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# The effects of globalization on English language learning: Perspectives from Senegal and the United States

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The Effects of Globalization on English Language Learning:

Perspectives from Senegal and the United States

Anna Poggensee

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### Abstract

This study is an analytical comparison among perspectives about English as a nonnative language and its function in Senegal, West Africa and the U.S. Midwest. The purpose of this study is to establish a better understanding of the effects of globalization in both countries by focusing on the increasing use of the English language (Crystal, 2003) and how it is used within diverse societies. Globalization can be defined as “the interconnections of global economic, political, cultural and environmental processes that continually transform present conditions” (Steger, 2003, p.7-8). Within the context of globalization, this topic allows for a broader understanding of the attitudes regarding the English language and its function not only in the United States, but also in another continent. Using the ethnomethodology theoretical framework, the researcher conducted a literature review, observations, and ethnographic interviews in order to answer the following research questions: (1): How has globalization affected the perceptions of the process of English language learning in Senegal and the U.S. Midwest? (2) What are the perceived functions of English as a nonnative language relating to accessibility of education? The data collected from the current study were analyzed and it was concluded that English is used as an instrument to communicate across the globalized world, and that knowledge of English provides individuals with additional educational opportunities.

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Additionally I would like to thank University of Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) and Western Michigan University (WMU) for allowing me to have access to participants for this study. Specifically, the English department at UCAD and the Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELCIS) program at WMU were the two programs that allowed this study to occur.

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## Introduction

Today, globalization has had and will continue to have effects on many aspects of society, including language (Steger, 2003). Globalization can be defined as “the interconnections of global economic, political, cultural and environmental processes that continually transform present conditions” (Steger, 2013, p.7-8). One major consequence of globalization is the increased spread and interconnectedness of languages, in particular the English language (Crystal, 2000). It is known that the English language is becoming increasingly widespread across the globe. Furthermore, it has been estimated that “only one fourth of all English users worldwide are native speakers, and most non-native speakers using English do so in the absence of native speakers” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 1). Evidently, there is a large population of nonnative English speakers throughout the entire world; however, this study focuses on comparing English language learners in Senegal, West Africa and the United States Midwest.

This study examines the consequences of globalization on the English language, specifically in Senegal, West Africa and the United States Midwest. Given that English as a second language, or as a foreign language, has become relevant in both countries, the study aims to provide insight to the current situation regarding perspectives about the English language and its impact on other languages and cultures. The results of this study will add qualitative data to the discussion of this topic and provide additional questions to examine.

Throughout this paper, the following key terms will be used: globalization, globalization of languages, English language learner, English as a foreign language (EFL) student, and world language. As noted by Hyter (2014), globalization is usually described as the “increased and intensified interdependencies across national borders” (p. 103). In this paper, *globalization* has been defined by Steger in the first paragraph. This definition was chosen because it describes

globalization as a process of interconnectedness (Steger, 2003), which aligns with the research questions in the sense that this study looks at how changes in language usage occur within an interconnected world. The term *globalization of languages* is also defined by Steger (2003) as “the process of the spread of some languages that are used as international languages, and the disappearance of other languages that lack speakers” (p. 82). Other reasons for the disappearance of languages will be discussed later in the literature review. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2008) define *English language learner* as “an active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term is used mainly in the U.S. to describe K–12 students” (NCTE, 2008). Additionally, NCTE defines *English as a foreign language (EFL) students* as “nonnative-English-speaking students who are learning English in a country where English is not the primary language” (NCTE, 2008). Lastly, *world language* is described by Ammon (2010) as a language that serves as a means for international communication. The preceding definitions were deliberately chosen in order to align with the research questions of the study.

### **Methodology**

In this study, the ethnomethodology theoretical framework was used to guide the research methods. Ethnomethodology, a social theory, is characterized by determining individual or group perspectives and meaning in order to make sense of a social situation (Westby, Burda, & Mehta, 2003). Proponents of ethnomethodology believe that the experiences of members of society are open to scientific analysis and interpretation (Garfinkel, 1967). The major components of the ethnomethodology framework that are incorporated in this study are observations in a naturalistic environment and ethnographic interviews (Sangasubanam, 2013). In this comparative study, two research questions were examined by analyzing information from two countries, Senegal and the

United States. The first research question is how has globalization affected the perceptions of the process of English language learning in Senegal and the U.S. Midwest? The second question is what are the perceived functions of English as a nonnative language relating to accessibility of education?

