

THESIS

AN INVESTIGATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION, IMAGINED  
COMMUNITIES, AND IDENTITIES IN AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM IN THE  
UNITED STATES

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2023

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## ABSTRACT

### AN INVESTIGATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION, IMAGINED COMMUNITIES, AND IDENTITIES IN AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM IN THE UNITED STATES

This study investigates three aspects of language acquisition that may be influenced by studying abroad at an Intensive English Program (IEP) in the United States: the English Language Learners' (ELL) motivation, imagined communities, and identity. More importantly, this study investigates how the interplay of ELL motivation, imagined communities, and identity factor into Second Language Acquisition (SLA) within the confines of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in an IEP. Sociocultural Theory perceives language acquisition as a product of interaction between students' social and cultural environment and academic material which consequently builds upon the development of their higher psychological function (Kozulin, 1998, 2003; as cited in Poehner, 2008).

This naturalistic case study aims to investigate the qualities of language learning motivation, imagined communities, and identity. To record the development of these phenomena, a series of interviews, observations, and reflections were administered. The goal of this study is to provide insight to IEP instructors and English instructors within the field of Applied Linguistics on the complexities that students experience during study abroad. In order to bring awareness of these three concepts in relation to language acquisition to inform teaching practices.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin, I would like to thank Colorado State University for the financial support that funded my graduate studies. Thank you to the Ann Osborn Zimdahl Memorial Scholarship, the Cross-Cultural Understanding Scholarship, the TEFL/TESL Scholarship, the James J. Garvey Graduate English Language Scholarship, the E. I. Pashby and Minnie Pashby Scholarship, and the English Graduate Department for giving me the financial flexibility to focus whole-heartedly on my studies and undertake this thesis project.

To my incredible team of supervisors, Dr. Tatiana Nekrasova-Beker, Dr. Tony Becker, Dr. Ehlers-Zavala, and Dr. Sharon Anderson, thank you for your time and support that made this project possible. Each and every one of you played an essential role in this study.

To my participants, thank you for letting me share your experiences and stories with the research community. I truly cannot express my gratitude enough for your trust and confidence.

Next, to the astounding women in my program with whom I cried and laughed. Your love and kindness got me through countless hours of studying and coursework. You all truly made this program a transformative experience that I will forever carry with me.

To my brother, parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends, thank you for your patience, love, and support as I navigated higher education. I could not have done it without you cheering me on.

Last, but certainly not least, to my partner Colin. Thank you for the countless hours you spent listening to me read every research paper I wrote and every presentation I created. Thank you for being there for every high and low that occurred over the duration of my master's program. You are my rock.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, Marie and Kevin Howard, who always encouraged me as a first-generation student to pursue my academic aspirations with unconditional love. I would not be the person I am today without your guidance and support.

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## **Chapter 1 - Positionality**

As the investigator and researcher, I am a heterosexual white female who was born and raised in rural Colorado in America. My parents grew up in low socioeconomic status, but I was raised with middle-class privilege and access to education. I am a first-generation student who received a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Language and Literature from the University of Colorado-Boulder. During my undergraduate studies, I became interested in linguistic equity for minoritized languages and communities in the Global South. During my studies, I developed a passion for advocating for human rights regarding equitable education and am pursuing knowledge in plurilingual and multicultural identities at an intersection with language. I am continuing my studies at Colorado State University (CSU), where I will obtain my Master of Arts in English with a specialization in Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (TEFL/TESL). I am a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) at CSU and was awarded a full scholarship.

As an aspiring professional within the field of Applied Linguistics, I have committed to conducting research that is based on interpretive epistemological perspectives, including qualitative and naturalistic case studies. My research interests include multilingualism, equity in second and foreign language pedagogy, issues of identity in the language classroom, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). As a white middle-class woman, I acknowledge my inherent privilege and subsequent bias that may potentially carry into all listed contexts of my involvement in academia. Moreover, given the fact that all of my education took place in Colorado, there are historical and systemic biases in which I was raised and educated that influence my positionality.

This research study is connected to my positionality in the way that I view the importance of individual stories and narratives of my participants as being integral to my research philosophy and my interest in a case study approach. Furthermore, my positionality influenced my interest in exploring the student experience during study abroad and equity in the classroom, specifically the development of language learners' identities. These interests influenced my research design and my value of investigating the individualized learner experience on a personalized level as opposed to a large participant number quantitative study. Finally, the results of this study and my inferences of the data were all influenced by my positionality and my interest in equity in the classroom and learning more about the student experience.

## **Chapter 2 - Introduction**

A common misconception about studying abroad in an Intensive English Program (IEP) in the U.S. is the presupposition that language immersion will inherently support language acquisition for English Language Learners (ELLs) (Bejarano, 2013). While immersion is a useful strategy for acquiring a language, it proves to be a complex experience for many students. Three aspects of language acquisition that may be influenced by studying abroad at an IEP were investigated in this study—the learners' motivation, imagined communities, and identity.

The experience of studying abroad in an IEP relates to these three constructs in the way that they all can be observed to have a unique and complex influence on the language learning experience of students in these programs (Alshumaimeri, 2013; Trentman, 2013; Lee, 2014). More importantly, this study aims to investigate how the interplay of motivation, imagined communities, and identity factor into SLA within the confines of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) in an IEP (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Vygotsky's SCT relates the material to the mind of learners in a given social context concerning higher mental processes (Vygotsky & Cole,

1978). Motivation is operationalized in this study within the confines of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) as an ever-changing fluid aspect of human behavior. The concept of imagined communities is viewed as preconceptions of communities that have not yet been experienced or met, yet the image is animate and plays a role in the experience of an individual (Anderson, 1991). Identity for this study is conceptualized as a part of a complex heterogeneous relationship between linguistic communities in which identity is negotiated (Norton, 2010). While previous research has investigated the development of motivation (e.g., Alshumaimeri, 2013), imagined communities (e.g., Trentman, 2013), and identity (e.g., Wei, 2011) in various pedagogical contexts, there is little research that investigates the development of all three concepts in the context of an IEP.

While there is no perfect strategy for investigating these complex inquiries, qualitative research can help uncover the complexities of studying abroad at an IEP in a contextualized and holistic manner. This naturalistic case study aims to capture some of the attributes and qualities of these three factors in an IEP in the U.S. for a student or small group of students studying abroad. In this manuscript, first previous literature investigating the three foci of the study is addressed. Second, the methods are described and followed by the results of the study which are then discussed. Finally, concluding thoughts are offered, including the pedagogical implications, the limitations, and suggestions for future research.

### **Importance of the Topic**

The role of Vygotsky's SCT in SLA is widely researched in terms of investigating the most effective tactics for supporting language acquisition. Within SCT, motivation, imagined communities, and identities all play a distinct role in social mediation in the language learning environment. While there is no study that explicitly correlates the role of motivation, imagined

communities, and identity in SLA, the importance of each construct is well understood in field of Applied Linguistics (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Trentman, 2013, Norton, 2010). Based on previous research conducted by Lee (2014), it was anticipated that the motivation, imagined communities, and identities of informants in the IEP would progress in a similar manner given the presupposition that informants who are highly motivated would be excited about becoming immersed in American culture and society while simultaneously improving English language competence. Additionally, it is believed that the informants' imaginations of the target community would be influenced by friends and family, descriptions of America in the media, and widespread beliefs about studying abroad (Lee, 2014).

This study was conducted in the context of an IEP in the U.S. provided that ELLs from around the world participate in these programs as a gateway program to matriculate to the university. Additionally, it is a fruitful context to investigate the influence of motivation, imagined communities, and identity on language development given the isolated English language learning context and English as an additional language environment. Finally, these programs are intended to not only assist in developing a learner's English skills but also intended to set the students up for success at a university in America. For these reasons, this investigation was conducted at an IEP in the U.S. to contribute to the limited body of knowledge investigating the combined influence of motivation, imagined communities, and identities on the study-abroad experience of ELLs.

During the second round of semi-structured interviews, much like that of Lee's study, it was believed that the reality of these preconceptions of identity and imagined communities would have had a subsequent influence on the informants' motivation when they face the struggles of studying abroad at an IEP in the U.S. This study intended to investigate students'

study abroad experience at an IEP to better understand the challenges they may face that could be reduced to further support the language acquisition process. These three concepts are complex, but conducting a contextualized investigation of their role in the classroom could benefit future pedagogical applications and approaches in the language learning context. Furthermore, the results of this study could help instructors at IEPs further understand the complexity of the students in their classrooms and become more aware of the environmental factors that may affect SLA for ELLs.

### **Chapter 3 - Literature Review**

#### **Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Acquisition**

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) has been extensively reviewed in the field of Applied Linguistics, from which emerged an emphasis on the importance of how students relate pedagogical material to their world psychologically in the same manner that they do physically in terms of social mediation (Poehner, 2008). Mediation acts as a pedagogical intervention to further support language development. As discussed by Brown (2020), mediation "assists the development of cognitive functions" (p. 101). Cognitive functions in a given pedagogical context refer to the processing of language development that students use to approach language learning. Vygotsky's SCT argues that the pedagogical tools and materials mediated in the L2 context can influence language development and proficiency by supporting these cognitive functions (Poehner, 2008). The pedagogical tools that can be utilized in the L2 context through the use of symbolic tools can be identified as "numeric and writing systems, graphs, charts, and tables" (Kozulin, 2003, p. 18, as cited in Poehner, 2008, p. 27). By implementing these symbolic tools, instructors connect everyday experiences to language concepts that promote contextualized language development.

Within SCT, students also need to relate and form meaningful connections with historic, cultural, and symbolic artifacts (Poehner, 2008; Lantolf et al., 2014). Language falls within the categorization of these artifacts, identifying strongly with the implementation of symbolic artifacts in the language learning context through the engagement of activities. The focus of SCT is on the development of a student's social and cultural environment concerning academic material which consequently builds upon the development of their higher psychological function (Kozulin, 1998, 2003; as cited in Poehner, 2008). Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory claims that there is "a dialectic relationship between humans and their environment whereby humans not only transform their environment through tool use but are themselves transformed in the process" (Poehner, 2008, p. 26). This approach and interpretation of SCT suggest that in order to support students' language development, there needs to be a pedagogical approach that supports and nurtures students' relationships with the material and the world around them through social mediation. Previous research in SLA has suggested that Vygotsky's SCT supports language acquisition by employing social interaction and negotiation (e.g., Johnson, 2015; Poehner, 2008; Wei, 2011; Panhwar et al., 2016; Pre, 2021).

A SLA model that argues the importance of an authentic social context to support language acquisition and learning is presented by Johnson (2015). This model highlights the shortcomings of the cognitive perspective as presented by Schneider and Stern (2010) in SLA since the cognitive perspective fails to address the influence of the social environment in which a learner is situated and focuses on information processing and knowledge acquisition. Furthermore, Johnson (2015) illustrates the importance of social contexts and interactions in SLA and adopts concepts from SCT that state language acquisition is rooted in social reality and language use. Moreover, the use of language and produced output occurs in authentic and

distinct social contexts. This model attributes another layer to Vygotsky's SCT that is more applicable to research in an IEP in the way that it relates to specific contexts where language acquisition is supported. A study conducted by Lee (2014) uses this model to shape their research on investigating "the local and contextual nature of language ability and language learning" in an IEP. Within the framework of SCT, the development of learner motivation, identity, and imagined communities were analyzed in a contextualized manner through the provision of rich descriptions.

### ***Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identity in Sociocultural Theory***

Sociocultural Theory interrelates learner motivation, imagined communities, and identity given the participation of ELLs in a given social context. Motivation in English language learning is an essential aspect of SLA and should be examined through the theoretical lens of SCT. As supported by Danish and Gresalfi (2018), SCT considers the development of motivation to be influenced partially by the context and external factors such as practices and activities in which motivation is inherently affected. This claim is built upon further in the authors' claim that Sociocultural Theories "consider human activity to be inseparable from the contexts, practices, and histories in which activity takes place" (Danish & Gresalfi, 2018, p. 3). They state that within this theoretical framework, motivation is viewed as a collaborative and individualized process where behavior develops in a symbiotic relationship of both the opportunities presented in the given context and the student's participation. This perspective means that motivation is both a collaborative and individual endeavor. Motivation is not viewed as a passive adaptation given the process of language learning but rather as an active engagement (or lack thereof) with the activities presented in an IEP. With this perception, the development of motivation can be

viewed as a decisive action (or lack thereof) produced by both a byproduct of the experience of studying at an IEP and personalized motives.

While motivation interrelates with SCT through the decisive amount of participation given the context of learning, imagined communities interrelate to SCT by means of influence, where the imagined communities are affected by a given sociocultural context (He et al., 2015). In their study on imagined communities for refugees and immigrants, He et al. (2015) discuss linguistic discrimination in the workforce for the participants that were attributed to the contextualized sociocultural environment. Furthermore, in the study, the participants experienced difficulties in the cultural transition from the expectations of their home country to the expectations of the U.S. The authors of this study discuss the disconnect in the cultural and societal transfer of immigrating to the U.S. given their demographic background. Sociocultural Theory in relation to imagined communities can be observed to have an influence on the preconceived notions and a subsequent disconnect in the experiences of learning English abroad in America.

For ELLs, identity and SLA can be related since language is seen as an aspect of culture and interrelates to identity as an ever-changing feature (Pre, 2021). This claim means that while language and identity are by no means correlational as claimed by Nakagawa (2021), language can be observed to have an influence on the development of identity. Pre (2021) argues that language is a byproduct of the negotiation of identities as a social practice. The author further discusses the influence of individualism versus collectivism, power distance, gender role differentiation, space distance, and tightness in relation to learner identity in a language learning context. These influences on ELL identity can be observed and further understood given the provided context of an IEP course in the U.S.

With the relevancy of learner motivation and imagined communities established, the development of identity within the confines of SCT can be determined. Identity and SCT interrelate in the way ELLs can renegotiate their presented identities in different social and cultural academic contexts (Pre, 2021) This concept of language identity directly relates to SCT in the way that it is concerned with larger social relationships that can be mediated through language use. Norton (2010) builds upon this foundation of language identity to isolate how power relations within the classroom can attribute to language usage, such as if a student chooses to be silent, speak, or read. Within this approach, the author argues that language identity can be seen as not simply a linguistic system but also a complex social practice where identities are negotiated (Norton, 2010). Furthermore, the development of identity is integrated with social relations with other students or communities in a given context (Esmonde, 2016). The development of identity in the language learning context of an IEP in the U.S. can therefore have attributive validity in documenting the given phenomenon within the confines of SCT.

Motivation, imagined communities, and identity all play an integral role in SCT and can influence a learner's language learning experience. Extending from these three concepts' roles within SCT, previous research in the language learner context has been conducted to investigate how they influence language acquisition. In the following sections, more insight into the influence of motivation, imagined communities, and identity on the language learning experience is provided that helped form the rationale for the study.

### **Motivation in the Language Learning Context**

Research in language learning motivation is no novel idea and has been conducted in a variety of pedagogical contexts. As argued by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), motivation concerns the “direction and magnitude of human behavior,” including a person's choice, persistence, and

effort (p. 4). Research in learner motivation will not provide a comprehensive account of all of an individual's motives and behaviors, which attributes to the complexity and unattainability of all-encompassing motivation research. Rather, the authors claim that motivation is responsible for “why people decide to do something; how long they are willing to sustain the activity; and how hard they are going to pursue it” (p. 4). With this concept in mind, researching motivation in the language learning context should not be investigated as a cause-and-effect relationship between student behavior and motivation, but rather as a non-binary gradual process that is more dynamic. In this study, learner motivation was investigated within the parameters suggested by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021).

### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

Extensive research on intrinsic motivation has emphasized its importance in learning across a variety of academic contexts (Larson & Rusk, 2011). Intrinsic motivation can be defined as the “underlying mechanism for students to have their own agency in finding out new knowledge” (Ng, 2018, p. 1). In academia, this definition claims that a learner engages in a given program to satiate their own curiosity or ambitions. As argued by Larson and Rusk (2011), intrinsic motivation can be seen as a self-motivating process that is generated by an individual that can emerge from engaging if an activity is challenging. The authors further argue that intrinsic motivation research has uncovered an observed correlational relationship to improved performance or output of an individual in many given contexts. Additionally, they claim that since students' “attention and motivation (their ‘hearts and minds’) are more fully engaged, their mental work is thought to be more efficient and effective” (Larson & Rusk, 2011, p. 91). This claim exemplifies the importance of understanding the intrinsic motivations of students to help support their learning.

Historically, intrinsic motivation has been researched with quantitative methods that are used to create generalizations in academia (Ng, 2018). Ng (2018) discusses how intrinsic motivation and the growth mindset are interrelated. The author defines the growth mindset as “the belief that intelligence can be nurtured through learning and effort” (Ng, 2018, p. 2). Ng (2018) further describes intrinsic motivation as an essential element of academic accomplishment and autonomous learning. The growth mindset and intrinsic motivation are important to poster the autonomous learning of students. The analysis presented by Ng (2018) provides a review of the neuroscientific developments on intrinsic motivation and the growth mindset in understanding how to promote academic success and autonomous learning for students. While the present study does not intend to investigate motivation from a neuroscience perspective, it does attempt to further understand the intrinsic motivations of students via qualitative methods. Understanding intrinsic motivations of students learning English abroad could help instructors and program directors better cater to the needs and aspirations of the student body.

