingual students who do not speak English as their first language have often been marginalized due to the lack of support from instructors, peers, and social network outside the classroom (Braine, 1996; Costino & Hyon, 2007; Cummins, 2007; Duff, 2001; Harklau, 1994). The present study investigated how L2 students in L1-dominant undergraduate professional communication courses self-identify their needs in undertaking collaborative tasks that resemble real-life workplace tasks such as writing professional documents in groups and preparing for group presentations with L1 students. A survey was conducted on L2 students in these upper-level professional communication courses to explore how they negotiate the role of English as an international language and self-perceptions of their linguistic identity in communicative contexts in which they prepare for English-speaking professional communities.

While the notion of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1990; Hymes, 1972) has been much emphasized in intercultural professional communication, it has heavily relied on the native speaker model of communicative competence (Berns, 2006; Kachru, 1992). Kachru argued that communicative competence needs to reflect the reality of sociolinguistic factors that are present in communication settings. In a similar vein, Berns (2006) also contended that communicative competence needs to be redefined and re-articulated in the way that social realities can best be reflected by criticizing the universal forms of English that adopt the native speaker model (Prator, 1968). Scholars in World Englishes have argued for a polymodel approach in pedagogies in order to take into account users and uses of varieties of English (Berns, 2006, p. 727). Polymodel approaches refer to the views in which teachers are conscious about the varieties of English being used and spoken all over the world and appropriately select materials and methods for teaching in their classes. Thus, World Englishes perspectives have not only enriched the resources and perspectives on pedagogical applications in teaching English but have also extended the discussion on the language policies in terms of power relations among different varieties of English, English teaching professional identity, English learners' social and professional identity, and native speaker – non-native speaker dichotomy (Higgins, 2003).

The interactions in business settings have also been explored from World Englishes perspectives. Van Horn (2006) criticized the trends in

business textbooks that support “a single native-speaker recipe for linguistic success” (native mono-model) and contradict with the “functionalist polymodel” of World Englishes (p. 620). He further emphasized that it is important to consider “socially realistic linguistics” (Kachru, 1981) that investigate how varieties of language are created and reflected in contexts of commerce and how members understand the relationships among the varieties of language that reproduce cultural systems in a given setting (p. 625). World Englishes literature identifies “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces in English as the tension between more static concepts such as “World English” and more dynamic ones, “world Englishes” (Bolton, Bautista, & Lourdes, 2004; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Van Horn, 2006). English nowadays in workplace settings show a unique sociolinguistic scene in which more than one variety of English inevitably becomes present in a workplace setting due to the globalized economy. Therefore, the Englishes of business are global, local, and “glocal” (Van Horn, 2006, p. 629).

There have been various attempts to universalize one type of English in global business settings. The rationale behind these attempts was to make it easier and more effective to communicate with one another and prevent miscommunication in internationalized professional settings. There has been an opinion where simplified English that adopts simplified words and semantics has to be a universal for all speakers of English (Prator, 1968; Quirk, 1988). However, this has often been considered unrealistic as reality does not support the claim where a universal language can make the communication easier due to the nature of language that changes according to the time, space, ideologies, social and cultural factors, and technological advances (Kachru, 1988, 1991, 2005). Furthermore, the current medium of communication in advertising or marketing is pluralized beyond the level of using different varieties of English by using visuals or aural materials, which means ways to communicate messages across the world are becoming rather pluralistic and particularized depending on the context (Van Horn, 2006, p. 631). Thus, conforming to “standards” or “norms” of ways of communicating is essentially an unachievable goal and it may not be as effective as expected in real-life workplace settings.

An argument made by Kachru (2005) stresses the importance of rearticulating the status of non-native speakers of English. He introduced the notion of “functional nativeness” that refers to an ability to communicate proficiently regardless of their first language status, or country of origin. Kachru asserted that terms such as “native speaker”, “second-language speaker” and “foreign language user” seem to give clear distinctions among “native” and non-native” speakers of English, irrespective of the proficiency levels, how well speakers communicate their messages in general (Nickerson, 2015, p. 447). Nickerson (2015) addressed the issue of native speaker model in ELF (English as Lingua Franca) interactions in regards to ESP (English for Specific Purpose). She argued that it is important to reassess the “privileged position” that native speaker models have in English for business purposes,

with specific attention to factors that contribute to the success and failure in ELF settings (p. 451). More attention is needed on ways English is used in globalized workplace settings, and how members of the workplace may interact with each other and successfully communicate necessary information. Mere assumptions that native speaker models will enable every learner of English to reach the level of proficiency needed in their workplaces do not seem to align with how English is actually used in real-life workplace settings, or what circumstances they need to perform in English appropriately. It seems to be essential to carefully examine uses of English in workplace settings from the perspective that considers pluralistic models of English use and how functional nativeness can be discussed in workplace interactions. As more workplaces become multinational and multilingual, the models or framework that English teaching professionals adopt need to be more realistic and sensitive to the contexts of social situations.