Several methods were used to answer these research questions. A literature review was employed and focused on literature regarding language use and function, public policies in Senegal, and the theory of ethnomethodology and globalization in general. Then ethnographic interviews were conducted at universities with English language learning students and faculty within relevant departments to determine perspectives of English use in Senegal, West Africa and the U.S. Midwest. In addition to the information gathered from the interviews, I conducted field observations in both countries and finally expanded on the literature review to analyze and verify the conclusions drawn from the interviews, observations, and literature review. The steps of this study are outlined by Sangasubanam (2011) in order to align with the ethnomethodology framework.

### **Literature Review**

The first step of this study began with an initial literature review in order to gather information about existing research in the interested field. Scholarly databases through Western Michigan University's research library were used, including ProQuest Research Library, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), ERIC, and Google Scholar. The following key phrases were used in combination to narrow the literature within the databases: *language policy, English, nonnative language, ESL, Senegal, United States, globalization, world language, world English, education, English language learning, lingua franca, language endangerment, and beliefs about language learning.* Additional information on public policies



regarding national language and education was gathered through websites such as United Nations and UNESCO. The information collected from the literature review was used to make conclusions about language use in Senegal and the U.S. within the context of globalization. The conclusions led to further questions and guided the development of the interview questions.

### **Observations in Senegal and the United States**

The next step of the study was participation in a three-week study abroad program in Dakar, Senegal through Western Michigan University called “Cultural Connections in Senegal: Causes of Globalization and Consequences on Systems”. During the three weeks in Senegal, I spent time at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) taking classes with other students from the United States as well as students from Senegal. The majority of the students were learning English as a foreign language, making observations in the classroom and outside of the classroom relevant to the current study. I observed language usage of the Senegalese students, and recorded field notes describing which languages were used in varying social contexts in order to gain more insight to the function of English use in Dakar, Senegal. In the field notes, observations were made about conversation partner(s), the students’ language usage, and conversation topic as seen in Table 3. Such contexts included student interactions within the classroom, between classes, at the university café, and outside of the university at community events such as shows or markets.

Similar observations were made upon returning to the United States. At Western Michigan University, there is a large population of international students attending the university who speak English as a second or additional language. Again, observations were made about the students’ language use around campus and in different social contexts, such as within the classroom, time between classes, the university café, and outside of the university at community

events such as restaurants and sporting events. These observations are found in Table 3 and were used to make generalizations about the function of English in an educational setting.

### **Ethnographic Interviews**

Ethnographic interviews were conducted in both countries in order to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions about language use and to help answer the research questions. An ethnographic interview is a research tool that allows interviewers to acquire knowledge about an individual's perspective on a certain social topic (Westby et al., 2003). Ethnographic interviews differ from traditional interviews because in ethnographic interviews, the interviewee, rather than the interviewer, guides the interview and ultimately decides the most important ideas of the conversation based on their past experiences. Key aspects of ethnographic interviewing include: asking open ended questions, summarizing what the interviewee said to clarify information, and using recurring themes mentioned by the interviewee to ask follow-up questions (Westby et al., 2003). The components of ethnographic interviewing make this method of data collection the most valuable in gathering information to answer the research questions.

Initially, several broad interview themes which corresponded to themes emerging from the preliminary literature review were asked to obtain qualitative data about the interviewee's perspective regarding English as a nonnative language and how it has impacted their education. Questions such as "Describe your process of learning English" were asked to begin the conversation about their experience. Furthermore, when the interviewee shared details that revealed significance, I asked for elaboration on that topic in order to make sense of their perception on the topic. More details about the interviews and participants can be found in Table 1. The ethnographic interviews served to provide additional information that verify the conclusions drawn from the literature review and observations.

Interviewee	Senegal, West Africa	United States Midwest	Initial Interview Themes
University level students who speak English as nonnative language (6 students total)	University of Cheikh Anta Diop (3 students)	The Center for English Language and Culture for International Students at Western Michigan University (3 students)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe your process of learning English.</li> <li>2. What role does English play in the education system?</li> <li>3. Talk about the functions of English use in your life.</li> <li>4. How has learning English affected your primary language/culture?</li> <li>5. Tell me about your future goals regarding the English language?</li> </ol>
Faculty 1: Professor in English/ESL department	Professor in English department at University of Cheikh Anta Diop	Professor in ESL teaching program at Western Michigan University	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about your role in the department.</li> <li>2. Discuss some of the goals for the department regarding English.</li> </ol>
Faculty 2: Faculty familiar with multilingual students	Language professor at University of Cheikh Anta Diop	Faculty at El Sol Bilingual Elementary School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What are the benefits and consequences of students learning English?</li> <li>4. How has globalization influenced English use in the education system in the past 10 years?</li> </ol>

### Participants

Participants for the ethnographic interviews were selected based on the language experience and background knowledge that is relevant to the study. Three students were interviewed at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop who speak English as a foreign language in order to gain a student perspective about their language use and its function. I also interviewed two faculty members at that university who speak English as a foreign language and who have knowledge regarding the English department at the university. Upon returning to the United

States, I compiled equivalent information in the Midwest. Three university students enrolled in the Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELSIS) program and two faculty members familiar with ESL programs were interviewed about their perspectives regarding English as a second language for students in the U.S. In order to keep all participant information confidential, participant identifiers were used to refer to specific participants throughout the paper. Table 2, below, shows how the participants will be identified throughout the paper.