### ***Extrinsic Motivation***

While intrinsic motivation investigates the student agency in the pursuit of knowledge, extrinsic motivation proposes the opposite. As defined by Ryan and Deci (2020), extrinsic motivation is the actions completed for rationales that do not emerge from inherent satisfactions. Furthermore, the authors argue that within the framework of self-determination theory that relates to an individual’s wellness and development, extrinsic rewards, promotions, or rewards as a method to motivate a student usually fails. Ryan and Deci (2020) place importance on extrinsic motivation and claim that it has a greater impact on academic achievement and performance.

This claim is important to consider when examining student motivation and their reasoning for engaging with a course and their subsequent academic performance.

Building upon the analysis set forth by Ryan and Deci (2020), Alizadeh (2016) discusses extrinsic motivations as being the external pressures of language learning that could emerge from a student's social environment, rewards, or punishments. As opposed to the claim set forth by Ryan and Deci (2020), the author claims that extrinsic motivation could be an important element of providing a language learner with an opportunity to learn a language for integrative purposes. Furthermore, they claim that if an external entity or power wants a learner to acquire a language, extrinsic motivation could prove instrumental in the acquisition process.

### ***Motivation and Language Learning***

To further contextualize the approach to motivation in the language learning context set forth by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), studies on learner motivation suggest that there is an observed influence of English language learning. Rosmayanti and Yanuarti (2018) investigated whether or not there was a relationship between motivation and English language acquisition in their study with 88 second-year students at an Islamic high school. Through quantitative data collection, a positive correlation between these students' English language acquisition and their motivation was determined. In another study conducted by Suryasa et al. (2017), the authors investigated the influence of motivation on language acquisition using the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for a group of students at the Pritchard English Academy. In this study, the authors determined that students that were more instrumentally motivated to learn English, meaning that they felt motivated to use English as an instrument or tool, were relatively highly motivated individuals. These studies suggest that there is an important relationship between motivation and language acquisition that can be studied in the context of an IEP. This study

investigated the students' perceptions and reflections on their choices of particular actions, persistence with the IEP program and coursework, and the students' effort expended on it.

Alshumaimeri (2013) conducted a quasi-experimental research study on students' motivations in an IEP at King Saud University. In this study, there were six male and six female first-year university participants (N=12) that were administered a self-reported learner motivation questionnaire three times over four months to get the students' perceptions of the efficacy of the IEP program. This study investigated the influence of an IEP on motivation during the language learning experience by collecting data on the students' perceptions and the influence of proficiency level. The results demonstrate the students' motivation and willingness to learn were advantageous via the instruction of native-speaker teachers at the IEP. A limitation of this study was that these cases were not examined holistically or descriptively, meaning there was no thorough contextualization of the student's experiences at the IEP.

### **Imagined Communities**

The term imagined communities was first coined by Anderson (1991) to illustrate the development of nationalism. The author further claims that a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 5). In more modern terms, imagined communities can be defined as a group of individuals that are connected via the power of imagination (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Imagined communities for this study can be defined as how people may feel connected to the communities they have never met that consequently shape an individual's past, present, and future as a product of a powerful imagination (Anderson, 1992 as cited in Kharchenko, 2014). Additionally, Kharchenko (2014)

argues that these imagined communities can influence an individual's perception of who they are or are trying to become.

Building upon Anderson's interpretation of imagined communities, Kanno and Norton (2003) argue that it can be perceived that an individual can have an inherent connection with a community they have yet to meet but desire to be a part of. A student who desires to study abroad in America may have a romanticized notion of learning English and becoming a famous movie star, as influenced by popular media for instance. In the research conducted by these authors, it was deduced that engagement in learning can be influenced by how individuals relate and connect with "communities that lie beyond the local and immediate" that prompt investment in the imagined community (p. 247). This engagement with learning can be examined through Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) interpretation of learner motivation in language acquisition. More specifically, their interpretation of learner motivation relates to how and if the learner decides to invest in the target community and how they decide to engage with learning. The connections that a learner decides to form during their study abroad experience can relate to motivation in the manner in which they decide to form those connections. Furthermore, as discussed by Ryan (2008), imagined communities are both dynamic and individualized as a consequence of globalization. The author further discusses how many ELLs were left at a deficit and were marginalized in society due to this process. This role of imagined communities during the learners' experiences studying abroad reinforces the importance of considering how communities can influence their language learning experience.

While there is very little research that investigates an explicit relationship between imagined communities and language acquisition, He et al. (2015) as discussed previously relate the two concepts in a holistic way. The importance of imagined communities in the context of

learning can be drawn from Martinez (2012) in her investigation of the wealth, stereotypes, and issues of prestige for Mexican American students. In this study, twenty Mexican-American seniors in high school (N=20) participated in the qualitative study consisting of two rounds of semi-structured interviews. In these interviews, the participants were asked to first reflect on their college aspirations and financial support status and then discuss how their sociocultural attributes influence their college selections. The author observed that the communities and social engagements provided social capital for the students. Furthermore, the author's findings indicated that the students gained aspirational and resistant capital to combat ethnic and racial discrimination in the given academic and social contexts.

Trentman (2013) investigated the development of imagined communities and Arabic language learning during a study abroad in Egypt. This study consisted of 54 study-abroad students in Egypt (N=54), including 13 of their Egyptian associates and 10 Arabic instructors. This study aimed to investigate the experience of investing in a target language community against the preconceived notions of what the learners had imagined the experience to be like. Additionally, Trentman (2013) documented the influence on students' engagement in the target community and the utilization of Arabic. For three semesters, data was collected via study-abroad interviews, Arabic interviews, questionnaires, technological observations, and participant observations. The results revealed that the students desired to belong to an imagined community in the Middle East, but the target language community presented differential opportunities to formulate identities that prompted misalignments and alignments between reality and imagination. Trentman (2013) deduced that "The degree of alignment between students' expectations and the realities that they encountered may help explain the extensive variation in students' access to Egyptians and their use of the Arabic language" (p. 545). This research builds

upon the presupposition that immersive language learning programs such as study abroad may present challenges differentiating between the expectations and realities of the imagined communities presented while studying abroad.

## **Identity**

Identity and language are related in the way that “Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating a sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space” (Norton, 2010, p. 350). In language learning, language identity is affected given the new negotiation for identity and renegotiation of self in the target language. Language identity can be seen as a part of a complex heterogeneous relationship between linguistic communities in which identity is negotiated (Norton, 2010). More specifically, concerning discourse “speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships” (Bourdieu, 1977 as cited in Norton, 2010). This concept of language identity directly relates to SCT in the way that it is concerned with larger social relationships that can be mediated through language use. Norton (2010) builds upon this foundation of language identity to isolate how power relations within the classroom can attribute to language usage, such as if a student chooses to be silent, speak or read. Within this approach, the author argues that language identity can then be seen as not simply a linguistic system but also as a complex social practice where identities are negotiated (Norton, 2010, p. 351).

Identity and imagined communities can be related in the way that language learners often aspire to join the imagined communities of the target language (Norton, 2010). In a study abroad experience, students may have preconceptions and ideas about the communities in which they will be immersed via language learning. Negotiation for identity can be perceived as a complex

social practice concerning language learning as mentioned previously. Consequently, an imagined community is assumed by a subsequent imagined identity during the process of language learning (Norton, 2010). This relationship between language and identity needs to be understood within this context, and how it may subsequently affect a student's motivation to learn the target language given obstacles and challenges they may face during a study abroad experience at an IEP.

In a study conducted by Wei (2011), it was observed that three Chinese youths in Britain experienced a negotiation for identity positions in which they had to apply sociocultural resources as demanded by prompted monolingual ideologies. This study documented the importance and representation of multilingual identities that opposed the societal imposition of the given monolingual context. The researcher also acknowledges the observed importance of language mixing, such as translanguaging, as an attributive factor to identity development for the three participants. Building off of the research presented by Wei (2011), Giroir (2014) documented transformative and iterative identity negotiations in their study investigating the narratives of participation, identity, and positionality of two Saudi ELLs in America. The researcher highlights in their study how negotiated participation in a variety of different discursive practices influenced the negotiation of the students' multilingual identities. It was observed that marginalization in some prompted discursive contents prompted critical development in identity for the learners. Finally, Lee (2014) observed a problematic dichotomy of native versus non-native speakers of English for students negotiating identity at an IEP in America. The data in this study suggests that the development and negotiation for identity relating to language in the context of an IEP can be observed to prompt unique pedagogical implications for promoting equitable practices for ELLs.

The development of language identity concerning language acquisition has been a popular area of research in Applied Linguistics to promote equitable multilingual practices. But how is language identity affected by studying abroad at an IEP in the U.S.? Another intriguing study mentioned previously that addresses language identity development was conducted by Lee (2014) which investigated the distinct struggles experienced by three Asian students who attended an IEP in the U.S. in terms of their motivation, imagined communities, and identities, and their subsequent obstacles in language learning. The researcher hypothesized that the participants' language learning experiences would be shaped by both contextual and motivational factors alongside the fact that identity negotiations would impact the participants' experiences in the program. Through Grounded Theory methodology, the researcher administered two semi-structured interviews to obtain a holistic, qualitative understanding of the students' motivations, imagined communities, and identities. It was discovered that the "highly motivated participants were excited about being immersed in American society and culture and improving English language competence" (Lee, 2014, p. 37). Furthermore, the learners' interpretations and perceptions of the target language community were influenced by friends and family, descriptions of America from the media, and general beliefs about studying abroad. The semi-structured interviews demonstrated that the students adopted different strategies to adjust to studying at an IEP after difficulties forming connections and acclimating to the local community. While this study did an exemplary job observing learner motivation, imagined communities, and identity within an IEP, the researchers did not explicitly consider how these combined experiences shaped the students' learning experience in an IEP collectively.

## **Present Investigation**

Investigating identity, imagined communities, and motivation in isolation within the language learning context have been a popular area of research in Applied Linguistics to promote equitable multilingual practices. But how are these three concepts influenced by the experience of studying abroad at an IEP? In the present study, data on the phenomenon of studying abroad at an IEP was recorded to help conceptualize the informants' learning experience. While there is limited research on the development of learner identity within this proposed context, previous research conducted by Wei (2011), Giroir (2014), and Lee (2014) suggests that there will be an influence on the development of linguistic and cultural identity. Since there has been an established connection between social interaction and SLA employing SCT, the experience of studying abroad at an IEP can be further investigated in terms of the effects on the students' motivation, imagined communities, and language identity. The interplay between these three aspects is a complex phenomenon that can challenge students' language acquisition while studying abroad. Some of these challenges may be allotted to the contextualized student experience, as supported by previous research (Trentman, 2013; Lee, 2014).

Given the limited research that addresses the intersection and development of learner motivation, imagined communities, and identity in the context of an IEP, this study intends to observe and document the progression in these three areas for a small group of students studying abroad by asking the following research questions:

### ***Learner Motivation***

- 1) Does the influence of the use of an IEP on first-year students' motivations vary with respect to the students' gender and their English language proficiency level?  
(Alshumaimeri, 2013, pp. 19-20)

- 2) How long are the informants willing to actively participate in the program (i.e. attend regularly, complete the required coursework, participate in class, and complete assignments), and how hard are they going to pursue their studies (i.e. Do the students consistently participate in the program and do they do any additional work for the course?)?

***Imagined Community*** (adopted from Trentman, 2013, p. 548)

- 1) In what imagined communities did they desire to participate in while abroad?
- 2) To what extent did these imagined communities align with the communities of practice in which they participated while abroad?
- 3) How do the students imagine the community of English speakers in the US? How does that perception change with the IEP experience?

***Language Identity Formation***

- 1) What types of difficulties do students experience while they study abroad at an IEP in the US in their attempts to immerse themselves in the target language community and position themselves as English speakers?
- 2) What are the ELLs' perceptions of the influence of the IEP on increasing their language and cultural knowledge over time?

The preceding RQs regarding learner motivation, imagined community, and language identity all play a role in the students' experience studying at an IEP in the way that they elicit unique elements of language learning that are affected by immersive programs as argued by previous studies (e.g., Alshumaimeri, 2013; Trentman, 2013; Lee, 2014). In this study, the learners' language learning experience in an IEP in the U.S. were further understood with these concepts

and questions in mind within the framework of Vygotsky's SCT to provide instructors with a better grasp on how to support linguistically and culturally diverse students.

## **Chapter 4 - Method**

### **Research Design**

This research study was conducted within the epistemological interpretive or constructivist perspective that is intended to describe, understand and interpret a given phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, it is a phenomenological case study that views data collection as concerning the collective lived experience that has an essence to be observed as argued by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Creswell (2007) views the case study research approach as an investigation of a given case over a period of time that utilizes extensive data collection from more than one source of information to provide a detailed analysis of the case-based themes. Moreover, a qualitative case study allows for data collection that provides insight into a focused sample group in a given context. In this study, the experience of studying abroad at an IEP itself was the primary focus. Furthermore, analytical cultural descriptions were provided relating to the influences of studying in the program on the learners' developing identities, motivations, and imagined communities within the phenomenon of studying abroad at an IEP as a collective experience for the participants.

### **Context**

This study took place at an IEP that is offered by a university in the western U.S. There are three main levels at this program, Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, and it can take a full calendar year to complete the program if a student participates in the summer session. Upon enrolling in the Level 1 at this IEP, the student's Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR) for Languages level is a A2, and by the end of the semester they are anticipated to be at

the B1 level. At their initial A2 level, students are assumed to understand sentences alongside frequently utilized expressions, and can communicate about simple tasks and terms that are essential (i.e., food, routines, personal information, etc.) (Common European Framework for Reference for Languages, 2023). In Level 2, the English proficiency of these learners is equivalent to a B1 level on the CEFR scale, which assumes that the learners read Level 2 texts fluently, as well as can describe events and experiences, hopes, dreams, ambitions, and provide adequate reasons and explanations for those opinions—both course offerings are comparable in terms of proficiency level (Common European Framework for Reference for Languages, 2023). By the end of their semester in Level 2, students are anticipated to be at the B2 CEFR level. Finally, the Level 3 CEFR classification is a B2 at the beginning of the semester, where students can interact with a degree of fluency with little to no struggle, understand the main ideas of intricate texts, and can provide clear texts on a variety of topics (Common European Framework for Reference for Languages, 2023). Upon the completion of this final level at the IEP, students are at the C1 CEFR level.

Students usually finish the program within an academic year but have the option to take summer courses. There are three available sessions for students: fall, spring, and summer. Typically, the fall session takes place from August-December, the spring session takes place from January to May, and the summer session takes place from May to August. Contingent on student enrollment, all levels are offered each semester so students may enroll during any session. At every level, there are three primary content areas that are offered: Reading and Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Grammar.

Given the current issues in the U.S. surrounding visa obtainment and personal circumstances that come into play while studying abroad, students have the option at the IEP to

enroll during midterm intake. This section is called Foundations and is offered to the students as a preparatory pass-or-fail option to give students the chance to study English for no credit. Students enrolled in this option take a placement test upon arrival and at the end of the semester. Some students use this option to improve their English and test out of the IEP before fully enrolling in the following semester. This section includes Reading and Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Grammar during the same days and times as the regular section. This IEP also offers classes on academic study skills to help set the students up for success.

Students from all over the globe participate in this program and enroll through a variety of pathway options. Two of the most frequently utilized pathways are: A) the students apply directly to the IEP, or B) they apply to the host university and get conditional admission upon the completion of the IEP. Another pathway option that is less common entails the IEP working with some agents that recruit for the IEP. There are requirements for enrolling in the program, including having basic English skills. This program is catered towards a specific target audience that does not meet the English proficiency requirements as presented by the host university for admission. One of the goals of this IEP is to provide students with the necessary English skills to be successful at a university. Having a 2.5 Grade Point Average (GPA), which needs to be converted to match the U.S. GPA standards, is a prerequisite for enrolling at the IEP. Student applicants need to be in good academic standing and have to send their transcripts along with the application. This program is an option for both undergraduate and graduate students, and there is no age minimum or maximum presented. The IEP currently has more undergraduate students with the highest student demographic comprising Arabic-speaking countries and gulf countries (e.g., Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, etc.). Some of the students who enroll at the IEP do

matriculate to the host university contingent on a variety of factors such as their visa, application status, and career objectives.

## **Participants**

For this case study, three students from both the Foundations 3 and regular Level 2 sections at an IEP in the U.S. were selected to participate. A demographic survey was administered (see Appendix A) to students who volunteered and were interested in participating in the study. The informants had to be new to the IEP, meaning that they had not previously been enrolled in any IEP in the U.S. Ideally, the informants needed to have a similar amount of time spent in the U.S. as well. The informants all have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds which were determined via purposeful sampling based on their gender and geographic background. All three participants involved in this study volunteered to partake in the study and were not compensated in any way (i.e., financial compensation or course extra credit).