In relation to NS-NNS dichotomy in workplace communication, observational studies on the perception of English and language proficiency revealed that NS level fluency might not be a top concern for business professionals. Louhiala-Salminen, Charles and Kankaanranta (2005) explored the perceptions that BELF (Business English as a Lingua Franca) might have towards the use of English in business contexts. Through a survey and interviews of international business professionals, they were able to find that their informants in the study considered the use of English as secondary concerns to the “work” itself, rather than regarding it as primary concerns that can greatly impact the overall work performance. Both NNSs and NSs accommodated their speech towards the audience depending on their level of proficiency and focused more on business competence in specific contexts. They also argued that “NS fluency is not a relevant criterion for success in international business work, and in addition, since most interactions take place between NNSs of English, it might not even be desirable” (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005, p. 207). Although English is considered a primary medium to communicate in workplace settings, this study found that international business professionals perceived English as something they need in order to better conduct business-related events, rather than something they need to master to perform like a native speaker of English.

There have been studies that explored the perceptions towards English and other languages in workplaces. Ehrenreich’s (2010) study provided similar perspectives on the role of English in workplace settings. She examined the perceptions towards English and other languages in upper management in a family-owned German multinational corporation and found that English plays an essential role in conducting a variety of tasks in the company, but it needs to be emphasized that native-level fluency does not necessarily contribute to the communicative effectiveness in business tasks. She further noted that understanding diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and being able to take it into account appropriately impacts the

overall effectiveness of communication. Moreover, other languages can be a great pragmatic resource to discuss local issues in the community. Hornikx, Van Meurs, and de Boer (2010) investigated the perceptions of English and local languages in advertisements in a Dutch company with a focus on readers' preference for English or local languages. They found that when English was easy to understand in a given slogan, participants preferred English slogans, and when given a difficult-to-understand English slogan, there was little difference in the preference. They emphasized the role of comprehension in international advertisements in local settings.

In recent years, a few studies have focused on the better understanding of the role of English in international contexts. Gilsdorf (2002) discussed further on the status of English in a globalized professional world. She argued that understanding English as a polymorph is crucial in professional settings in order to better communicate with international audiences. She emphasized that a commonality of understanding in the same language fundamentally requires more than one ways to interpret meaning in contexts; therefore, international settings generate more complex communicative situations where speakers of English need to have multiple perspectives in sharing and exchanging knowledge in the same language (p. 364).

Bokor (2011) investigated native English-speaking students' perceptions towards different varieties of English used in technical communication tasks. Based on his classroom-based research on 30 participants, he found that native English-speaking students tend not to think that communication failure can be caused by their own linguistic performances or attitudes towards different varieties of English. Rather, they seem to think that their linguistic competence is highly advantaged across different English speaking environments (p. 233). He argued that providing multiple perspectives on the use of English and including World Englishes paradigm in technical communication training program might help students to experience globalized views in communicating complex information with international audiences. In order to internationalize technical communication, he asserted that consideration of non-native speakers of English should be essential for "cross-boundary technical discourse" for training native English speakers for global technical communication (p. 211). Bokor noted that there needs to be more intentional effort to raise awareness in English as an international language and complexities and political constructs language creates in the globalized world:

English has been adapted to meet the challenges of the complex identities created by globalization. The role of English is, therefore, fraught with linguacultural and rhetorical problems for which training programs must account. Undoubtedly, the need exists for educators to use language-based heuristics as a systematized approach toward facilitating students' rhetorical efforts as adapting to international audiences. (Bokor, 2011, p. 211)

Together with a polymodel approach in World English literature, this study provides an important insight on how educators in technical communication can construct professional ethos in conducting communicative tasks in international settings, as well as ways to think about globalizing and localizing technologies with taking into account the different beliefs and values international audiences might have. The present study investigates how L2 students in predominantly L1-dominant undergraduate professional communication courses self-identify their needs in undertaking collaborative tasks with L1 students. A survey was conducted on L2 students in upper-level professional communication courses to explore how they negotiate the role of English as an international language in relation to their career plans, as well as ways they describe their linguistic identity in an L1-dominant environment.

Methods

Contexts and participants

The present study was situated in the context of mainstream professional communication courses for upper-level undergraduate students from a variety of disciplines in a North American university. There are typically 20-22 students in each class: the majority of the students in these classes are domestic students, while there is an average of less than five international students in each class. These classes are variable in that there are students of all majors and years, from sophomores to seniors, studying in these classes. For some students, these classes are required by their academic advisors; however, some students choose to take these classes to prepare themselves for the job market or to learn how to write professional documents in the workplace.

The nature of these classes is largely project-based in which students often work in groups to collaboratively write a proposal or make and design professional documents together in a given time. Instructors of professional communication classes provide students with tasks which students are likely to encounter in future workplaces and students work on these tasks with group members. Throughout the semester, students are exposed to a variety of collaborative projects and social and communicative activities as they work together to achieve shared goals.

Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. The participants in this study are international students who speak English as a second language (L2 students) who have finished one of the professional communication courses (Business Communication, Technical Communication). These students often have diverse cultural and educational backgrounds as they have come from outside the US and speak English as a second or foreign language. There were sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the L1 population and they have taken professional communication courses in order to meet graduation requirements

or develop their advanced communication skills in business or technical documents.

Data collection

Survey

Thirty international students who have taken Business Communication and Technical Communication courses have participated in the survey. Of these, 65% of the students were from Business Communication, and 35% of the students were from Technical Communication courses. Seniors (35%), sophomores (37%), and juniors (27%) participated in the survey. There were students from the following majors: engineering, business, health sciences. Table 1 shows the participants' first language.

Table 1
L2 student demographics

First Languages	Number
Mandarin Chinese	16
Cantonese Chinese	2
Korean	4
Japanese	1
Portuguese	1
Indonesian	2
Gujarati	1
Malay	1
Tamil	1
Telugu	1

The purpose of conducting a survey was to gather demographic information about L2 students in this study and identify their needs and support in interacting and collaborating with L1 students, as well as obtain descriptive responses from each questionnaire. The survey method was used primarily to reveal participants' perceived needs and challenges in conducting various tasks involved in professional communication courses. The questions also asked participants' career plans after graduation, expected use of English, most needed support to carry out all the tasks involved in the projects, and how they perceive their abilities to communicate with L1 students. As professional communication courses often adopt collaborative projects and assignments that simulate real-life workplace environments, it is necessary to understand how these few L2 students in each class identify their needs and how they negotiate their language abilities while engaging in group discussion and collaboration. The "situated needs" of learners can be explored through needs analysis surveys as it allows one to explore "relevant information

necessary to meet the language learning needs of the students within the context of particular institutions involved in the learning and teaching situation” (Brown, 1997, p. 112). Brown (1997) further noted that one of the best advantages of survey research is that researchers can obtain a wide range of types of information efficiently through collecting responses from a variety of people in a target group (p. 112). Researchers designed “opinion surveys” in order to explore participants’ opinions and attitudes about particular topics, “judgments” are often adopted to investigate participants’ perceptions in learning, and “rankings” tend to be used to see how participants perceive priorities, and level of importance or usefulness (Brown, 1997, p. 115). The survey of the current study adopted a mix of opinions, judgments, and rankings in the survey as a way to explore participants’ own ways to identify ranks of needs or difficulties in engaging in coursework, opinions on various activities involved in assignments and projects, and understand their motivations to participate in various tasks. As the survey was distributed to a small number of students, students were strongly encouraged to write detailed responses to descriptive response boxes as well in the survey.

Data analysis

The survey began in May 2015 and responses were collected until the end of August 2015. After the survey data were collected, key themes and common themes across participants were determined using a three-stage coding method of open, axial and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Open coding examined data in interviews and established preliminary themes, axial coding further refined these themes, and selective coding focused on the themes that best address the questions of this research. As the focus of the study centered on students’ perceptions and self-identified needs, the data has been categorized under the themes that emerged in this analysis.

In the open coding stage, labels such as “career plans”, “expected use of English”, “what English means”, “native vs. non-native”, “needs”, and “anxiety” were given to the data that indicate those labels both on the quantitative and qualitative results. The axial coding stage allowed the researchers to see how these open codes are related, for example, open codes such as “career plans” and “expected use of English” indicate a causal link between them, therefore, the theme of “student motivation” was generated during the selective coding process. “Native vs. non-native” was another open code that was related to the codes “needs” and “anxiety”, which led to the creation of core themes, “self-perceptions” and “self-identified needs” in the selective coding process.

Although thematic analyses potentially lack theoretical or conceptual bases or can be criticized for its tendency to rely on “repeated instances”, they tend to be sensitive to the contextual and situational factors that affect the communicative events target demographic experiences in particular situations (Pavlenko, 2007). Open coding and thematic analysis thrive on casting aside

the researchers' own bias and beliefs, and interpreting the data as it appears (Wicker, 1985). Thematic analyses allow one to attend to details of communicative situations, target learners' interests, motivation, and learning process and future plans in relation to language use (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 166).

Results and Discussion

In the results and discussion, we discuss the results in relation to the notion of "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003) and how L2 students negotiate the role of English within the context of their career path. Next, we discuss ways L2 students in this study negotiate self-perceptions of their linguistic identity and needs in L1-dominant professional communication courses as they participate in collaborative tasks with L1 students. The notion of "native speaker model" will be revisited to discuss the results from critical perspectives (Higgins, 2003; Kubota, 1998; Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994), along with "functionalist polymodel approach" (Berns, 2006; Kachru, 1981; Van Horn, 2006) as a potential resource to consult to teach multilingual students in an L1-dominant environment.