Participant One was an 18-year-old male from Kuwait who self-identified as having studied English his entire life. He was in the Foundations 3 and matriculated to the Level 2 section for the Spring 2023 semester. He passed out of the program with a sufficient International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score to matriculate to the host university after the Fall 2022 semester but chose to still enroll in the Spring of 2023 for more practice studying English before matriculating into the university. He is bilingual and speaks Arabic and English, with Arabic as his first language (L1). He has been in the U.S. since September 2022 and came to the university for his major with the intention to matriculate to the host university as an undergraduate student to obtain a bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering. When asked to evaluate his English skills on a scale from 1-10, with 1 being a beginner level with no

previous English experience and 10 being fluent, he ranked himself at 7.0/10 for Listening, 10.0/10 for Speaking, 6.0/10 for Writing, and 9.0/10 for Reading.

Participant Two was a 30-year-old female from Thailand who has been studying English since she was 7 years old. She was in Level 2 and moved to the Level 3 section for the Spring 2023 semester. She is bilingual and speaks Thai and English, with Thai as her L1. She has been in the U.S. since August 2022 and came to the university for her advisor, to meet new people, and experience life in America. She was a graduate student who intended to matriculate to the host university to obtain a doctorate degree in Radiology. When asked to evaluate her English skills on a scale from 1-10, she ranked herself at 5.0/10 for Listening, 4.0/10 for Speaking, 6.0/10 for Writing, and 5.0/10 for Reading.

Participant Three was a 29-year-old male from Uruguay who has been studying English for two years. He was in the Level 2 section and moved to the Level 3 section for the Spring 2023 semester. He is trilingual and speaks Spanish, Portuguese, and English, with Spanish as his L1. He has been in the U.S. since August 2022 and came to the university for the program and the mountains. He was a graduate student who intended to matriculate to the host university to obtain a master's degree in Agriculture. When asked to evaluate his English skills on a scale from 1-10, he ranked himself at 8.0/10 for Listening, 7.0/10 for Speaking, 7.0/10 for Writing, and 7.0/10 for Reading.

Regarding the instructors' involved in this study, there were four instructors in total across the different content sections. Each instructor held a master's degree in a relevant field of teaching English. There were two male and two female instructors involved in the study. One of the instructors taught in both sections (i.e. the Foundations 3 section and the Level 2 section), and one of the instructors taught two content courses for the Foundations 3 section. All four of

the instructors involved in this study had English as their L1 and had at least several years of teaching experience at the IEP and in other pedagogical contexts. Furthermore, all of their dialects were American English. No demographic information for the instructors was collected for this study as this study investigated the student experience in the IEP.

## **Instruments**

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

There were two rounds of semi-structured interviews for this research study. As conceptualized by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), interview data collection intends to further understand the participants' inner perspectives, emotions, and interpretations of learner identity that are not observable. The semi-structured interview prompted the informants to reflect on their motivations to study abroad at an IEP, reflect on their preconceptions of what their experience studying at an IEP in the U.S. would be like, alongside their self-perceptions on how often they used English as opposed to their native language(s). The first interview aims to get a basic understanding of the participants' initial thoughts on their motivation to be in the program, the imagined communities they expected to join, and how their language identities would change in terms of use. Furthermore, this first interview focused on the learners' motivations to study abroad and general experiences living in America and taking ESL classes if they have done so previously (Lee, 2014). The interview questions in both interviews were derived from the three foci of this study and previous literature that address the research questions. These interviews were conducted in a manner that tried to limit bias and allow the students to elaborate on elements of their study abroad experience. This point of data collection proved to be a more structured dialogue between the principal investigator and the informant. The researcher elicited

more information on the student's experiences in a summative manner, which provided a specific point in data collection for triangulation.

The interview questions utilized in both sessions were created without reference to another study, but with consideration of the previous literature in which this study was founded. Furthermore, the questions were organized thematically to target the three main foci—imagined communities, motivation, and identity of the participant. There were several screening processes for the interview questions. Once the first draft of the questions was created based on previous literature with the research questions in mind, they were discussed with colleagues to make revisions to ensure that the questions would not only allow an equitable opportunity for the students to share their stories but also they would give the participants an opportunity to elaborate or build upon their answers. The final draft of the questions was also presented to one of the instructors involved in this study that taught in both the Level 2 and the Foundations 3 sections. The majority of the questions were deemed appropriate with the exemption that the participants were allowed to ask clarification questions as needed, which was adhered to in the interviews. There were a few questions that were identified by the instructor to contain complex grammar structures, and they were adjusted accordingly before conducting the interviews.

### ***Field Notes-Instructor Reflections & Researcher's Observations***

While the semi-structured interviews aimed to document a formative understanding of the participants' perceptions on the development of their own identities, the instructor reflections and researcher observations aimed to provide another point of triangulation and document the physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and subtle factors that relate to learner identity in the given context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These field notes from this participation were collected via thick description (Geertz, 1973 as cited in Cowie, 2009). Thick

description can be characterized as taking extensive detailed notes that transport the reader to the observation itself to contribute to the reliability of the study. These field notes provided a more holistic contextualization of the data collection on the phenomenon of studying at an IEP in the U.S. Cowie (2009) considers observation as intentional awareness and analysis of the informant's performance given a specific context. Based on this interpretation of observational data collection, the field notes for this study were an accumulation of detailed notes about the place, people, and interactions that occur. This data from both the instructor and the principal investigator contributed to the complexity of social interaction in the classroom for the participants (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). These observations served to illustrate the interpersonal relationships of the informants, their friendships, and other social interactions that occur within the class that demonstrates how the students and instructors develop and relate on a personal level within the confines of Vygotsky's SCT.

## **Procedure**

### ***Study Timeline***

This study was conducted over the span of a four-month time period, as demonstrated in Table 1. On the far left column, the months are identified numerically and contain the subsequent weeks and tasks that were completed during that time. The tasks identified sometimes spanned several weeks or months, as illustrated in the conduction of classroom observations. This occasional variance is due to the inconsistency in availability among the participants or to their requested meeting preferences. While this was not the initially intended timeline (see limitations), the procedures for the study were all completed successfully and fulfilled the initial objectives.

**Table 1***Schedule of Study Procedures*

Month	Week	Tasks
One	One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IRB was approved.</li> <li>● Student Participant Recruitment took place.</li> </ul>
	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student Participant Recruitment took place.</li> <li>● Student demographic form was administered.</li> </ul>
	Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The student demographic form was administered.</li> <li>● The first round of student interviews were conducted.</li> </ul>
	Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The first round of student interviews were conducted.</li> <li>● Classroom observations were conducted.</li> </ul>
Two	Five	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Classroom observations were conducted.</li> </ul>
	Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Classroom observations were conducted.</li> <li>● Instructor reflections were administered and completed.</li> </ul>
	Seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thanksgiving Break – No school.</li> </ul>
	Eight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Instructor reflections were administered and completed.</li> </ul>
Three	Nine-Twelve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All the first round of interviews were transcribed.</li> <li>● Samples of the initial coding round were completed.</li> </ul>
Four	Thirteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All the first round of interviews were transcribed.</li> <li>● Samples of the initial coding round were completed.</li> </ul>
	Fourteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All the first round of interviews were transcribed.</li> <li>● Samples of the initial coding round were completed.</li> </ul>
	Fifteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All the first round of interviews were transcribed.</li> <li>● Samples of the initial coding round were completed.</li> </ul>
	Sixteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The second round of student interviews were conducted.</li> <li>● The coding samples were workshopped and with a peer.</li> <li>● The second round of interviews were transcribed.</li> <li>● All of the data went through three rounds of coding.</li> </ul>

### ***Institutional Review Board Approval and Participant Recruitment***

To conduct this study, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained (see Appendix A for the approval letter). Furthermore, consent forms were created for both the students and instructors participating in this study can be found in Appendices B and C. In the first step of the recruitment process, a faculty member at the IEP entered the classrooms for the Level 2, Level 3, and Foundations 3 sections and read a scripted description of the study provided by the investigator (Appendix D). From there, the students that were interested in participating in the study were asked by the faculty member who read the script to contact the investigator and schedule a time to fill out the consent form. If the participant decided to move forward with the study, a demographic survey was administered to students who volunteered and were interested in participating in the study (see Appendix E).

The students had to be new to the IEP, meaning that they had not previously been enrolled in the program and ideally needed to have a similar amount of time spent in America. The student participants had different cultural and linguistic backgrounds which were determined via purposeful sampling based on their gender and geographic background. Regarding the instructors' involvement, the investigator hosted a meeting with the instructors and provided a brief description and intended purpose of the study, information regarding the expectations of their participation, and the potential benefits and risks of the study (see Appendix F). Finally, the investigator contacted the instructors individually to provide the written consent form before proceeding with the study.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

These semi-structured interviews were approximately an hour long for each student participant for each session. These semi-structured interviews were taped with a digital audio

recorder, and the subsequent audio recordings were labeled and dated in separate files for each participant. Additionally, pseudonyms (Participant #1, Participant #2, and Participant #3) were used for each of the informants to ensure confidentiality. The first interview took place in October 2022 and the second interview took place in January 2023, upon the conclusion of winter break. All three of the participants agreed to have the second round of interviews take place in January 2023 as opposed to December 2022. The first interview round was conducted in person within the IEP building in a private room, while the second round of interviews was offered to the participants to be conducted over Zoom or in-person contingent on the student's availability. The first interview focused on the learners' motivations to study abroad and general experiences living in America and taking ESL classes if they had done so previously (Lee, 2014). These interviews were conducted in an attempt to provide an unbiased opportunity that allowed the students to elaborate on elements of their study abroad experience. This point of data collection proved to be a more structured dialogue between the researcher and the informant. The researcher elicited more information on the student's experiences in a summative manner, which provides a specific point in data collection for triangulation.

### ***Instructor Reflections***

The students who participated in this study had three separate instructors for each given level. There were two Reading and Writing, two Listening and Speaking, and two Grammar instructors totaling five instructor participants. Each of these instructors was asked to submit a reflection on the student(s) participation and overall willingness to contribute in class. This was a written semi-structured interview observation sheet provided to the instructors (see Appendix G and Appendix H). In this form, the instructor was asked to provide a general overview of classroom submission assignments. Furthermore, the entries may include their attendance, their

use of English in the class versus their native language(s), and or their social interactions with other students or the faculty at the IEP. The instructor was also invited to provide more general observations about the students' interactions in the class and within the building walls. The reflections provided by the instructors served as an outsider's perspective on the informants' learning experiences in the IEP. These reflections were also filed separately and under pseudonyms to ensure instructor anonymity.

### ***Researcher's Observations***

The researcher contributed to the data by observing nine classes in total, one class section for each student. During these observations, the researcher acted as a participant observer and recorded holistic notes on the student's participation and engagement with their classmates and instructor during class. These observations provided an outsider's perspective on the informants' language learning experience in an IEP. Additionally, the observations contributed to identifying themes of the informants' learning experience and helped hone in on specific trends related to the themes and provide specific examples of those trends to contribute to the data analysis. The field notes from the instructors and the researcher served as an attempt to provide some external validity for the case study.

### **Data Coding**

For this study, a qualitative coding approach was employed as presented by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). The authors define coding as “nothing more than assigning some sort of short-hand designations to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve various aspects of your data” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 199). More specifically, the authors elaborate on how short-hand designation can be symbolic of a variety of identifying characteristics but intend to help the researcher organize their findings and create an analysis. Given the three

sources of data collection utilized in this study (interviews, reflections, and observations), qualitative coding provided an opportunity to implement some consistency for data analysis. To build upon the interpretation of qualitative coding as presented by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), Saldaña (2021) provides a more concise definition of qualitative codes as being “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). The author further illustrates how qualitative codes need to be representative of the data. This interpretation of qualitative coding as presented by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Saldaña (2021) was adopted for this study.

The coding approach used for this study was done via deductive analysis, given the fact that the coding was initially determined by relevance to the three foci involved in the study. Furthermore, there were predetermined categories and theories that guided the study. There were three different rounds of coding for this study; initial coding, focused coding, and then thematic coding. The initial coding entailed any and all data points that related to motivation, imagined communities, and identity of the participant. This round of coding was completed through In Vivo Codes, which utilizes direct quotations from a participant (Saldaña, 2021, p. 4). The focused coding took the codes from the initial coding and put them into categories. Finally, the researcher coded for trends during the second round of coding to see if there were thematic trends that were consistently presented in the data. This round of coding was used to address the research questions relating to imagined communities, motivation, and identity. In the provision of the examples of the coding approach that follows, P1 is indicative of the interview with Participant One, P2 is indicative of the interview with Participant Two, and P3 is indicative of the interview with Participant Three. In the excerpt below from P1, he is responding to the researcher’s inquiry on why he decided to come study abroad in the U.S. and participate in the

IEP. In the response from P2 listed below, she is responding to the researcher's inquiry about why she said it was important for her to learn English. In the response from P3 below, he is responding to the researcher's inquiry about why he believed it was important for his instructors to speak clearly and have patience with him. The sections on the researcher's observation and one of the instructor's reflections are then provided for further contextualization. With this contextualization in mind, examples of the initial coding for motivation are illustrated in the following data excerpt:

### **Excerpt 1**

*P1: Because of my two uncles, that's why, and my father used to study here. Well, most of my uncles studied here. So, yeah, just a family thing.*

*P2: So, uhh, I think if we can speak English, we can make money more.*

*P3: Clearly, yes. That is very useful for us student because you can understand almost the one hundred perecent the thing that you say so is and is motive motive motivation motivational, motivational particular for me at least because if I understand a lot of the conversation or the class, I I want to go the class, I want to learn, but then, I don't know.*

*Observation: Participant #2 explains her answers to the other student and works through some of the answers where they do not get the same answer. Participant #2 says "Ahh, yes" when she missed a point that her classmate made.*

*Reflection: Participant #2 knew that she worked on her pronunciation and positively took feedback and suggestions from her classmates.*

Examples of the initial coding for imagined communities is illustrated in the following datum excerpts:

## **Excerpt 2**

P1: *They do a lot of stuff that just gets students together so we can meet up and maybe meet people that I've met once and seen them again. Maybe meet new people. Maybe go there with my friends and have a good time if we don't have anything to do. It helps a lot with community, so yeah.*

P2: *Ahh, I think uhh, uhh before I come I I think I think too much, mhm, I afraid mistake, but a teacher told me in the first class, make mistake in all of the class.*

P3: *Okay, yes, ehh, because they sent me a mail ehh asking me if I wanted to participate in uhh, a conversation partner, conversation. And I said yes. And I went, I went, you know, five, six times the last semester and was very nice, very good experience.*

Observation: *Participant #2 went with her English partner and watched the children Trick-or-Treat. Participant #2 dressed up as a fox for Halloween.*

Reflection: *I believe the student participates in extra-curricular activities of the program. He has attended International Thursday Nights, attended the pumpkin/Halloween party, and dressed up for Halloween.*

Examples of the initial coding for identity is illustrated in the following datum excerpts:

## **Excerpt 3**

P1: *Like the only people I'm not gonna speak English to are the Arab students and sometimes we do speak English actually but it's just everyone's gonna be talking English so it would be rude like let's say me you and an Arab student are sitting it would be rude for us to speak in Arabic and you're here, so well just speak in English.*

P2: *Uhm, it, not only in Thai, but it is better if I can publish in English.*

P3: *I feel more comfortable when I speak Spanish, but also, I have the same feeling in in*

*Portuguese that ehh in English now.*

*Observation: Participant #2 used a Thai word in her outline. She laughs when she shows it to the instructor. The instructor says that is OK while they walk through the rest of the outline.*

*Reflection: This student uses their native language some when talking with other students in class, however, he tends to use the target language more frequently than other students do. He seems genuinely interested in practicing the language and uses it more than he uses Arabic.*

It is important to add that these datum excerpts were evaluated holistically in the way that the final interpretations of the data came from the engagement with the participant through the interviews, observations, and the instructor reflections via triangulation. These codes in isolation lose their meaning but serve to demonstrate the approach the researcher took in the coding. After the initial round of coding, as stated previously, each data excerpt or concept was categorized within each foci that was determined previously. Some of the categories that emerged were SCHOOL for motivation, FAMILY for imagined communities, and REPRESENTATION for identity. From there, the themes that emerged were determined with holistic consideration and are discussed in Chapter 5 - Results and Discussion.

The inclusion criterion for the coding approach was any topic relevant or related to imagined communities, motivation, and/or identity that emerged from the data. If the data lacked relevance to the three main foci for this study then it was excluded. Additionally, if the datum did not relate to the student participants involved in this study, they were excluded as well. Examples of the excluded data are demonstrated below:

#### **Excerpt 4**

P1: *So, I had to sort that out so, uh, and then as soon as I got to the hotel, everything was sorted from there.*

P2: *Yes, around uhh I take arou twenty-four hour one day.*

P3: *But I don't know in English.*

Observation: *The instructor randomly calls on students to change a sentence from an active to a passive sentence.*

Reflection: *I explain my classroom philosophy at the beginning of the term, which is that there are three classroom learning rules: talk, let others talk, and make mistakes*

As illustrated by Saldaña (2021), it is important to consider that coding is an interpretive application, not a concrete science. Furthermore, qualitative coding can be subjective and can vary between researchers. The intention in coding the data serves to summarize the data as accurately as possible to tell the stories of the participants to the best of the researchers' ability. To establish a certain level of reliability of the coding decisions, a colleague reviewed the sample of the three rounds of coding which were further discussed and clarified. As suggested by Saldaña (2021), even as a solo coder it is essential to review the findings to validate the findings. Even though this is a highly qualitative study that does not aim to establish generalizability, reviewing the coding decisions of the findings helped generate stronger connections between the datum and the emerging categories. Furthermore, as suggested by Saldaña (2021), "member checking" was also employed with the participants that occurred during the second round of interviews where the researcher checked the interpretations of the findings with the students (pp. 35-36). This collaborative effort in the coding and data analysis helped strengthen the findings and pedagogical implications.