Imagined professional communities and student motivation

As the L2 students in the current study chose to take L1-dominant professional communication courses, their motivation behind this decision has been investigated. Figure 1 shows L2 students' career plans post-graduation. All of them responded that they plan to find employment opportunities in an international organization (see Figure 1.).

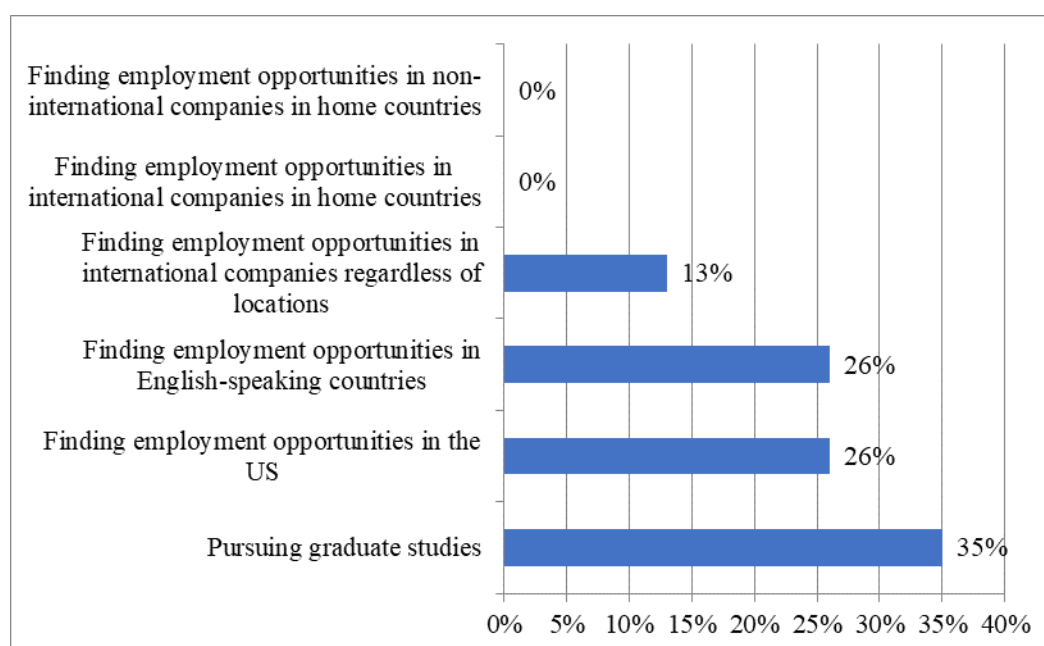


Figure 1. L2 students' career plans after graduation

This result aligns well with the survey question on L2 students' expected use of English after graduation (see Figure 2.). Most L2 students in this study plan to use English mostly in their future workplace. The results indicate that L2 students in this study plan to pursue a career in an international organization in which English is a primary language to communicate.

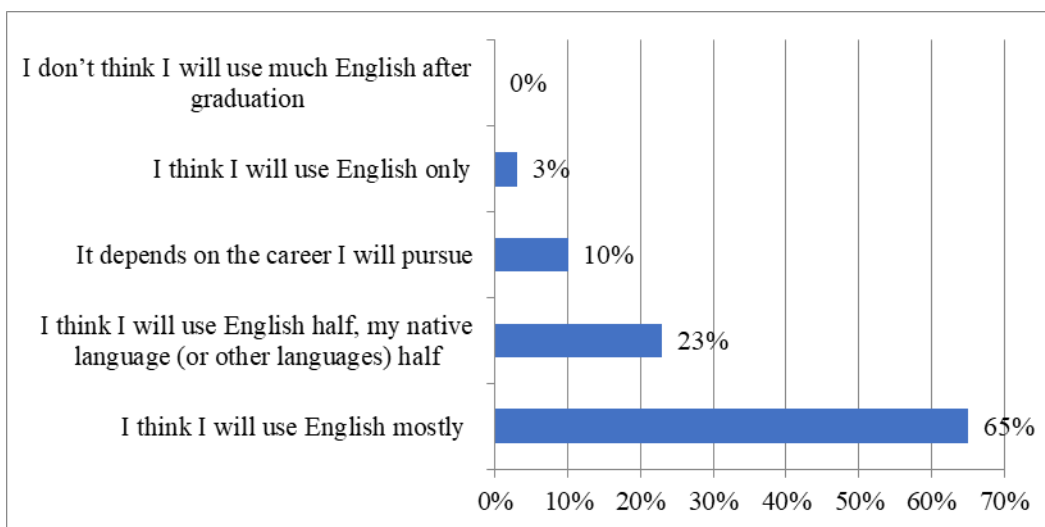


Figure 2. L2 students' expected use of English after graduation

Their descriptive responses to this survey question revealed that their expected use of English in their career may be higher than how much they currently use English on campus, specifically at workplaces. Among the 65% of the students who expected to use "English mostly" wrote their reasons in descriptive text boxes. It appears that students associate English with work, career, and a professional language to use mainly at workplaces. Responses follow, not corrected for grammar.