## **Data Analysis**

The data analysis consisted of triangulation between all points of data: researcher observations, student interviews, and instructor reflections. All three of these instruments offered a different perspective on the phenomenon of studying abroad and the subsequent influence on motivation, identity, and imagined communities. Furthermore, in the data analysis portion of the study, the instruments allowed corroboration between the three data points.

In this research study, in which a holistic analysis was adopted as argued by Creswell (2007), the investigated issues were the influences on the development of learner motivation, imagined communities, and identity that emerged during an IEP in the U.S. The data analysis consisted of a detailed description of the case and provided some central themes that emerged from the data collection. This approach further illustrated the complexity of the three concepts in an IEP. The semi-structured interviews, observations, and reflections were analyzed given the qualitative case study methodology as presented by Creswell (2007). First, the data collection undertook a holistic analysis, where specific themes were provided that emerged given the detailed description. Then, an analysis was provided of the emerging themes to further understand the complexity of the case. Finally, the themes and specific examples were related to the purpose of the study—to further understand the complexities of language identity, motivation, and imagined communities that emerge while studying at an IEP. Data analysis was conducted by using open coding, categories, and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertler, 2020).

The coding parameters are demonstrated in Figure A1 (found in Appendix J) which provides three tiers of different emerging concepts from all of the collected data. From all of the data, motivation, imagined communities, and identity were extracted. From these three foci,

future aspirations, preconceptions, and identity negotiation emerged. Future aspirations was a trending category that emerged from all of the data on motivation. All three participants were motivated by their future aspirations in both striving towards the manifestation of their academic goals and the manifestation of their professional goals. The manifestation of both professional and academic goals emerged as two prominent themes within the thematic round of coding. Within imagined communities, all of the data fit within the category of their own preconceptions of the study abroad experience and provided the themes of refuted preconceptions, realized preconceptions, and discovered communities that weren't previously imagined. Finally, the negotiation for identity emerged in the categorical coding round where all of the data within identity related to the participant's own negotiation for identity. Thematically, from the participants' negotiation for identity emerged the two main concepts of both use and context alongside their own self-perceptions on their linguistic identities. The thematic concepts from the coding are discussed more in depth in the following section.

## **Chapter 5 - Results and Discussion**

This chapter serves to illustrate the documented influence of studying abroad at an IEP on motivation, imagined communities, and identity. First, the stories of each participant and their experience studying abroad will be described. In this section, the students' personal development of motivation, imagined communities, and identity is illustrated. Next, the similarities and differences in the study abroad experience of the student participants are described. Finally, the trends that emerged relating to motivation, imagined communities, and identities from the cumulative experience of the three students are discussed. Although this study was non-longitudinal and was conducted over a relatively short period, the results can contribute to educators' general understanding of the study abroad experience for ELLs.

## **Participant One's Story**

Participant One was a prospective undergraduate student who had just graduated high school in the spring before enrolling in the IEP. He had never studied abroad before, and participating in this program was his first time in America. When prompted to provide his experience moving abroad, he stated that there were a few hiccups with a friend who was supposed to pick him up at the airport, but otherwise it was an exciting new adventure. He was offered a scholarship from the Kuwaiti government which was sponsoring his studies at the IEP and could cover his expenses if he matriculated to the host university after completing the IEP. He was greatly looking forward to the experience of studying in America and wanted to have fun and make new friends. Overall, Participant One had a very positive outlook on his upcoming experience in the IEP.

Participant One was motivated by his family and his academic and professional aspirations to participate and engage in the study abroad experience in America. First, he was motivated to participate in the IEP by the influence of his uncle, who had studied abroad in the U.S. as well and believed that it would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for him. His uncles also encouraged him to enroll in English classes at the IEP so that he could get used to the classroom style and the grading approach utilized in the U.S. before matriculating to the university so that he could maintain a high GPA for his bachelor's studies. Furthermore, he was motivated to study abroad because of his academic aspirations to obtain a bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering at the host university. He claimed that the environmental engineering program at the university is one of the top thirty in America and is one of the easier universities to study at. When the researcher asked him to elaborate on why he believed that it was one of the easier universities to study at, he said that he asked other people who had studied at the

university and that it was easier and more fun to study there. Finally, he wanted to improve his English at the IEP because he had aspirations to present at conferences and share research around the world, and he believed English was essential for helping him be successful in his career aspirations. He believed that he would be a more marketable candidate for a position and would get to travel to international conferences to present information if he had mastery of the English language. All in all, Participant One was motivated by his family and his academic and professional aspirations to participate in the IEP during his study abroad.

Participant One believed he had a relatively good grasp on what life would be like in America due to the research he did both on the university and the city where the IEP was located. He watched YouTube videos and looked-up information about the program beforehand and stated that this helped him understand what life would be like in America. Although he said that he wanted the study abroad experience to be fun, Participant One said he was surprised at how fun the experience was and that he can understand why his uncles encouraged him to participate in the program. Although he said that being a male in the program was normal in participating in class alongside women, he did state that other students from Kuwait or some other Arab countries might not be used to it due to the religious and cultural differences, but it was a normal classroom experience for him. Additionally, Participant One was surprised at how nice the people were in the IEP, and he was pleasantly surprised at how safe it was where the IEP was located. Finally, he stated that the community of Arab students in the program was an essential part of the study abroad experience for him and that it made the whole adventure a very positive experience for him. Overall, Participant One had preconceptions about how studying abroad would be a transformative experience for him and that friends would be an essential part of the journey which were realized.

Arabic was the native language of Participant One, and it played an extremely prevalent role in his experience at the IEP. There was a large population of Arabic speakers at the IEP both in his class and in the program at large, so he had a large community of students in the program that he was able to converse with both in class and out of class. Participant One had a very interesting perspective on his linguistic identities, and emphasized how the use of his Arabic is contingent on both who he is speaking to and the proximity of the people around him. For example, he adopted the claim from his father that it is considered rude to speak Arabic to or around individuals who do not speak the language. He felt neutral about his Arabic identity, but addressed how he was attempting to move away from that part of himself in learning English to sound more “native-like.” Participant One spoke some Arabic in classes and within the building walls of the IEP, but mainly spoke and practiced English when he could. He spoke Arabic with his family and friends, but tried to speak English whenever he could in class and in extra-curricular activities or social interactions that he had when appropriate. In conclusion, his Arabic linguistic identity played a large role in his study abroad experience but he still considered his English identity as essential to his personal development at the IEP and in America.

### **Participant Two’s Story**

Participant Two was a prospective graduate student who received both a Bachelor of Science in Radiological Technology from Mahidol University and a Master of Science in Medical Biochemistry from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. Studying abroad at the IEP was her first time in the U.S., and she had never studied abroad before in any other country. When the researcher asked her to describe her experience moving abroad, she described it as a

long and exciting experience. She was nervous but was looking forward to the experience because she said she would grow more mature in being by herself.

There were a few things that motivated her to enroll in the IEP to learn English. First, she came to the United States for the doctoral program in Radiological Health Sciences at the host university. She corresponded with an advisor before moving abroad and was conditionally accepted into the program. Due to the fact that she did not have a high enough English exam score for admission at the host university, she was granted acceptance into the doctoral program on the condition that she either complete the IEP and pass out of the program or re-test one of the assessments accepted (such as the IELTS exam) by the host university and obtain a satisfactory score. She said that she had taken the IELTS exam four or five times in Thailand, but was about one point short of the admission criteria. In addition to her desire to participate in a doctoral program at the university, Participant Two said that her aunt played a major role in her participating in a study abroad experience to learn English. Her aunt had done a study abroad session herself and encouraged this participant to take a leap of faith and enroll in the IEP at the university to further develop her English skills. Finally, she was motivated to obtain a doctorate from an English-speaking country due to her professional aspirations in her field. Participant Two strived to learn English to collaborate with other professionals in her field in research publications and conferences and English skills provided an opportunity for a wider range of collaboration opportunities. Also, she said that she would get more money if she had strong English proficiency. To conclude, she became motivated to enroll and participate in the program due to her future aspirations and family influence which played an important role in her experience studying abroad at the IEP.

To this participant, she imagined that she would become more confident in her English skills. She believed before coming to America that her English skills would improve and that she would get a different language learning experience. She also had preconceived knowledge about the culture in America, and she looked forward to celebrating Halloween and Christmas.

Participant Two talked about how she imagined Americans as solitary individuals that kept mostly to themselves, which she said was one of the most surprising realizations once she came to the U.S. and everyone seemed eager to say “Good morning” or “Hello” to her as complete strangers. Finally, her aunt told her that studying abroad was a transformative experience that would create memories that would last a lifetime. She also had a close friend who also studied abroad in the U.S. which influenced her preconceptions regarding education in the U.S. and the overall study experience. Both narratives were positive and encouraged Participant Two to make the most of her English exposure during the program. In short, her imagined communities were influenced by her aunt and friends' experiences studying abroad and general preconceptions about the culture and life in America.

The linguistic identities of Participant Two played an essential role in her study abroad experience. With her first language being Thai, she had no one in the IEP who shared her language which contributed to a great amount of English exposure and use every day. In addition, her roommates were American speakers of English so she had to navigate her academic and home life completely in English. Participant Two entered the program with very low confidence in her English proficiency and demonstrated a great desire to improve her confidence and have less fear, frustration, and anxiety in the target language. She used Thai to speak with her mother and family every day, and she spoke every so often with her friends as well. In her connections at the host university, her advisor and colleagues shared a common language of

English which was to communicate on any administrative or program-specific affairs. Furthermore, she discussed how she wants to use both English and Thai in her career back in Thailand, but that she needed English to become a successful professional in the field. In sum, Participant Two had a complex negotiation for identity during her study abroad experience that influenced the role of her linguistic profiles during her daily interactions and aspirations.

### **Participant Three's Story**

Participant Three was also a prospective graduate student who had a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering from the Universidad de la República in Uruguay. When the researcher asked him to describe his experience moving to America, he described it as a complicated process, as he had intended to travel to the U.S. in March of 2020. Due to the pandemic, he had to delay moving and starting his master's. He moved to America with his fiancée, who was accepted to study at the host university as well. Participant Three said that the process upon arrival was smooth because the university set him and his fiancée up with furnished housing so they had minimal things to do to get settled in since his fiancée was awarded a scholarship. He was also recovering from a recent surgery and was grateful for the ease of transition to the new city but it presented other complications for him in regards to the restriction in activities he could participate in, such as sports and some athletic activities that he would usually partake in. Once he and his fiancée had settled into their new place and as the semester unfolded, Participant Three had doubts about his decision to move abroad and thought about moving to Uruguay.

Participant Three was motivated to come to participate in study abroad for one of the Agricultural Sciences master's programs offered by the host university. He wanted to get a master's degree in Agricultural Sciences from either a university in the U.S. or Australia due to their prestigious programs and return back to Uruguay to work as an agricultural engineer. He

decided to move to a university in the U.S. since his fiancée was accepted at the host university on scholarship and she helped him make the decision. Much like that of Participant One and Participant Two, he did feel like he had a high enough English proficiency score to matriculate straight into the university, so decided to start with the IEP on campus before applying himself to the master's program. While he did not have funding for the first semester at the IEP, he decided to stay enrolled and continue classes at the IEP for the spring semester since he received a scholarship and secured an advisor for his graduate studies. In sum, Participant Three was motivated to enroll and participate in an IEP in the U.S. due to his academic and professional aspirations, opportunities to continue participating in both the IEP and his graduate studies at the host university, and the influence of his fiancée.

Participant Two also imagined that his English skills would improve with both the help of the IEP and immersing himself in the target language. He was not very confident with his English skills and wanted to take advantage of every opportunity he could to speak English with Americans. He worked with the Agricultural Department at the host university, so he was exposed to many different English speakers in that program. Although he didn't think studying at the IEP as a male was different or estranged from his preconceptions of the program, he was surprised at how many women worked with him. He stated that in Uruguay, it was the opposite. Furthermore, he was surprised at how many international students were enrolled in the IEP, which he greatly enjoyed as part of his experience studying abroad. He did not know what his experience would be like at the IEP, but he did know that he wanted to be a student and meet new people. He described how he was also very surprised that people were so nice both in the IEP and in the local community. He imagined during his study abroad experience that he would grow not only as a professional but also as a person. To conclude, Participant Two's imagined

communities were influenced by his preconceptions of the U.S. and his desire to immerse himself in the target language community to further his own growth and development.

As a trilingual learner, Participant Three had a more complex linguistic profile and identity than that of some of his colleagues. His native language was Spanish and there were more people both in the community and in the IEP who shared his language, the principal investigator included. As an intermediate Spanish speaker, the researcher was able to talk in his native tongue about some of his experiences and assist in vocabulary when needed. This assistance was more prevalent than that of Participant Two, who had no one who shared her native language, and less than that of Participant One, who had a very large community of Arabic speakers in and out of the classroom. Participant Three shared feelings of frustration over negotiating with English speakers at times in the local community or in his job but overall was excited and eager to continue developing his English skills. He stated that he uses English every day, in school and at his job alongside interactions that he has in public. Participant Two further elaborated that he uses Spanish primarily at home with his fiancée, but that sometimes they will speak in English to practice. He described how he used Portuguese at least at several times a week on the phone with people back in Uruguay. His goal is to use all of his linguistic profiles in his future career, but that English will be the most helpful for him in terms of successfully securing a job as an agricultural engineer. All in all, Participant Two had the representation of all three of his linguistic profiles prevalent in his experience studying abroad with a strong emphasis on his English and Spanish usage.

## **Influence of Motivation**

### ***Manifestation of Academic Goals***

All three of the participants believed that it was very important for them to engage and participate in the IEP before matriculating at the host university. Participant One had tested out of the program with the IELTS over winter break but decided to continue at the IEP for the spring semester. When asked why he decided to continue at the IEP, he provided the following response:

#### **Excerpt 5**

*P1: Well, I was here cause as I told you the first time, it was just like to help me with study-wise, I'm good at English, but not studying English.*

Here the participant is illustrating how he wants to continue learning how to learn in English before enrolling in the university. This excerpt came from his second interview, which reinforced his initial position of desiring to participate in the IEP to help prepare him for university. During the class observations of his language learning experience, his motivation for learning how to study in English transferred into the classroom was evident. As demonstrated in Excerpt 2 below, Participant One completed his classwork and was eager to engage in classroom discussions and answer provided questions:

#### **Excerpt 6**

*Observation: Participant One listens to the instructor and asks and answers clarification questions. When the instructor asks what the students are working on in their other class, Participant One answers the question. (OC-He is engaged and motivated.)*

Here in this excerpt, OC signifies the Observer Comments that were the researcher's interpretations and thoughts about the classroom observation. It was evident, at times, that

Participant One was very dedicated to his studies and was motivated to engage in his English language learning. There were moments when he was distracted in class, and he had some attendance issues toward the end of the semester. As illustrated in Excerpt 3 below, one of his instructors discusses the manifestation, role, and development of motivation for Participant One over the course of the semester:

### **Excerpt 7**

*Instructor Reflection: This student's effort, as seen in in-class participation and in-class activities and assignments, has changed over the course of the term. At the beginning of the term, the student was present most days for both classes, and he participated actively in class. He would also ask many questions when he didn't understand the assignment directions or the content of the assignment/activity. His participation has dropped off over the last couple of weeks of the term, as he has been late or absent frequently. Recently, therefore, he has not been keeping up with the course-load, as nearly all assignments are expected to be completed during class-time (no homework). Nonetheless, when the student is present, he is engaged and asks questions.*

While Participant One had high aspirations and intentions to make the most out of his study experience at the IEP in learning English, at times the discussed motivation was not transferred into the classroom. Nevertheless, Participant One was still considered to be a present and engaged student when he attended class and appeared to be motivated to continue his English studies. Despite his spotty attendance towards the end of the semester and occasional lack of participation, Participant One's motivations for learning English for his academic aspirations were manifested due to his engagement in class and the decision to continue the IEP although it was no longer a requirement of the host university.