- "I am going to have a full-time position in US"
- "I want to find a job here in US"
- "I want to do international business so English would be so important to me"
- "I want to work in a company where English is mostly spoken"
- "The standard language for aviation is English"
- "I want to work in international company"
- "I will be pursuing a career in the US"
- "As a doctor, you must interact with patients"
- "I am trying to work in U.S in my future"
- "I am planning to go to an international organization of go to graduate school that is not in my home country after graduation, I will pursuing Master studies still in U.S"
- "English is working language"

Most of the students who responded to the survey that they expect to use English mostly after graduation wrote in their descriptive responses that they will be working in in the US or another English-speaking country, and some of them mentioned they will be working for international companies. 23% of the students who chose “I think I will use English half, my native language (or other languages) half” shared the following descriptive responses.

“My plan is to work in an English-speaking company, however I wish I could speak my native language at home”

“I will pursue graduate studies and find internship, so I will use more English than now. However, I will have friends from the same country with me, and I need to speak my native language every day”

The above excerpts show that some students want to use English primarily for professional settings and use native language with their families and friends if possible.

The status of English seems to greatly influence the way L2 students plan their career paths and motivate them to engage actively in an L1 only classroom. As one of the students indicated in the survey, English is the “working language” for many L2 students, especially if they wish to work in English-speaking environments. English affects their preparation for employment, daily life and promotion, both in their social and professional lives. As shown in the results, all L2 students in this study indicated that they would like to seek employment opportunities in the US or other English-speaking environments. When students predict their career paths, they aspire to a future in English-speaking communities.

The English language itself plays an important role in communicating professional knowledge, however, having a membership in global professional communities also seems to be an important step in building one’s career path. Professions are becoming more globalized and L2 students do not seem to restrict themselves to certain national, cultural, or ethnic boundaries in order to become more globally competitive professionals, as well as locally competitive among other L2 professionals in their home countries. Communities of professions are expanding beyond national borders in various disciplines. The notion of imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) can be discussed to explain L2 student motivation and their desired professional community in the future. This is largely attributed to the global economy and technological advances that facilitate efficient communication and fast formation of networks all over the world through professions. It is not hard to say that L2 students in this study imagine themselves as global professionals when planning their careers. Their imagined communities may involve multilingual environments that consist of L1 and L2 speakers whom they will communicate with on a daily basis in both professional and social settings. Students are well-aware of the phenomena of

globalization and actively make decisions to become part of it.

The discussion of imagined professional identity and communities may allow teaching practitioners to think about ways to support upper-level L2 students in L1-dominant classrooms by looking at how the goals of the class align with the goals L2 students have for their future careers. It also helps to understand L2 students' motivations and desired communities they wish to be part of, and what kinds of relationships L2 students have with English language and English-speaking communities. Although they may have learned their native language as a first language, due to the status of English as an international language, globalized businesses and mass media, contemporary L2 learners develop a stronger ownership of English as they start learning it from early ages, which provides a different perspective on the way they construct L2 identities and build memberships in English-speaking communities (Norton, 1997; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Widdowson, 1994).

Negotiating perceptions and needs of support in L1-dominant courses

Although L2 students in the current study are highly motivated to learn in an L1-dominant classroom, the survey results showed that they would like to have some support, especially when they speak with L1 students or in front of the whole class.

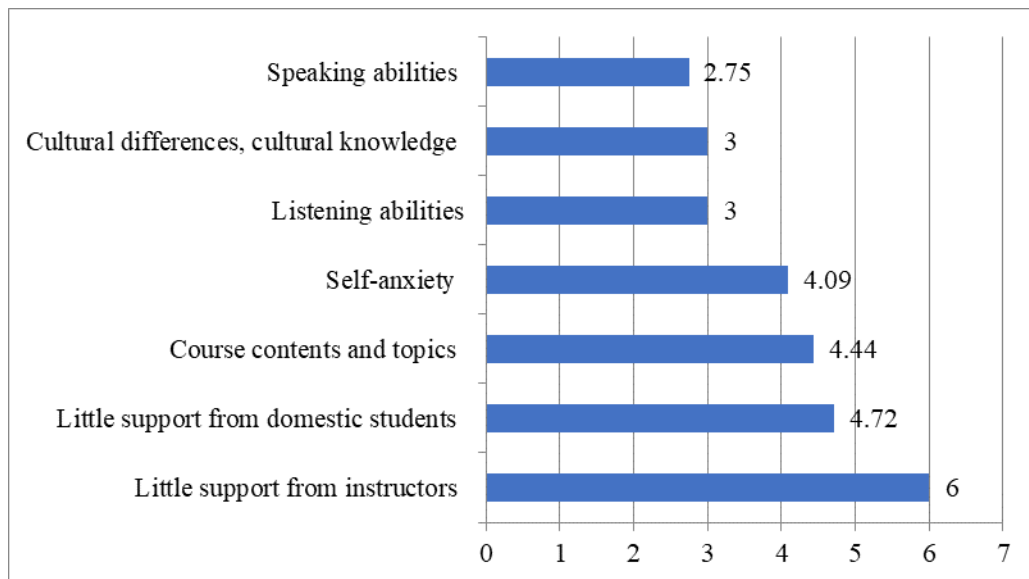


Figure 3. L2 students' perceived needs ranked

As shown in Figure 3, "speaking abilities" was ranked as the biggest factor that could affect the way L2 students feel challenged in the L1-dominant professional communication course. It appears that L2 students are most concerned about their speaking abilities that include pronunciation, vocabulary, rate of speech, etc. While there seems to be a few different

challenges that L2 students experience, they seem to believe that achieving a native speaker level of English will enable them to converse better with L1 students. Some of their descriptive responses showed how they perceive their challenges. The responses that follow are not corrected for grammar.

“I am not a native speaker”

“My vocab variety is not that wide”

“I was quiet because of language barrier”

“Pronunciation”

“Less international student”

“I was not speak very well English so that did not want to talk in front of all classmates”

“It’s hard for them to understand my accent”

“For the most time I can freely talk to them, but sometimes I cannot get their words”

“I don’t know how to express what I think in English in a native way”

It is possible that L1-dominant environments could create an intimidating situation in which L2 students feel pressured to perform like L1 students in spoken English. This pressure might further create anxiety or discourage them from participating actively when interacting and collaborating with L1 students. While this is a case for some students, there was a response in the survey indicating she or he had an impression that L1 students seem to be superficial at times as they are simply trying to be sensitive to L2 students’ feelings: “everyone wants to be nice and give very superficial response.”

“Listening abilities” and “cultural differences, cultural knowledge” have both been ranked as the second biggest factor that contributes to the perceived needs of L2 students (Figure 3). Workplace communication tends to rely on efficient communication among members of a group, effective use of brainstorming time, negotiation of ideas, expressing agreement or disagreement, confirmation of ideas, giving directions and instructions, within formal and informal conversations during collaboration (Crosling & Ward, 2002). The result seems to confirm that “listening” remains one of the top perceived needs, which indicates that L2 students may struggle in predominantly L1 groups. As demonstrated in Figure 3, “cultural differences, cultural knowledge” is another top perceived need, showing that when the topic of a conversation is culturally unfamiliar to L2 students, they might feel discouraged to actively participate in the group collaboration.

As shown in Figure 4, students also identified the kind of support they wish to have in order to successfully carry out all the collaborative tasks in class.

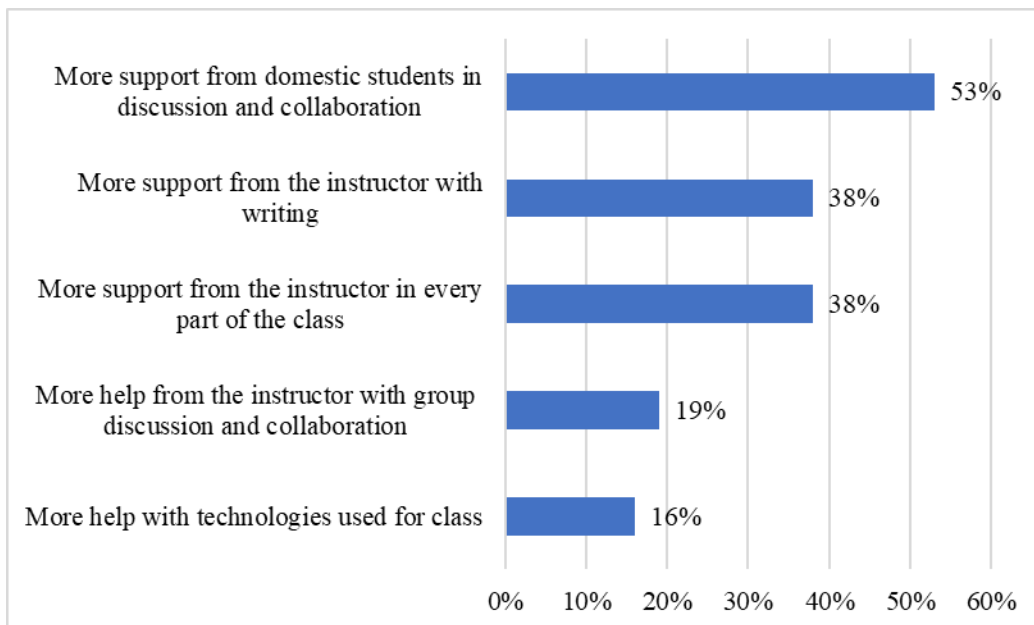


Figure 4. The kinds of support L2 students wish to have

Figure 4 shows that 53% of the participants responded that they would want more support from L1 students in discussion and collaboration. Their descriptive responses showed a variety of reasons why they want more support from L1 students. Some students seem to want to learn a more “American way” of writing or speaking through interacting with L1 students, and generally are positive about learning from each other.