Much like that of Participant One, Participant Two thought that it was a very good thing that she enrolled in the IEP before matriculating into the university because she was not confident in her English skills. As demonstrated in Excerpt 1, she discusses how essential it is to her to take English courses before taking courses for her degree. This excerpt is in response to a discussion regarding the conditions of her enrollment at the IEP:

### **Excerpt 8**

*P2: But, but I think uhh it is good because if I uhh come and study in my [...] major program I will die.*

This quote from the first interview demonstrates her desire to participate in the English program and her position on how she believed it would be terrible to jump straight into her doctoral program without working on her English skills first. Although she took several tests over break to try to obtain an admissible score to enroll at the host university, she did not score high enough and wanted to take another semester at the IEP. In the second interview, Participant Two discussed how she negotiated funding for another semester at the IEP in the Level 3 section so that she could continue to build on her English skills before matriculating full-time to the university in the following fall. As demonstrated in the excerpt below from the first semi-structured interview, the participant argues the importance of enrolling in the IEP before starting your studies at the university:

### **Excerpt 9**

*P2: Uhh, I think uhh, it is better because uhh if student who uhh feel uncomfortable to use English, it is better to uh study English uh or Intensive Program before.*

In this excerpt, Participant Two is discussing how she believes it is important for students who are not confident in their English, like her, to participate in an IEP before matriculating into the

university to help them feel more comfortable in their studies. Her academic goals to improve her English motivated her to complete another semester at the IEP and negotiate funding to continue her studies at the IEP before completely matriculating into the university.

Her dedication to the IEP and learning English was further noted in both the classroom observations and her instructor's reflections. During the classroom observations, her willingness to learn and desire to further develop her English learning was observed. As illustrated in the following excerpt, Participant was very attentive and eager to participate in the classroom, including making mistakes:

#### **Excerpt 10**

*Observation: Participant #2 explains her answers to the other student and works through some of the answers where they do not get the same answer. Participant #2 says “Ahh, yes”, when she missed a point that her classmate made.*

This excerpt on motivation to engage and participate also illustrates the participant's collaborative approach to learning where a growth mindset in the classroom was incorporated. During the classroom observations, Participant Two was very engaged and consistently focused on classroom activities and discussions with little to no distractions. This perspective is corroborated by the instructors' reflections that discuss her motivation to participate and engage in class. As demonstrated in Excerpt 7, her instructor believes that she is a highly motivated student that takes her English studies seriously:

#### **Excerpt 11**

*Instructor Reflection: Participant Two is a very motivated student. Based on examples from her writing assignments, she has specific goals for her studies at CSU and is willing to work hard to achieve them.*

Building off of this perspective of Participant Two's participation and dedication to learning English and pursuing her academic aspirations, all of her instructors commented on her pristine attendance and is always prepared for class. This perspective contributes to the manifestation of her academic aspirations and high motivation in how she was willing and able to actively pursue her goals.

Participant Three also was motivated by his academic aspirations and had initially stated that he only planned on attending the IEP for one semester due to the cost of the program. In the middle of the semester when we had the first semi-structured interview about his experience in the IEP, he voiced concerns about his ability to stay in the U.S. due to the fact that he needed to pass an English proficiency exam and obtain an advisor for his master's program. As demonstrated in excerpt below from the first interview in October, in a conversation about his future plans for pursuing his academic aspirations and continuing learning English this participant had problems with motivation in the way that he did not know if he would be able to continue in the IEP due to finances:

### **Excerpt 12**

*P3: [...] now I had to make a decision and and the scholarship is is if I had a scholarship maybe me my planning or my plans for the future will be different [...] And such as maybe ehh if I had the scholarship, I would take the level three the level three but without the scholarship I am thinking in in in ehm take TOEFL and return to Uruguay [...] And then come back again to ehh USA.*

Thankfully, Participant Three got a lot of great news in a short period of time over winter break—he received a scholarship to continue in the IEP and secured an advisor for his master's studies. He claimed that this influenced his ability to continue his English studies and pursue a

master's degree at the host university. His decision to stay in the U.S. and continue his English studies at the IEP instead of returning back to his home country can be attributed to the manifestation of his academic goals.

Alongside his personal narrative and journey in participating in the IEP, the classroom observations also contributed to the representation of motivation in his experience abroad. In the observations, how he interacted with classmates and participated in classroom activities was noted. Although at times he seemed to be disengaged and unmotivated during class, the majority of the observations contributed to the manifestation of his willingness to participate and engage. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, Participant Three was often engaged and eager to provide answers in class:

### **Excerpt 13**

*Observation: Participant #3 begins adding to his paper. He leans back in his chair [...] and continues to write on his paper as Participant #2 provides her answers to a different vocabulary term. Participant #3 laughs at the instructor in the back of the classroom and puts his attention on the board. He clears his throat and practices saying the word "threaten" on his own time. During this activity, he briefly gets back on his phone before continuing to complete his vocabulary log along with the rest of the class.*

In this excerpt, the representation of where he was distracted (e.g. phone use) and engaged (e.g. practicing pronunciation of his own volition) is prevalent and applicable. The majority of the classroom observations reflected this sort of behavior—a willingness to learn and engage intertwined with occasional distractions that may have impeded his learning experience. This perspective is corroborated by his instructors' reflections that discuss how he participates in class and completes the majority of his work. All three of his instructors discussed how in the second

half of the semester, they saw a decline in participation although he was still overall a good student. They discussed how they believed this observed slight decline in motivation may have been attributed to his personal life, such as his work with the Agricultural Department. The timeline for this perspective is corroborated by the first interview where the participant felt a little hopeless about his future and uncertain of what step would come next. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, the instructors' reflections still reflect his willingness to engage and participate in class:

#### **Excerpt 14**

*Instructor Reflection: Participant #3 completes homework, in-class assignments and prepares for tests most of the time. There have been a few times when he fell behind because of personal circumstances, but he always bounced back.*

While there may have been a few hiccups along the way for Participant #3, overall his motivation to engage and participate in the IEP and pursue his master's at the host university was manifested in the pursuit of his academic goals.

#### ***Manifestation of Professional Goals***

Alongside the role of the manifestation of academic goals, the professional goals of the participants also was influenced by the manifestation of motivation in their experience studying abroad at the IEP. To begin, Participant One had high expectations and goals for obtaining a high-paying job in the field of Environmental Engineering back in Kuwait. He believed that English would help him achieve this goal and that by attending the IEP and obtaining his master's degree from the host university that he would be able to achieve this goal. In the following excerpt, the participant correlates his fluency in English to his ability to secure a job

and get a raise from his employers due to his English skills in comparison to other English Arab speakers in his home county:

### **Excerpt 15**

*P1: They you know talk with a bit of cutting in between like “ahhh” like that so that will help me in the job maybe get raise faster. Cause like maybe I’m gonna be better at other people at some stuff. With English it could help me, so hopefully, and I like to do presentations in English not in Arabic, so, if they wanna like do a presentation in Dubai let’s say. I they could pick me to go there cause I’m good at English and I like to do presentation so that could help.*

The aforementioned excerpt also illustrates how his English abilities will equip him with abilities to engage in professional development in his future career. The observations and instructor reflections that were previously discussed regarding Participation One’s willingness to engage and participate in the classroom are related to the manifestation of his professional aspirations. In addition, the instructors’ reflection forms relate to not only his academic aspirations but also his professional aspirations in the way that he is willing to engage out of the classroom to further develop his English skills. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, the participant did pursue opportunities to engage with English out of the classroom to help develop his skills:

### **Excerpt 16**

*Instructor Reflection: I think Participant One exhibits strong willingness to engage. He volunteered for this study, he volunteered to be a speaker at the end of term celebration, he has gotten involved in many social activities, and he sees unafraid to put himself out there.*

This position and perspective on the motivation of Participant One reinforce the manifestation of how his academic aspirations influence and motivate the manifestation of his professional aspirations during his time studying abroad in the IEP.

Much like that of Participant One, the influence of motivation on the manifestation of professional aspirations was a prevalent aspect of her time studying at the IEP. Participant Two also claimed that she needed mastery of English and that it was an essential part of her professional aspirations. As briefly referenced previously, she had aspirations to obtain her doctorate from the host university in the U.S. and to return back to Thailand for her job. She aimed to work as a researcher and maybe a lecturer back in her home country and to use English to share research and work collaboratively with other colleagues in her field. As demonstrated in the following excerpt, Participant Two placed high importance on her language acquisition to her achieving her professional aspirations in the future. When asked why she believed English to be important for her future career. She stated the following:

**Excerpt 17**

*P2: Because uh uh, I think the staff or the boss in my workplace want me to uhh keep connection mhm and collaborate with other, mhm. It include uhh the, research around the world.*

In a conversation during the two semi-structured interviews, Participant Two reinforced at how mastering English wouldn't just be beneficial for collaborative work in her future job, but also that she could get paid more, as demonstrated below. In this excerpt, she is responding to an inquiry about why she believed English would benefit her in a future job:

**Excerpt 18**

*P2: So, uhh, I think if if we can speak English, we can make money more.*

Similarly to Participant One's manifestation of professional aspirations, the instructors' reflections and the classroom observations for Participant Two also demonstrated her willingness to participate in class to further develop her English language skills. Building upon Participant Two's desire to work collaboratively in the future, her instructors commented on her willingness to work collaboratively with others and pursue additional help to further develop her English language skills. The following excerpt demonstrates how the participant was motivated in these ways:

**Excerpt 19**

*Instructor Reflection: Participant Two was a super positive help to other students and regularly helped them with projects, such as showing a fellow student how to use google slides. She stayed after class to ask questions about the lessons and talked to other students before and after class.*

This demonstration of Participant Two's dedication to the development of her English skills reinforces the manifestation of her academic aspirations in supporting the manifestation of her professional aspirations during her time studying abroad at the IEP.

Finally, the motivation of Participant Three was heavily influenced by his attempts to manifest his professional aspirations. As demonstrated previously, was motivated to enroll and participate in the IEP to better his English so that he could matriculate to the host university. Once he had obtained his master's from the host university, he planned to return back to Uruguay to work as an agricultural engineer. In alignment with Participant One and Participant Two, Participant Three also believed that having mastery over English would help him become more marketable for a high-paying respectable job in his home country. When asked if he believed

money was an important part of his experience learning abroad at the IEP, Participant Three offered the following response:

**Excerpt 20**

*P3: But yes, of course, the money is very important, now and also I am here and I am doing the master's degree because I want to improve as a professional. And one of the one of the ehh the thing because I am, I I want to do the masters and professional is ehh for the money, because ehh I will earn or I hope earn more money ehh after my master's degree.*

This comment from the participant demonstrates the importance of utilizing his master's to get a job that offers more money as an improved professional. Furthermore, Participant Three elaborated on the importance and role of English in his professional aspirations as demonstrated in the following excerpt. This excerpt is in response to the questions about why English matters for his professional aspirations:

**Excerpt 21**

*P3: Because when I, when you try to get uhh uhh, a high position in a job, ehh it will require uhh uhh uhh, high level of English because ehh this position or these jobs are in the big companies and usually, the big company work with international companies, or they are international companies, so you need to have uh good English.*

This necessity for English mastery for his professional aspirations can be corroborated by his willingness to engage in class as presented previously in the discussion about his academic aspirations. Outside of the classroom context, Participant Three also prioritized pursuing English opportunities outside of the classroom, such as the program FAITH at a local church that served as conversation partners for ELLs. The participant claimed that he attended this program five or

six times during the fall semester. Although one of his instructors said that they were not familiar with the participant's extra-curricular activities, they claimed that they offered the following advice for the student:

### **Excerpt 22**

*Instructor Reflection: However, I recommend to all my students that they should find native English speakers to hang out with so that they can practice listening and reading, as well as experience and learn about aspects of everyday culture and interactions.*

In the interviews with Participant Three, the researcher came to learn that the student took this message to heart and did try to seek out extra opportunities to engage with English speakers out of the classroom. In the following excerpt, the abbreviation "SH" signifies the researcher as the researcher and interviewer. When asked about his suggested importance of using English out of the classroom, we had the following discussion:

### **Excerpt 23**

*P3: Yes yes, I think every place no, ehh, each place that you can go and practice your English is good for you. A friend me told told me when I arrived to [name of host city] he he lives ehh with ehm his girlfriend here at they both are from Uruguay [...] and they ehm ehh they [...] invited us to go to the old town and walk and so we could know the old town. Showed he showed me [...] bars hey if you go to that bar and you sit in the in the [...] bar, people the people will talk with you. Okay, one plan for me [...] Ehh I try to go to the bars I I I went two or three times and I sit a lot and stay waiting, OK. Hi hi hi.*

As represented in this dialogue, Participant Three acted on the suggestion of his instructor to utilize out-of-the-classroom opportunities to engage with English speakers and further develop his own skills whenever he could. As claimed with Participant One and Participant Two, the

dedication to English language learning as an academic pursuit influenced the manifestation of his professional aspirations.

## **Imagined Communities**

### ***Refuted Preconceptions***

During her study abroad experience, Participant Two talked about how it surprised her that Americans were very nice and open. She had imagined that Americans would be very isolated and solitary, but she realized over the course of this study that this was not true as demonstrated in the following excerpt. Here, the participant describes how her perspective of English speakers in America changed during her experience studying abroad.

#### **Excerpt 24**

*P2: I think in the first time I think uh people are separate, and mm and they they connect more than I think.*

*SH: So, you thought that like people were very alone, by themselves, but we're more connected here in the United States?*

*P2: Yes, I think they are co-, cooperate. Uh-huh, and speak and share opining a lot of opinion and they open mind.*

Building off of this perception of English speakers in America, both Participant Two and Participant Three also commented on how surprised they were that people were kind and nice during their time in the program. Participant Two, in the interview, stated the following in response to a question about what they now believed Americans to be like after several weeks in the program:

### **Excerpt 25**

P1: [...] *people are so nice here and uh everybody tells me like Fort Collins is like one of the safest cities in America. So, Fort Collins, one of the best cities, yeah [...] I slept without locking my door yesterday [...] but I didn't feel afraid cause I didn't I didn't check oh did someone come in did something get robbed cause I know it's fine.*

SH: *Very good, so then in your experience Americans have been nice?*

P1: *Yes, so much [...] You know not everybody is nice, but I have I still haven't met the people who are not nice.*

In line with the preconceptions of Participant Two of how she was surprised by how connected Americans were, Participant One had a different experience transitioning from his home city in Kuwait to the host city in America. For him, there was less of a community mindset in comparison to his home country which was different for him. When asked how Kuwait was different from America, Participant One offered the following response:

### **Excerpt 26**

P1: *It's more of a family community.*

SH: *In Kuwait?*

P1: *Yeah, but here's just like a lot of people that are alone, alone, alone.*

Participant Three had a very similar experience with refuted preconceptions of Americans as being very pleasant in the host city, which surprised him. When asked what he believed English speakers in America to be like, he stated the following:

### **Excerpt 27**

P3: *Very kind, a lot of people kind.*

SH: *Good, did that surprise you?*

P3: *Yes.*

SH: *So, what did you think Americans would be like?*

P3: *Normal [...] I don't know but not ehh so ehh ehh attention with me. Are you good? How are you? Do you need something? If you have a problem let me know I can help you.*

In the preceding excerpt, Participant Three further described how he was surprised in a positive way at the social pleasantries exchanged by strangers here in America. Before coming to America, he had preconceptions about the behavior of Americans and how they would interact with him. All three participants discussed how their preconceptions of communities and people in the U.S. were not quite what they had expected, but that for the most part, it was a positive contribution to their experience studying abroad.

### ***Realized Preconceptions***

While there were refuted expectations that contributed to the study abroad experience of the three participants, there were also actualized preconceptions that also played a part in their journey. For all three of the students, they had imagined that their English skills would develop due to the immersion and their interactions with English speakers. This preconception was realized during their time in the IEP, and proved to be another positive experience for the participants. In the first semi-structured interview when the researcher asked Participant One what expectations he had for his experience studying abroad, he responded with the following statement:

### **Excerpt 28**

P1: *Get better, better hope it's good right now but hopefully it gets more better. Like I'm doing stuff outside of studying so and I hope they work out as well.*

SH: *So like getting better at English?*

P1: *Yeah.*

As illustrated in the preceding excerpt, Participant One expected that his English language skills would develop as a result from the study abroad experience. In the second semi-structured interview that was conducted in the following semester, when the investigator asked him if he believed his English skills had improved as a result of the IEP and his experience abroad, he said yes and even claimed that his English skills were then better than some of the English instructors in Kuwait. Much like this realized expectation taken from Participant One, Participant Two also had a similar realized expectation of English development. In the second interview, the researcher asked her to reflect on her English language learning experience and if she felt she had improved in proficiency. She claimed the following statement:

**Excerpt 29**

P2: *Uhh, yes, better than before, but need to practice more.*

Here in the aforementioned excerpt, the participant still wanted to improve her English skills and was not satisfied with her current proficiency, but was able to acknowledge that she had become better in her English proficiency. Much like that of Participant One and Participant Two, Participant Three also acknowledged that he had realized his preconceptions of obtaining better control of the English as a result of his study abroad experience. Participant Three acknowledge language learning as a process in which he was gaining more control of his English, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

**Excerpt 30**

P3: *Ehh, each day a little better, but is uh challenge everyday and every meeting that I have now at ehh animal science, with my advisor, with because now I am [...] in charge*

*of an experiment and I have to work with more students. Ehh, they come to help me and, is always a challenge ehh to have to speak with more people in English. But, each day, I feel a little better about [...] about my English.*

Participant Three was also able to realize his expectations of gaining more mastery of the English language as a result of the study abroad experience. All three of the participants had realized expectations of their own development of English proficiency as a result of being immersed in the target language through study abroad at an IEP.