“I could learn how to write in an American way”

“It would be nice to have American student pair up with international student to collaborate and get better result”

Although L2 students welcome the idea that they can learn from collaborating with L1 students, they also seem anxious about interacting with L1 students.

“Americans do not seem voluntary to talk to you”

“Lack of cultural knowledge that only American students know”

Some students expressed concerns in talking with L1 students as L1 students are perceived that they do not approach them first, or there are perceived gaps in cultural knowledge between L1 and L2 students. Of the 30 participants, 38% seem to want more support from instructors with writing, or in every part of the class, which is also worth paying attention as instructors of these professional communication courses are mostly L1 speakers of English.

The descriptive responses also included L2 student reflections on their experience in collaborative writing. A student shared a challenging aspect of collaborative writing.

“From the collaborating, I found that my group members have better writing ability than me. Because the words they are using seems more formal than mine when we write about same idea like transportation and timeline part in our project. I have learned a lot from reading their work.”

This student seems to feel that his writing was not as good as his L1 group members. He observes that his L1 group members use more formal language and generally have better writing skills than he has. He may feel that his writing ability is limited compared to his L1 group members, which could potentially withdraw himself from participating in the process of writing. This may be common among L2 students who do not have much experience collaborating with L1 students or exposure to L1-dominant classroom environments. Another student shared his views on collaborative writing with L1 students.

“Since I am not a naturally fluent English speaker, I have always been less confident about talking about serious and professional matters such as business-related conversation. It is the one I also have been practicing on. We have splitted into three sections and worked on each assigned section. Because I am not good at writing down all those information, I was actually trying to suggest an innovative idea so that I can contribute to the team. I was desperately looking for things that I can at least contribute.”

As can be observed in his reflections, he mentions that he tried to contribute not through writing, but in different ways such as suggesting a new idea. It is likely that he may have withdrawn himself from the writing process because he did not think his contribution would benefit his group members. In order to promote collaborative writing in a multilingual setting, it might be helpful to facilitate the collaborative writing process by providing more instructional support or covering relevant examples and literature on collaborative writing process in class so both L1 and L2 writers can see how exactly they can conduct collaborative writing without being too concerned about L1 status or native-level proficiency.

Many L2 students in the survey emphasized the fact that they are not “native speakers” of English, and therefore, they might not perform as well as L1 students, or expressed a need to improve their skills in speaking or writing in order to work together in L1-dominant groups. The results suggest that L2 students often withdrew themselves from actively participating in group discussions or collaborative writing due to the perceptions of their own abilities in speaking and/or writing, and the perceived gap in proficiency level between L1 speakers’ and their own.

There can be many possible interpretations of the perceived gap

mentioned above. One interpretation is that many L2 students come from an educational context in which inner-circle English is a standard model of English teaching and learning, which might have impacted the way they compare themselves to L1 students who speak inner-circle English as their first language (Kachru, 1990, 1992). Kumaravadivelu (2012) pointed out how countries in non-Western contexts depend on “West-oriented” model of teaching English, further reinforcing the power structure of West and non-West in the framework of English teaching. He noted that many scholars in periphery countries have been doing “reactive, not proactive” research to the West-oriented approaches in the field of language teaching (p. 17). Due to this existing power structure of some educational contexts, it is possible that many L2 students have been taught in educational contexts where they are encouraged to adapt many features of inner circle Englishes such as phonological, lexical, syntactical, semantic, and cultural aspects that are Western-oriented. When L2 students from such educational contexts interact with L1 students from inner circle countries, their perceived power relations can become more obvious because of this pre-established understanding of English in relations to power structure that lies in many teaching approaches. Some students experience this more than others, especially in countries where the “native speaker model” is reinforced throughout educational systems and cultures (Bolton, 2008; Kubota, 1998).

The results re-confirm that the perceived gap exists as L2 students have expressed their concerns regarding their “non-native” status in group discussions and collaborative writing. Although the degree of the gap which both L1 and L2 students might perceive may vary, if such issues can be brought up in a classroom setting, students might be able to form a better understanding of English as an international language and how intercultural communication should be conducted. The notion of “native speaker” has long been debated as an unrealistic goal for L2 learners (Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 1990, 1992). “Native speaker English” that idealizes the level of language proficiency does not exist as no L1 speakers speak the same version of English and “native-speaker competence” does not give a realistic picture of what effective communication should be. From the perspective of “native speaker competence”, every member of communicative settings needs to be able to speak like a native speaker in order to understand each other, and convey meanings to one another, which creates pressure and anxiety for L2 learners to engage in conversations with L1 students who are perceived as “native speakers.” This could push L2 students away from participating in oral discussions or collaborative writing.