One other realized expectation of the three participants was that their time in the U.S. would be a transformative experience. Participant One had preconceptions from his uncles that studying abroad was a once in a lifetime opportunity, as referenced previously in his motivations to participate in study abroad at the IEP.

### **Excerpt 31**

*P3: [...] most of my uncles and my father told me that if you go to America that's like four years, that's like one in a lifetime experience. You'll never experience that again. And in my first month here, I now understand what they are talking about, and I'm excited for what to come.*

Participant One had a positive realized expectation on how the experience in America would unfold and looked forward to his time in the program and potentially his undergraduate studies. Participant Two reflected on her experience and expectations for her study abroad experience as well, and how it was a positive transformative experience. In a conversation about her preconceived notions about the experience studying abroad in the U.S., Participant Two talked about the role and influence of her aunt and how they were realized during her study experience.

### **Excerpt 32**

P2: [...] *my aunt, my aunt told me, yes, mhm.*

SH: *That it was a good or a bad experience in the United States?*

P2: *Good, yes.*

SH: *Oh, good, so has that is that the what you expected are you having a good experience here, with people, are you happy?*

P2: *Mm, yes, very happy.*

The preceding excerpt supports the claim of realized expectation of studying abroad at the IEP in the U.S., and how in the moment of the interview, the participant was having a positive experience much like that of her aunt. Participant Three had a different route than the other two participants, and for a period of time in the first semester when his experience studying abroad was quite negative due to uncertainty about his future in the U.S. and overall life trajectory. In the second semi-structured interview, Participant Three illustrates how upon reflection of his time participating in study abroad, it proved to be a transformative experience due to the opportunities that were presented to him by the IEP and host university. As discussed previously in the section regarding motivation, Participant Three had initially imagined that the IEP and study abroad experience would provide him with opportunities for both his profession and in his career. These expectations were realized because of the financial and academic opportunities offered to him. In the first semi-structured interview, Participant Three was asked what his expectations were for his study abroad experience and he offered the following response:

### **Excerpt 33**

P3: *Uhm, I I think if I stay for three years, I think I I will change not only as a professional as a person too. It's a big experience and I need to take that better from*

*experience and try to to improve ehh obviously my English but in other aspect of my life too that I want improve. Ehh and I I I had I high expectatives but not only as a student, yes. But [...] my uncertainty is difficult now. Is make is is it is make me doubting until answer your question. \*Laughs\**

In the preceding excerpt, the participant discusses the transformation in his expectations for the study abroad experience due to his life circumstance. In the second interview, Participant Three discussed how he had started his master's since he had an advisor and was able to continue classes at the IEP as a result of receiving a scholarship. While the road to his realized expectations of the transformative experience in achieving his goals wasn't as straightforward as he had hoped, Participant Three still was able to realize his expectations of a positive experience studying abroad.

### ***Reality-Discovered Communities***

While the participants involved with this study did have preconceived notions about what life would be like studying abroad in America, there were also some discovered communities that influenced the experience of the learners. The discovered community was that of the role of the IEP community in the classroom. As claimed by Participant One, the rapport and community in the classroom had an influence on his experience studying abroad in a positive way. When asked if his experience was what he expected in the second semi-structured interview, Participant One responded with the following statement.

### **Excerpt 34**

*P1: Not really, it was more fun actually [...] A main reason for that was most of my classmates were Kuwaitis, so that helped us all just get used to the uhh CSU, get used to [the city] in general, made us make friends faster, but like let's say if the class didn't have*

*any Arabic person, it would have been a lot harder for me to make friends, like go around campus with confidence, and stuff like that.*

In this excerpt, the participant described how influential his established community of friends in the classroom influenced his experience abroad, and how it contributed to his confidence in the university community as well. This role of the classroom community was reinforced by classroom observations. As demonstrated below, the positive classroom community of the participant was observed:

**Excerpt 35**

*Observation: The students laugh together and the classroom is loud with the sound of conversations in both Arabic and English. Participant One smiles and laughs when he speaks with his classmates. (OC-Community and friends are important for him.)*

From the researcher's perspective as the observer, Participant One appeared to greatly enjoy class time with his friends and was frequently seen smiling and laughing with his classmates. The role of community in the classroom proved to be an integral part of the participant's experience studying abroad at the IEP.

Participant Two also described her perspective on the influence of classroom rapport and community on her study abroad experience in the second semi-structured interview. When asked her if friends and community in the classroom was an important part of her study abroad experience, she elicited the following response.

**Excerpt 36**

*P2: Yes, I think, I think uh I strongly agree, because uhh, uhh we have the same goal and we want to improve our English together.*

This collaborative mindset in the classroom was also observed in the observations and in her instructors' reflections on her involvement in class. In the class observations on her performance in-class learning, the researcher was able to document the collaborative rapport evident in the classroom as described below:

### **Excerpt 37**

*Observation: Participant Three and Participant Two smile and laugh together as they continue to work through the rest of the questions. Participant Two continues to say “Mmmm”, “Aha.” and “Ooooo” while her classmate explains his ideas. She says “Good job”, and “Good idea”, and gives positive reinforcement to Participant Three. She also asks clarification questions about his ideas.*

This observation excerpt is one example from many where the participant provides positive reinforcement of her classmate and displays positive emotions during class interactions. This perspective is strengthened by her instructors' reflections, which align with the following excerpt:

### **Excerpt 38**

*Instructor Reflection: Participant Two was always smiling, participating and engaged in participation, projects and discussions. She enjoyed encouraging others as well. She knew that she worked on her pronunciation and positively took feedback and suggestions from her classmates. By her openness, she helped create a community of helpers and learners.*

As interpreted from the data, it appears that the classroom community influenced the learning experience for Participant Two. This collaborative rapport and group mindset in the classroom

proved to be an integral aspect of the established communities during her study abroad experience at the IEP.

The experience of Participant Three was also influenced by the community created by the IEP in the classroom. As taken from the second semi-structured interview, the participant describes the role of the classroom community on his experience studying abroad. When inquired as to if the community in the classroom had a positive influence on his experience studying abroad, he stated clearly that this was the case. Participant Three goes along further in this interview and claims that having positive relationships in the classroom provides an opportunity to learn collaboratively and that it motivates him in his studies to participate and converse. In the classroom observations, the principal investigator witnessed the role of working collaboratively and how it influenced his performance in class, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

### **Excerpt 39**

*Observation: The video ends, and the instructor asks Participant Two to write their new answers on the board for the first for answers. When she forgets to put an (s) at the end of the word “colors”, Participant Three makes the “s” sound, like a snake, multiple times in a row. (OC-He wants to help his classmate write the correct answer.) She changes the answer that she wrote on the board. Participant Three says “Excellent” to Participant Two as she comes back to her seat and gives her a thumbs up.*

This importance of established communities in the classroom for Participant Three was also noted in the instructors’ reflections regarding his presence in the classroom. When asked to speak on the participant’s interactions in the classroom, his instructor offered the following statement:

#### **Excerpt 40**

Instructor Reflection: *Participant Three is a very social person, and fully participated in group conversations, often directing and aiding other students in their pronunciation or grammar. While he may not always have been fully prepared for each project, he could quickly pull together content to share with his classmates and happily and fully participate in the discussion.*

This excerpt contributes to the perspective of Participant Three in the way that he valued collaboration in the classroom and that this discovered community influenced his language learning experience while in the IEP. All three participants demonstrated a newfound value for the communities in their classroom during their study abroad experience.

#### **Identity**

##### *Use and Context*

One prevalent theme that attributed to the development of linguistic identities of the participants was the use and context of the language representation. Participant One had a very clear interpretation of where and when he could use Arabic and when he could use English.

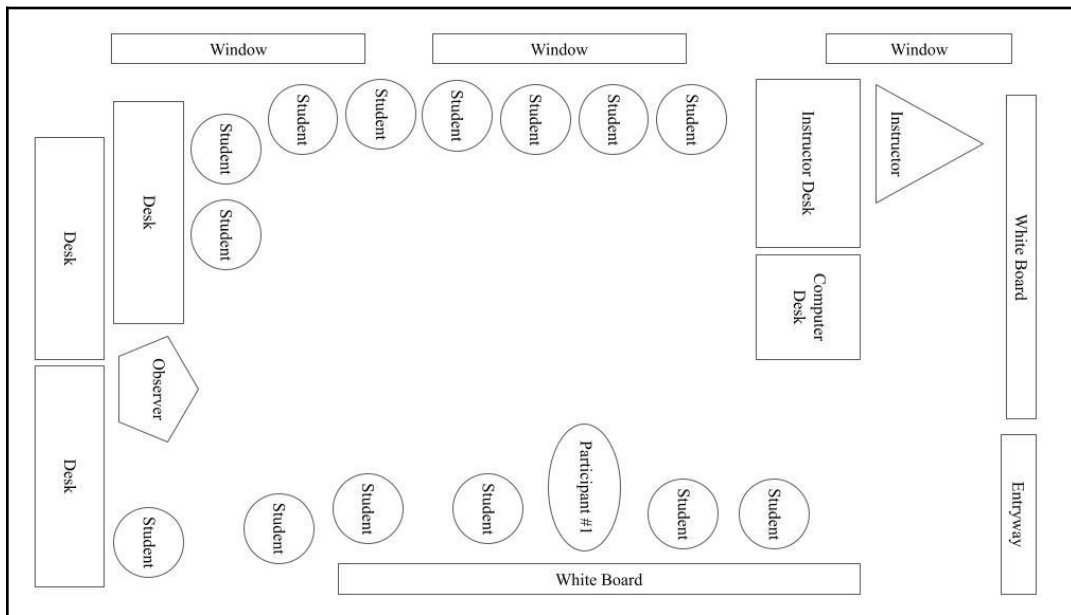
#### **Excerpt 41**

P1: *It's not rude [...] it's not, I'll explain why. Cause like let's say me you and an Arabic speaker sits here, if we start speaking Arabic, that's rude cause you're gonna think we're gonna, you don't know what we're saying so. But, if like uhh it was me and him and the whole class was busy doing something, I was just explaining him something or was a stupid joke or anything it would be fine. It's not rude cause nobody is listening to us, they don't think we're talking about them.*

When the researcher asked Participant One where this concept of speaking Arabic around people who could not understand the language was being rude in some contexts, he stated that his father set that precedent. The participant said that if someone who could not speak Arabic was involved in the conversation, then he would switch to English. This approach in action was observed during one of the classroom observations. During this classroom observation, the researcher noted the following:

**Excerpt 42**

*Observation: The participant engages in a conversation in Arabic with a classmate across the classroom as the instructor asks the observer a question in the back of the classroom. (OC-Proximity in Arabic use?)[...] A different classmate shows the participant his outline and speaks in Arabic. The instructor is helping a student at the front of the classroom.*



**Figure 1**

*Classroom Diagram for Observation Three*

In addition to proximity around the room influencing the participants' use and representation of Arabic, Participant One stated that he used Arabic to speak with his friends and family throughout the day every day, but that he also used English in some social events and the majority of his time when he was in-class or involved in the IEP. To further contextualize the use of Participant One's linguistic profiles, the following instructor reflection is provided:

**Excerpt 43**

*Instructor Reflection: This student uses their native language some when talking with other students in class, however, he tends to use the target language more frequently than other students do. He seems genuinely interested in practicing the language and uses it more than he uses Arabic.*

Participant One interchangeably used his two linguistic profiles in the classroom but primarily utilized English within the classroom walls. All in all, the representation of his linguistic repertoire can be related to the context in which he was situated and who he was addressing.

Similar to Participant One, Participant Two also had specific contexts and situations in which she utilized her different linguistic profiles. During the second semi-structured interview when asked when she used her native language of Thai, she offered the following response:

**Excerpt 44**

*P2: Ahh, I think I use every day, because I call to my mom every day.*

*SH: Ohh, good, so do you use Thai in any other time, or just when you call your mom?*

*P2: Yes, just call my mom.*

Later on in the interview, Participant Three elaborated on how she also relied on her Thai when she listened to YouTube or the news in her free time, or when she spoke on the phone with her friends. Otherwise, she would use English for the majority of her other affairs. For example, she

lived with her two American roommates and during school since there was no one in her social interactions that shared her native language. This perspective is corroborated in the majority of the classroom observations, although she did occasionally use Thai for her notes in class as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

**Excerpt 45**

*Observation: Participant #2 used a Thai word in her outline. She laughs when she shows it to the instructor. The instructor says that is OK while they walk through the rest of the outline.*

The instructors' reflections reinforced this position on the representation and use of Participant Two's linguistic profiles and noted her occasional use of Thai as demonstrated below:

**Excerpt 46**

*Instructor Reflection: With the exception of occasional notes written in Thai, this student does not use her native language in class—but keep in mind, she is the only Thai speaker in the class.*

While Participant Two did not have as many opportunities to use her native language in comparison to Participant One, she still had some contexts in which she was able to still utilize Thai. The majority of the contexts that she was in during her study abroad session at the IEP required her to use English to negotiate meaning with the people around her.

Participant Three had a similar linguistic experience to Participant Two given the fact that in their classroom there was no one who shared his native languages of Spanish and Portuguese. When asked how often he used Spanish, he stated every day in his house, although he and his fiance sometimes used English to practice. In a conversation about where and when Participant Three uses his Spanish linguistic identity, he offered the following response:

#### **Excerpt 47**

P3: *In my house, in my house, yes. And with my friend, with my family. I talk with my friends, my family every day.*

Then, when asked how often he spoke Portuguese and in what context, he stated the following

#### **Excerpt 48**

P3: *Yes, yes. Ehh every day, not, not every day. But maybe once a week, I don't know.*

SH: *Yeah, very good. When do you speak Portuguese, on the phone with people or?*

P3: *Phone, on the phone with ehh with my friends, may, yeah, with my friends, yes.*

When he was not at home or on the phone with family or friends, Participant Three said that he used English. For example, he used English at school, at work, and in the local community.

When the classroom observations were conducted for Participant Three, although there was no other student who shared a common language in the classroom, they did have conversations about the linguistic differences of Spanish and English at times in the classroom as demonstrated below:

#### **Excerpt 49**

Observation: *The instructor talks about breweries in our city. Participant Three states that "We don't have this word in Spanish." He offers his position on how, in Spanish, the language does not have a word for the place where beer is made or created. The participant says, "That word doesn't exist in Spanish." The instructor asks what words translate closely to "making beer" and "making wine." The participant sits up straight and uses his hands to gesture while he explains his position. (OC-He is engaged and feels very comfortable relating his Spanish linguistic identity to his English linguistic identity and sharing his experience in class.)*

Building off of this negotiation of linguistic identities for Participant Three, the instructors' reflections commented on how they did not see a prevalent use of the participant's linguistic profiles in the classroom. One of his instructors did state that the development of his English represented his Spanish identity, as demonstrated below:

#### **Excerpt 50**

*Instructor Reflection: Participant Three rarely speaks his native language, although he leans heavily on several Spanish language constructions and slang. For example, he uses "no?" instead of "isn't it?" or "doesn't it?" or in place of an appropriate question tag.*

While the representation of his Spanish identity seemed to be more prevalent over his use of Portuguese, English still was the most dominant linguistic identity that was relied upon for the majority of Participant Three's interactions. Even though all three of the participants came from different linguistic backgrounds and had different contexts and uses for their languages, English was considered to be utilized the most in their context of studying abroad at the IEP.

#### ***Self-perceptions of Linguistic Identities***

The development of the participant's self-perceptions of their different linguistic identities also needs to be considered in reference to the influence of studying abroad at an IEP. For Participant One, his self-perception of Arabic seemed to be neutral and positive. In the first interview, Participant One related his Arabic to feeling at home with the other Arabic-speaking students at the IEP, as demonstrated below:

#### **Excerpt 51**

*P1: Like miss speaking to people in Arabic and stuff but my friends here the Arab ones, they're like family now.*

When asked to elaborate on his thoughts about language connecting him to people from back home, he stated that he feels more comfortable when he talks compared to English because he did not have to translate his thoughts. The development of his self-perception in Arabic can be illustrated in the second interview where he expressed more neutral self-perceptions of his native tongue. When asked to reflect on his feelings when he spoke in Arabic, he offered the following response:

**Excerpt 52**

*P1: It's just, no, don't really feel confident, just don't feel anything when I speak Arabic.*

Furthermore, he stated that now in English he felt more proud and even a little “cocky” in his English abilities as illustrated in the following excerpt:

**Excerpt 53**

*P1: It helps me a lot to like push my English more like try to learn as much as possible. I know sometimes I feel cocky and say like oh I'm really good at English [...] I know I'm good at talking, but as you can hear right now I cut a bit so I'm trying to improve that.*

Moreover, the development of his self-perception of his English identity proved to be majoritively positive, with some considerations of the obstacles in finding the correct work or some frustration about his speech fluency. In addition to his previous sentiments about gaining more confidence in his English and having a positive self-perception of the linguistic identity, Participant One offered the following statement about why he views himself more positively in English:

**Excerpt 54**

*P1: Well, it's a positive, that's why I like to do presentations in English not in Arabic [...] I'll be confident the whole way except like five minutes before the presentation I will say,*

*oh what am I gonna say [...] then when I get up there, I break the first two minutes or not even two minutes [...] and then I just open up, start talking confidence.*

Participant One's appeared to have developed not only his own positioning and self-perspective on his English identity during the study abroad experience at the IEP, but also a development in his Arabic identity as he came to have more mastery of the English language. Both profiles still played a prevalent role in his everyday life, but his control of English appeared to help develop his confidence and self-perception in the target community.

From very early on in this study, Participant Two voiced concerns of her lack of confidence in English. In the first interview, when asked how she feels when she speaks in English, she disclosed that she felt nervous when she spoke and that she couldn't communicate very well. She doubted her English abilities and had very low confidence, and stated that she got uncomfortable when she didn't understand the language. Overall, she had relatively negative self-perceptions of her English identity when she started the program.

In the second interview, after several months in the program and having entered her second semester at the IEP, Participant Two offered the following response to a question about how she felt when she spoke English:

**Excerpt 55**

*P2: I think I feel better [...] because I, uhh, done overthinking, mhm.*

*SH: Mhm, good, so is are you more confident, you've said that are you more confident now with English?*

*P2: Uhh, yes, better than before, but need to practice more.*

The aforementioned dialogue illustrates the development of her English identity and how she feels more confident and at ease with the language. Additionally, Participant Two demonstrates a desire to continue developing her English identity by becoming more proficient in the language.

The self-perception of Participant Two's Thai identity for the most part remained neutral, and in both interviews, she disclosed that there was an ease and comfortability in using her native tongue. The following excerpt contains two statements where the participant addressed how she felt in Thai from both of the interviews:

#### **Excerpt 56**

P2: *Mmm, it's normal and feel very comfortable.*

P2: *Mhm, when I speak Thai I didn't think too much just speak.*

Although the two statements from the previous excerpt illustrate a comfortable and neutral self-perception of her Thai identity, there was also an acknowledgement of guilt that was elicited during the second interview. When asked to elaborate on when she used Thai and how it made her feel, she discussed how she would listen to Thai news during her free time when she was not working for the university or studying for class. It was during this conversation that she stated the following:

#### **Excerpt 57**

SH: *Okay, good, so do wait so you watch news from Thailand on YouTube?*

P2: *Yes...but I think it is was not good [...] I should practice my English.*

This statement acknowledges that although she felt comfortable and neutral in her Thai identity, that she also felt guilt for not utilizing English and allocating more time and energy into the development of her English skills. This statement could suggest that there is a negative self-perception of her Thai identity since she believes it comes at the cost of her English identity.

Overall, Participant Two also experienced a development in her self-perceptions of her two linguistic identities during her time studying abroad at the IEP.

Finally, Participant Three also experienced a development in his linguistic self-perceptions over the course of his study abroad experience at the IEP. Much like that of the other two participants, he had a relatively neutral self-perception of his Spanish and Portuguese identity. One difference in his emotions towards his Spanish identity is that he felt very good about his Spanish and the identity that came along with it. When asked to describe how he felt about his Spanish in the second interview, he responded as follows:

**Excerpt 58**

P3: *Ehh, very good [...] very good, very good, very good.*

SH: *Why do you feel very good?*

P3: *Because I love, I love talk [...] yes, I am uhh, I am very [...] talkative person.*

SH: *Yeah, very good, so it is a positive emotion when you speak Spanish?*

P3: *Yes, of course, yes, absolutely.*

This conversation demonstrated that Participant Three had a very strong and absolutely positive self-perception of his identity and the use of the language in his everyday life. Building off of this conversation, Participant Three was asked if his self-perception and feelings that he had in Spanish were the same as in Portuguese. To this referenced question, he offered the following:

**Excerpt 59**

SH: *And then Portuguese, is that a positive feeling?*

P3: *Is a positive, is a positive, not not like Spanish, but it's a positive, yes.*

SH: *How is it different from Spanish?*

*P3: Ehh because it's not my native language, you know? So, it's a little different, I feel more comfortable when I speak Spanish, but also, I have the same feeling in in Portuguese that ehh in English now. When I go to a meeting, and I have a good meeting that I ehh say everything that I want wanted to say before the meeting and I say relatively good then I feel very good [...] but then, also, sometimes happen that I after the meeting I feel not so good because I didn't say in the way that I wanted to say the things.*

Here Participant Three appears to relate the development and self-perception of his Portuguese identity to that of his English identity in the way that sometimes he is frustrated and has negative sentiments of not being able to negotiate meaning nor portray his thoughts in the way that he is able to in Spanish. His English identity appeared to have developed and manifested in an overall positive manner along with the development of the IEP experience to where he felt that he had more control over the language. In the second interview, Participant Three was asked how he felt about his English at that point in time during his study abroad experience and he stated the following:

**Excerpt 60**

*P3: [...] is always a challenge ehh to have to speak with more people in English. But, each day, I feel a little better about [...] about my English [...] and I am very proud because two years ago, I didn't speak ehh, ehmm, nothing, nothing.*

The aforementioned excerpt illustrates how the self-perceptions of his English identity developed and were applied in his everyday life. Although Participant Three was still wanting to develop his English and consequently continue negotiating his English identity, he was proud of his progress and felt more confident with his language abilities.

In conclusion, the experience of studying abroad at an IEP in the U.S. was observed to influence the development of the participant's motivations, imagined communities, and identities. Their motivations were influenced by means of their academic and professional aspirations, and their imagined communities were both refuted and realized alongside the reality of their established communities during their study abroad experience. In addition, their linguistic identities changed as they gained mastery of the English language and negotiated the representation of their linguistic profiles during their everyday lives. In the next chapter, these results will be related to previous research, and the pedagogical implications of the study, the limitations, and directions for future research will be offered.

## **Chapter 6 - General Discussion**

This study reveals how the experience of studying abroad at an IEP influenced the development of motivation, imagined communities, and identity of ELLs. The results of this study should be considered contextually, and while they are not generalizable, they can help inform and shape future instructional practices. Each participant involved with this study had a unique and personalized experience that can help instructors and program directors holistically understand the development of a student's study abroad experience.

### **Research Questions Regarding Learner Motivation**

At the beginning of this study, the principal investigator wanted to observe the influence of the experience of an IEP on first-year students' motivations and how they vary with respect to the student's gender and their English language proficiency level. Within the theoretical lens of Vygotsky's SCT and Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) interpretation of motivation being non-binary and gradual, this study affirmed the previously established role of motivation in the social context. Based on the semi-structured interviews, the observations, and the instructor

reflections, there was no noted influence of gender on the motivations of students. All three of the participants claimed that gender had no influence on their study experience in the program. Furthermore, they were all at a similar proficiency level at the IEP, which did not appear to influence the experience of the students during their time in the program. Instead, there was an observed influence of academic and professional aspirations on the motivation of these students. In addition, understanding more about how long the informants were willing to actively participate in the program and how hard they were going to pursue it was investigated. All three of the participants actively participated in the program and decided to continue their studies the following semester, overcoming obstacles in the process. Furthermore, all three points of triangulation (i.e., interviews, observations, reflections) demonstrated how the three students in their own ways were motivated individuals and were seriously willing to pursue their English studies.

Reflecting back on previous research conducted in the field on learner motivation for language learners, the results of this study are related to the results of the study conducted by Rosmayanti and Yanuarti (2018). The participants in their study also demonstrated to be motivated individuals in the way that they chose to continue in the IEP for the following semester and continue their English studies, expend effort on their studies, and their choices to pursue English outside of the class as deduced by the interviews, classroom observations, and instructors' reflections. Relating to the study conducted by Alshumaimeri (2013), the results of this study were not aligned with the anticipated results. None of the participants involved in this study claimed to be motivated by the instructor being a native speaker, but they were observed to be motivated students that had a willingness to learn. Furthermore, there was no documented

difference in proficiency level influencing the motivation of the participants which could be attributed to the fact that all of the participants were at a very similar proficiency level.

### **Research Questions Regarding Imagined Communities**

Concerning imagined communities, this study investigated what communities the participants desired to participate in while abroad. Within the theoretical confines of Vygotsky's SCT and Norton and Kanno's (2003) interpretation of imagined communities developing in the social context, this study reaffirmed the role of both the aligned and misaligned preconceptions on the study abroad experience. Additionally, this study contributed another prevalent point within imagined communities of the role of discovered communities for the students' experience. The participants in this study had desires to participate in society as legitimate English speakers and imagined that their English proficiency would improve due to the immersion. This was realized during their study experience. Furthermore, this study intended to investigate the extent to which these imagined communities aligned with the communities of practice in which they participated while abroad. For Participant One, they aligned with the community of practice by means of his social interactions in and out of the classroom as well as his pursuit to utilize English outside of the classroom. The communities of Participant Two were also aligned with the community of practice within the classroom at the IEP and with her study aspirations at the host university. Participant Three also had communities that aligned with his preconceptions of the study abroad experience due to the community in the classroom and in his work for graduate studies. The final inquiry coming into this study was investigating how the students imagined the community of English speakers in the U.S. Before participating in the IEP, Participant One did not imagine English speakers to be nice and pleasant. He was also surprised at how culturally different English speakers in the U.S. were in comparison to his home country of Kuwait. He

came to perceive English speakers as nice and kind, but less family-oriented than he had expected. Participants Two and Three were also surprised at how welcoming, nice, and pleasant English speakers in the U.S. were. Participant Two was also surprised at how Americans were more community-oriented as opposed to solitary individuals.

Building off of previous research in imagined communities, this study was aligned with the results of Trentman (2013) in the way that the participants experienced misalignments and alignments with their preconceived notions about the study abroad experience in the target language community. More specifically, opportunities within the classroom and outside of the academic contexts helped the students differentiate reality and refuted preconceived notions about their own positions as English speakers and members of society. In this study, the results did not relate to or mimic that of He et al. (2015). While the participants of this study did engage in academic and social contexts which proved to be an important part of their study abroad experience, these interactions did not serve as opportunities to gain aspirational and resistant capital to combat ethnic and racial discrimination.

### **Research Questions Regarding Language Identity Formation**

The development of language identity for the participants was a key element of the participants' study abroad experience at the IEP in America. In this study, the development of identity as a consequence of the social experience studying abroad as conceptualized by Norton (2010) and theoreticized within Vygotsky's SCT was affirmed as the development of the learners identity was negotiated as a result of the social interactions and environment. First, this study was concerned with what types of difficulties students experience while they study abroad at an IEP in the US in their attempts to immerse in the target language community and position themselves as English speakers. All three participants voiced their struggles in attempting to

position themselves as English speakers. They had both positive and negative developments in their target language identity, including shame, frustration, growth in confidence, and proud emotions. The longer they spent time in the program, the more their positive self-perceptions of being English speakers became prevalent. There was also an observed influence on the native language or languages in the program that developed over the course of this study. While some of the participants felt neutral or positive about their other linguistic profiles besides English, some of them also voiced concerns about feeling guilty about not using English more in their daily lives and that it was at the cost of using their native tongue too frequently. The principal investigator was also interested to discover what the ELLs' perceptions of the influence of the IEP on increasing their language and cultural knowledge over time were. All three of the participants had realized expectations of their English language development and they came to understand the dynamics and pleasantries more the longer that they were in the program.

Previous research in the development of identities for ELLs can be related to the current study, although the results were sometimes not aligned. Concerning the study conducted by Wei (2011), the results of this study are relatable due to the fact that the participants utilized their linguistic profiles depending on the context and speaker—they were able to negotiate their identities and find a space for each one of their linguistic profiles. Much like the relation to the study by Wei (2011), the results of the present investigation can also be positively related to the results of Giroir (2014). The participants were able to negotiate participation in different discourses practices that were subsequently influenced by the students' multilingual identities. Furthermore, as in the case of Participant Two and Participant Three specifically, the marginalization of their linguistic profiles and the need for English use to negotiate the majority of their discursive context prompted critical development in identity. The results of this study

were not aligned with that of Lee (2014) due to the fact that there was no discussion on part of the participants relating to the dichotomy of native versus non-native speakers of English for students negotiating identity at an IEP in America.

### **Chapter 7 - Conclusion**

In this presented study, the study abroad experiences of three ELLs at an IEP in the U.S. were examined and the subsequent influence on motivation, imagined communities, and identities. All three students were found to have motivation in the way that they actively participated in class and decided to continue their English studies for the following semester overcoming obstacles in the process. The semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and instructor reflections revealed that the participants were motivated to come and participate in study abroad at the IEP to manifest their academic and professional aspirations both here in the U.S. and in their respective home countries. Furthermore, the participants refuted previously established expectations, realized expectations, and confronted reality in relation to their preconceived notions of community during their study abroad experience. They had refuted expectations concerning society and social interactions in the U.S. alongside their realized expectations of their English language development and how studying abroad would be a transformative experience. The reality of their communities during study abroad related to their classroom communities and their communities outside of the classroom walls. The identities of the three participants developed and were influenced by the IEP experience by means of the use and context, the negotiation of their linguistic self-perceptions, and the role of identity negotiation in their linguistic profiles.

## **Pedagogical Implications**

This study serves to gain a better understanding of ELLs' experiences during a study abroad session at an IEP in relation to their motivations, imagined communities, and identities. In striving for more equitable pedagogies and further understanding the learner experience, English instructors can offer students opportunities to create meaningful connections with the target language both in and out of the classroom. The three participants involved in this study voiced a desire for engaging with the language in as many ways as possible, and an IEP or associated faculty can continue providing these opportunities for students if they so desire to participate. Furthermore, it could be beneficial to discuss some of the societal disconnects students may experience in moving from their home countries and learning to acclimate and find their place in society in the target context. Also, it can be beneficial for instructors to support learners in the classroom through the representation and implementation of all of their linguistic profiles, also known as translanguaging (Tian, 2020). This may help with the comprehensibility of content, and instructors should provide an opportunity for students to use their native language(s). This approach may help students overcome negative perceptions of their native languages due to the instructor's creation of a safe and inclusive environment that encourages the use of all of the students' linguistic profiles. Finally, programs should be patient and understanding of the journey of students studying abroad, as was the case of the program and instructors involved with this study.

Regarding supporting language acquisition for students, it is essential to understand that motivations can differ from student to student and that the representation of their linguistic profiles and the development of identity can be a unique and formative process for students during study abroad. In addition, students in an IEP may experience a disconnect between their

perceived reality of what life will be like in the target community which could influence their language learning experience. Instructors should also engage in Participatory Action Research which intends to “improve the quality of the lives of individuals who make up organizations, communities, and families” (Mertler, 2020). Participatory Action Research is a way that instructors or organizations such as IEPs can further understand the development of students’ motivations, imagined communities, and identities by means of collaboratively investigating best practices that meet learners’ needs where they are in your class.

### **Limitations**

One of the main limitations of this study was the number of student participants. Initially, the principal investigator had aimed for around 15 participants, which was not possible. Many factors attributed to the lack of participants available to survey for this study, including the COVID-19 pandemic’s toll on international travel and U.S. visa obtainment. Due to the small percentage of student enrollment at the IEP at this given university, there was less of an opportunity to reach data saturation. Alongside the low number of participants, another major limitation of this study was the lack of time and resources allotted for the development of the data collection.

Concerning the observations used for data collection, as argued by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), many researchers suggest that it is most effective to collect observational data for shorter than one-hour increments at a time, especially for novice researchers. For this study, in order to observe the students’ participation throughout an entire class session the researcher had to record field notes over the span of 80-minute class periods. Furthermore, due to the students’ various circumstances, many of the observational sessions had to be rescheduled. As the semester drew to a close, the researcher had to observe some classes back-to-back with only 20-minute breaks

between. This approach towards the observational data point proves to be a limitation of the study as it should have been in smaller increments with a greater amount of time between them.

In addition to the observations, the instructors' reflections also can be viewed as a limitation of this study due to the restricted responses. More specifically, while the instructors were given the opportunity to respond and elaborate on open-ended questions, richer data would have been obtained with verbal semi-structured interviews. Given the fact that the principal investigator transcribed all of the students' interviews, there was simply not enough time and or resources that would have allowed the transcription and coding of all the interviews in the allotted time before the completion of the principal investigator's graduate studies. Finally, it is important to consider that many mixed-methods and or collaborative qualitative studies implement interrater-reliability between two or more researchers involved in the study to provide strong validity of the coding approach, but in this study given the fact that the investigator was the only person immersed in the data, they were the only researcher who coded all of the data.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Looking forward to future research concerning the development and influence of motivation, imagined communities, and identities, researchers should conduct a longitudinal study over the course of several years to observe the development of these three foci. More specifically, it would be beneficial to see how the students experience matriculation into the university and how they continue to negotiate their communities and identities. This study served as a little fraction of the complexities that students experience during study abroad, and spending more time investigating their experiences could greatly contribute to the limited body of knowledge we have in the field of Applied Linguistics.