Without looking into the dependency on West-oriented models of language teaching, it may not be possible to explain the anxiety or the resistance to participation of L2 students in L1-dominant environments. While there might not be a quick solution to change the current state of English teaching, it can be introduced in class as one of the prominent issues in global professional contexts that both L1 and L2 students need to think about in order

to better conduct professional tasks in multilingual and collaborative environments. The degree of emphasis or reliance on West-oriented model of English can be adjusted by instructional approaches in a way that can foster L1 and L2 students' understanding of the power English may have in the globalized world by consulting a "functionalist polymodel approach" (Berns, 2006; Kachru, 1981; Van Horn, 2006) as a resource for providing an equal learning environment, as well as how English should be able to accommodate speakers of other languages in a creative way. As L1 or L2 speakers, students need to learn to become an ethical and responsible professional who can self-evaluate their own communicative abilities in a multilingual setting.

English as an international language should be discussed in a classroom level in relation to ideologies and epistemologies that affect many communication practices and legitimize the use of certain version of English. Instructional approaches should reflect such views in order to allow students to become more conscious about the status of English, and the power structures English creates among the speakers. The way certain standards are established directly impacts the group dynamic and how L1 and L2 students perceive one another in group discussion and collaborations. Thus, collaborative effort among speakers in facilitating conversations within a group needs to be emphasized and reinforced through classroom discourse. More awareness of English as an international language used by global audiences can offer new insights into teaching and learning in multilingual environments, as well as allow students to achieve their full potential in the globalized professional world.

Conclusion

The present study explored ways L2 students negotiate the role of English in their careers and how they navigate their linguistic identity, as well as ways they negotiate their needs in upper-level L1-dominant professional communication courses, specifically in group collaborations. The results showed that L2 students in this study plan to pursue careers in English-speaking environments post-graduation, however, have a certain degree of anxiety in an L1-dominant environment. Many L2 students indicated in the results that they were self-conscious about their "non-native" or "international" status, which might have accounted for the kinds of support (e.g., more support from domestic students) they wanted in group discussions and collaborative writing as indicated in the survey. This was further discussed in relation to the status of English as an international language, specifically about the teaching practices modeled after West-oriented language teaching models used in educational contexts some L2 students come from.

The study has some limitations. First, the participants have been recruited on a voluntary basis, so the opinions gathered from this data might have provided limited sets of views on student opinions on group collaborations in professional communication courses. Students who did not

volunteer for the survey or interviews might have had different experiences regarding collaborations in L1-dominant environments. Second, more details concerning the L2 students' educational backgrounds, cultural or linguistic backgrounds could have provided better explanations on the way they had learned English and the factors contributed to the way they construct L2 identities, as well as position themselves in globalized professional world.

However, the present study provides an observation on how highly motivated L2 students perceive challenges involved in group work in L1-dominant environments and ways they negotiate the role of English and the notion of native speaker in communicative contexts. The study also reveals that L2 students in this study want to actively engage in professional activities in English-speaking environments after they graduate, yet they tend to downplay their language proficiency compared to L1 students' by referring to their "non-native" status. L2 students' perceived gap in language abilities between L1 students and themselves may stem from readily present power relations (e.g., native vs. non-native), as well as the L2 students from educational contexts where inner circle Englishes are the standard model of teaching and learning.

English in professional settings encompasses many communicative tasks such as small conversations among colleagues and senior employees, discussions, meetings, reading documents, writing correspondences and reports, and presenting orally (Crosling & Ward, 2002). In other words, L2 students may engage in various tasks in which they need to perform in English in order to maintain job security and form positive relationships with colleagues at workplaces. The survey results suggest that speaking and listening are the top two perceived needs of L2 students in L1-dominant classrooms. As more L2 speakers become part of English-speaking communities in higher education or workplaces, it may become necessary to address issues regarding English as an International Language that can provide L2 speakers with access to information, resources, and membership in English-speaking communities (Higgins, 2003; Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994). If English does not create an inclusive environment, it fails to play its role as a lingua franca, which could easily lead to another form of language imperialism. Practitioners will need to hold ethical perspectives concerning the use of English as a language that can help and be used effectively by all speakers of English, regardless of their first language, to accomplish communicative goals, as well as shared goals as professionals in industries or academic disciplines. Such views will generate better instructional approaches that can impact classrooms, day-to-day interactions and workplaces.

Terms such as "globalization" and "internationalization" in contemporary professional world can be truly meaningful when a community of professionals create a space in which members can have ownership of communicative means and membership in the community as a professional who can make full use of their potential and talent and contribute to the community of professionals.

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