I also believe that the methods should be altered to provide better data saturation and some more validity in the results. For future research investigating learners' experiences in an IEP, an ethnographic case study should be utilized within the epistemological interpretive or constructivist perspective that is intended to describe, understand and interpret a given phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, researchers should conduct verbal semi-structured interviews with the instructors instead of written response forms to provide more information relating to the research questions. Other potential suggestions for future research are to investigate the development of the three foci in different pedagogical contexts across different isolated proficiency levels. Low-proficiency learners should also be included in the study and offered translation services to provide their answers in their native language.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### *IRB Approval Letter*

PROTOCOLS

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COLORADO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

The protocol listed below has been approved by the CSU IRB Determinations Fort Collins on Friday, October 7th 2022.

PI: Howard, Sarah Marie

Submission Type and ID: Initial 3740

Title: An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States

Approval Date: Friday, October 7th 2022

Continuing Review Date: Thursday, October 7th 2027

Expiration Date: Thursday, October 7th 2027

The CSU IRB (FWA0000647) has completed its review of protocol 3740 An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States. In accordance with federal and state requirements, and policies established by the CSU IRB, the committee has approved this protocol under Exempt review.

Any additional comments regarding this approval are included below. If you have additional questions about this please contact RICRO IRB Staff.

**Please note:**

- This protocol will need to undergo Continuing Review and approval prior to Thursday, October 7th 2027.
- Any additional changes to this approved protocol must be obtained prior to implementation of those changes, by submitting an amendment request to the CSU IRB for review/approval.

Good luck in your research endeavors!

The CSU IRB (FWA0000647) has completed its review of the above-referenced protocol. In accordance with federal and state requirements, and policies established by the CSU IRB, the committee has determined your project is exempt under 45CFR46.104(d)(1&2). Although exempt research is not covered by the federal regulations, this research is not exempt from ethical considerations, such as honoring the principles described in the Belmont Report.

Please note, any changes to your research plans should be submitted to IRB for review prior to implementation.

Thank you,

CSU\_IRB@colostate.edu

## Attachments

Methodology Section	Methodology Section.pdf	Thesis-Methodology Section
Recruitment Materials	Demographic Survey (1).pdf	Demographic Survey
Consent	Student Thesis Consent Form.pdf	Student Consent Form
Screening Tool or Procedure	Thesis-Interview One.pdf	Semi-Structured Interview One
Screening Tool or Procedure	Thesis-Interview Two.pdf	Semi-Structured Interview Two
Screening Tool or Procedure	Thesis-Open Ended Reflection Prompts.pdf	Open-Ended Voice Memo Prompts
Screening Tool or Procedure	Thesis-Observation Report.pdf	Instructor Observation Report
Consent	Thesis_Instructor Observation Consent (1).pdf	Instructor Observation Consent Form
Recruitment Materials	Oral Script for Student Participant Recruitment (2).pdf	Oral Script for Student Participant Recruitment
Recruitment Materials	Oral Script for Instructor Participant Recruitment.pdf	Oral Script for Instructor Participant Recruitment
Other	An Investigation on L2 Learners in an IEP (1).pdf	Completed Thesis Proposal
Recruitment Materials	Researcher Contact Information (1).pdf	Researcher Contact Information

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## Appendix B

### *Student Consent Form*

#### **Colorado State University Consent to Participate in Research**

#### ***An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States***

#### **Introduction and Purpose**

My name is Sarah Howard. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University working with my faculty advisor, Professor Nekrasova-Beker in the English Department at Colorado State University. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which looks at the relationship between learner motivation, imagined communities, and language identity in an Intensive English Program.

#### **Procedures**

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. We have the availability to conduct the interviews over video conference if you would prefer that method as well. The interview will involve questions about your experience studying abroad in an Intensive English Program. The questions will be open-ended and will ask you to reflect on your language learning experience. There will be two rounds of interviews, once at the beginning of the semester and once at the end of the semester or after winter break. Both interviews should last about 20 minutes each. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

#### **Benefits**

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. You will have the chance to reflect on your language learning experience. It is hoped that the research will help develop better teaching strategies for English Language Learners.

#### **Risks/Discomforts**

Some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to or stop the interview at any time.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

#### **Confidentiality**

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If the results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not

be used.

To minimize the risks to the confidentiality, I will tape the semi-structured interviews and the voice memos will be taped with a digital audio recorder, and the subsequent audio recordings will be labeled and dated in separate files for each participant. Additionally, fake names will be used for each of the informants to ensure confidentiality. No names of the instructors or participants will be recorded for this study. All of the data transcripts and recordings will be stored on a personal computer that is locked in a passcode. The only individuals that will have access to the data are myself, Dr. Tony Becker, and Dr. Tatiana Nekrasova-Beker. All of the data recordings will be destroyed in May of 2028.

We will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview and then destroy the tapes. When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain these records for up to 5 years after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect the confidentiality of this study data. We may be asked to share the research files with the sponsor or the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to CSU officials for financial audits.

### **Compensation**

To thank you for participating in this study, you will receive a pizza party at the end of the semester after the conclusion of this study,

### **Rights**

*Participation in research is completely voluntary.* You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at [303-775-3177] or [sarahhoward2094@gmail.com].

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1381, or e-mail [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu).

### **CONSENT**

Do you consent for your interview to be audiotaped?

Yes

No

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of

this consent form to keep for your own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name (*please print*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### *Student Participant Recruitment Script*

Hello, my name is Ying, and I am the Program Coordinator at PLACE. I am here because one of our Graduate Teaching Assistants Sarah Howard is doing a research study on Second Language Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States. The purpose of this study is to better understand the student's experiences during study abroad, and how this experience affects their language learning. The title of her project is "An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States." Sarah Howard is the principal investigator, and her thesis advisors Dr. Tatiana Nekrasova-Beker and Dr. Tony Becker are assisting with the study as well.

We would like you to do two interviews with Sarah Howard this semester to answer questions about your experience studying abroad here in the United States, and your experience with English language learning. Additionally, we would like you to submit a response in the form of a voice diary with voice memos submissions every other week sent to Sarah Howard. This voice diary collection will be created by your responses to a prompt sent to you from Sarah Howard reflecting on your experience studying abroad here at the Intensive English Program. The final point of data collection will be classroom observations. We would also like to have Sarah Howard observe your Grammar, Reading and Writing, and Listening and Speaking courses and collect field notes about your class participation. For this study, the two main interviews will take approximately two hours total, one hour for each interview. The reflections sent by a voice memo will take about 15 minutes every other week for the rest of the semester. The observations will take place during your class time and will not require an additional time commitment.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. Sarah will be collecting demographic information, meaning your name, your age, where you are from, and your gender. When she reports and shares the data with others, she will combine the data from all participants. There are no known risks or direct benefits to you, but we hope to gain more

knowledge from your experience studying here at PLACE, and you will have to opportunity to practice your English and share your story. You will be given compensation at the end of the study in the form of a pizza party with non-alcoholic drinks with the other participants at the end of the semester. Additionally, you can add this experience to your resume in the way that you participated in a research study about language learning.

If you are a new student to PLACE and are over 18 years of age and would like to participate, please message the primary investigator Sarah Howard at [sarah.howard@colostate.edu](mailto:sarah.howard@colostate.edu) or (303) 775-3177. Furthermore, if you have any questions, please contact Sarah Howard and she would be happy to talk with you.

## **Appendix D**

### *Instructor Consent Form*

Study Title: An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States

Principal Investigator: Sarah Howard

### **ADULT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT**

#### **Department of English**

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#### **Formal Study Title:**

An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sarah Howard, M.A. in TEFL/TESL, Graduate Student**

#### **WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

For questions or concerns about the study, you may contact **Sarah Howard** at **303-775-3177**. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at: [RICRO\\_IRB@mail.colostate.edu](mailto:RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu); 970-491-1553.

#### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the longitudinal relationship of English Language Learners' motivation, imagined communities, and language identity over the course of a semester during study abroad in an Intensive English Program.

#### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?**

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit these criteria: you are one of the instructors for the students involved in this study.

### **WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

Your time commitment to this study will be about 15 minutes for each student, totaling around 45-minutes once a month for 4-months. The total amount of time is 180 minutes over the course of the semester. This observation reflection will take place in Spruce on campus at Colorado State University.

### **WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

- Submit a monthly written semi-structured interview reflection on the student(s) participation and overall willingness to contribute in class.
- Provide a general overview of classroom submission assignments.
- Entries may include the students' attendance, their use of English in the class versus their native language(s), and or their social interactions with other students or the faculty at the Intensive English Program.
- Provide more general observations about the students' interactions in the class and within the building walls.

### **ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn more about the experience of English Language Learners during study abroad and how institutions and instructors can better assist the language acquisition process at an Intensive English Program.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**

There are no known risks included with this study. While the level of risk is minimal, you may become uncomfortable with some questions related to your students' interactions in the classroom.

### **WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You will/will not be compensated for participating in this research.

### **WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?**

All information gathered in this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Your privacy is very important to us and the researchers will take every measure to protect it. Your information may be given out if required by law; however, the researchers will do their best to make sure that any information that is released will not identify you. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. For this study, we will assign a code to your data so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your code. Only the research team will have access to the link between you, your code, and your data. All records will be stored in a restricted access folder in

a locked drawer in my private residence at CSU for three years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be destroyed. We may be asked to share the research files with the sponsor or the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes.

*Mandatory Report*

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court OR *to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.*

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with CSU. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**Participant Consent:**

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and voluntarily wish to participate in this research. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 3 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person providing information to participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Staff

**Appendix E**

*Demographic Survey*

1. Where are you from?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your gender?

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3. How old are you?

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4. What is your native language?

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5. How many languages do you speak?

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6. How long have you been studying English?

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7. Is this your first time studying in America?

Yes

If no, please explain.

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8. Is this your first time in an Intensive English Program?

Yes

If no, please explain.

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9. How long have you been in the United States?

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10. Why did you decide to come to Colorado State University?

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11. Evaluate your English language skills on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being fluent and 1 being a beginner level with no previous English experience.

Listening (1-10) \_\_\_\_\_

Speaking (1-10) \_\_\_\_\_

Writing (1-10) \_\_\_\_\_

Reading (1-10) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix F**

### *Instructor Participant Recruitment Script*

Hello, my name is Sarah Howard and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the English Graduate department. I am conducting a research study on Second Language Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States. The purpose of this study is to better understand the student's experiences during study abroad, and how this experience affects their language learning. The title of my project is "An Investigation on L2 Learners' Motivation, Imagined Communities, and Identities in an Intensive English Program in the United States." Sarah Howard is the principal investigator, and her thesis advisors Dr. Tatiana Nekrasova-Beker and Dr. Tony Becker are assisting with the study as well.

We would like you to submit a monthly reflection on the student(s) participation and overall willingness to contribute in class. This will be a written semi-structured interview observation sheet provided to you by the primary researcher Sarah Howard. In this form, you will be asked to provide a general overview of the informants' classroom submission assignments. Furthermore, the entries may include their attendance, their use of English in the class versus their native language(s), and or their social interactions with other students or the faculty at the Intensive English Program. You will also be invited to provide more general observations about the students' interactions in the class and within the building walls. The observations provided by the instructors will serve as an outsider's perspective on the informants' learning experiences in the Intensive English Program. These observations will also be filed separately and under pseudonyms to ensure instructor anonymity. These observation reports are anticipated to take no more than one hour once a month until the end of the semester in December.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty. There are no known risks to you. Some of the benefits of this study are that we hope to gain more knowledge from the student's experience studying here at PLACE. Additionally, you will be awarded professional development hours that can go towards the organization as assured by the program director.

If you are a Level-2 or Level-3 PLACE instructor and would like to participate, please put your name and email address on the contact information sheet that I will now pass around. If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Howard at [sarah.howard@colostate.edu](mailto:sarah.howard@colostate.edu) or (303) 775-3177 and I would be happy to talk with you.

## **Appendix G**

### *Semi-Structured Student Interview One*

1) Please describe your experience moving to the United States and participating in this Intensive English Program (IEP).

2) What motivated you to study abroad in an IEP in the United States?

- Why did you choose to study abroad in the United States? Explain.
- Have you considered other institutions?
- How did you make the decision to come to this university?
- Who helped you decide to attend university in the US?
- Was it an option to learn English in your home country?
  - If yes, why did you come to study at the IEP here in the US?

3) Is learning English at an IEP in the US important to you?

- If yes, why?
- If not, please explain. Why are you still participating in the program?

4) Why are you learning English?

- Why did you choose to study in an IEP?
- What are your goals as a result of getting this education?
- What will you do with your English learning skills?

- Do you plan on continuing to university after completing the Intensive English Program?  
What are you hoping to do after the IEP? What are you hoping to do with the English language in the future?

5) What is your experience as a male/female in learning English?

- Please tell me about an important memory of you learning English that motivated you to continue your language studies.
  - Why is this memory important?
- Is it easier or more difficult to study English in the US as a male/female?
- Is the experience learning English at an IEP different as a male/female than in your home country? Why or why not?

6) What expectations do you have for this IEP experience in the United States? (In terms of friends, social interactions, home life, etc.)

- What experiences are you hoping to have in the United States?
- What do you want to happen in your life during this IEP in America?

7) How do you imagine English speakers in the United States?

- How do you see English speakers in America?
  - What are they like?
  - How do they behave?
  - What do they do?
  - Are they what you expected or didn't expect them to be like? Why?

8) Why did you imagine English speakers in America that way?

- What type of community do you wish to participate in during this program? Why?  
(Sports, group organizations, work life, school life)

- What activities do you wish to do in this program? Is it any different than the types of activities you would do in your home country? Why?
- What do you want to do during your time in America? Did you do anything different or unique here in the United States?

9) How often do you think you will use English during your time in the program? How often do you think you will use your native language(s) in the program? Why?

- How do you feel about the amount of time you speak in English? Why?
- How do you feel about the amount of time you speak in Spanish? Why?
- When do you speak your native language? When do you speak English?

10) How do you feel when you speak English? How do you see yourself when you speak English?

- Do you feel different when you speak English? Please explain.
- How do you feel when you speak in your native language?
- How do you see yourself when you speak your native language?
- Do you feel different when you speak your native language? Please explain.

## **Appendix H**

### *Semi-Structured Student Interview Two*

- 1) What are your goals as a result of getting this education? What will you do with your English learning skills?
  - Do you plan on going to university after completing the Intensive English Program? What job do you want to have in the future?
- 2) What influence does money have on your study experience?
- 3) What lifestyle do you need to have to succeed in your English studies?

- 4) Will you continue your English studies? Why or why not?
  - If no, what would need to happen for you to continue studying English?
- 5) What would you like to see added to the Intensive English Program (IEP) to help you learn English? Why?
- 6) Was there anything that made it difficult for you to learn English at the IEP last semester?
  - If yes, how so?
- 7) Is attendance important for learning English? Why or why not?
- 8) Was the past semester what you expected? Please explain and provide examples that support your answer.
  - Were your expectations met for this IEP experience in the United States?
- 9) What communities did you participate in here in America?
  - What activities have you done at the IEP? What do you do in your free time?
- 10) Have you made new friends here at the IEP? Was that an important part of your experience here at the IEP? Why or why not?
- 11) What is the importance of friends or community to you during the study abroad experience? Do you feel like it influences your studies? Why or why not?
- 12) How would you describe English speakers in the U.S. to a friend back home?
  - Did your idea of English speakers in the U.S. change the past semester? Please explain.
- 13) How often did you use English? How often did you use your native language(s)? Why?
  - When do you speak your native language? When do you speak English?
- 14) How do you feel when you speak English? How do you see yourself when you speak English?

- Do you feel different when you speak English? Please explain.

15) How do you feel when you speak in your native language? How do you see yourself when you speak your native language?

- Do you feel different when you speak your native language? Please explain.

## Appendix I

### *Instructor Reflection Report*

This form is intended for the researcher to gain another perspective on the student's involvement in the Intensive English Program in which you teach. Please complete one report per student. Additionally, please feel free to use supplemental paper if you wish to elaborate more on your responses.

1. Please reflect on the student's involvement (work, participation, engagement) in your class.
  - a. To what extent does the student keep up with the course load? Please provide examples and explain. (EG: Homework, in-class assignments, assessments, etc.)

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  - b. Does the student have consistent attendance? Please include any comments about attendance that you find relevant.

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  - c. Evaluate this student's participation in classroom discussions and projects. Please include any comments about their participation that you find relevant.

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2. Please reflect on the student's language use in your class.

- a. To what extent does the student use their native language or their target language in class? Please include any comments about their language use that you find relevant.
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3. Please comment on the student's interactions in your class and within the building walls.
- a. Does the student participate in any extra-curricular activities with the program (to the best of your knowledge)? Please include any comments about their interactions that you find relevant.
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- b. Does the student attend any social events associated with the program (to the best of your knowledge)? Please include any comments about their interactions that you find relevant.
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- c. Please describe the student's social interactions (EG: the purpose of the interactions, willingness to interact, frequency, ease of interaction, etc. ) with both the faculty and their classmates (to the best of your knowledge).
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4. Is there anything else you would like to add to your observation report about the student?
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## **Appendix J**

### **Figure A1**

#### *Coding Parameters*