<i>Participant codes used throughout paper</i>		
Participant	Code used in paper	Language background
Senegal Student #1	SS1	First languages are Wolof and French, started learning English in 7 <sup>th</sup> grade
Senegal Student #2	SS2	First languages are Wolof and French, started learning English in 7 <sup>th</sup> grade
Senegal Student #3	SS3	First languages are Wolof and French, started learning English in 7 <sup>th</sup> grade
Senegal Faculty #1	SF1	Teaches in English department at UCAD
Senegal Faculty #2	SF2	Teaches many languages to university students and adults
United States Student #1	US1	Originally from Spain, first language is Spanish, started learning English in 6 <sup>th</sup> grade
United States Student #2	US2	Originally from India, started learning English in Kindergarten
United States Student #3	US3	Originally from Dominican Republic, first language is Spanish, started learning English in Kindergarten
United States Faculty #1	UF1	Developed ESL teaching graduate program at Western Michigan University
United States Faculty #2	UF2	Taught at a bilingual elementary school

### **Analysis and verification**

In ethnomethodology, data analysis involves coding the materials for common descriptive labels (Sangasubanam, 2011). Several basic categories were established which served as themes for coding the data gathered from the ethnographic interviews and observations. First level coding narrowed the information from the interviews and observations into the following categories: educational, social, vocational, and cultural influences on language use. Further sorting of material allowed the researcher to determine themes and connections that exist within the data (Sangasubanam, 2011). These common themes were used to develop interpretations and conclusions relating to the initial research questions; the themes additionally provided information about outliers found in the data that did not correspond with the rest of the information (Sangasubanam, 2011). The data analysis was verified through triangulation of sources with peer researchers who also participated in the study abroad program (Sangasubanam, 2011). Finally, the findings were verified with archival research and conclusions drawn from the literature.

### **Results**

The results of the study were assembled from the literature review, observations, and ethnographic interviews using the methodology described above. The data from the observations were organized in a chart and comparisons were made between the observations of each country and raw data from the interviews are located in Appendix A. Common themes from both the interviews and literature were pulled in order to organize the data into categories. Further discussion of the results and answers to the research questions are examined in the Discussion section.

## **Literature Review**

The literature for this study was conducted in order to gather more information regarding globalization and its impact on languages, particularly the English language. The results of the literature review were used as a piece of data to compare with the findings identified in the observations and ethnographic interviews. The literature review is divided into the following categories: globalization and language spread, language and education in Senegal, and functions of global English. The results from the literature review were used to acquire background information about globalization and language policies in Senegal and the United States. This information was then used to compare with the perceived impact of globalization on English identified from the observations and ethnographic interviews.

### *Globalization and language spread*

Globalization will be discussed throughout this paper in several contexts in order to address the first research question: how has globalization affected perceptions of the use of English as a nonnative language in Senegal and the United States Midwest? As Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) point out, English is the language predominantly used in the United States, United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other large organizations and businesses and for this reason English is considered to be a world language by most of the world. Furthermore, Phillipson (2008) adds that “global English” is an appropriate term because English is widely accepted in the global linguistic market and the goal of English is “becoming the default language of international communication and the dominant language of international communication in an increasing number of countries worldwide” (p. 4). On the other hand, Ammon (2010) uses the terms “international language” or “world language” to describe the English language because of its function as a language of international communication. He

believes that “the more international the language or the higher its international standing and the more justified its claim to the status of a world language” (Ammon, 2010, p. 11). When comparing the different terms, ‘world language’ appears to be the most appropriate term to describe the English language in this study because the definition emphasizes describing the spread of English as a result of globalization.

As globalization has increased the spread of world languages like English, another consequence is that many other languages are becoming endangered and ultimately extinct. Nettle and Romaine (2000) claim that nearly half of the existing 5,000-6,000 languages will be extinct in the next 100 years. They argued that languages become endangered as a response to different pressures acting on a community, including social, cultural, economic, and military demands. The extinction occurs when the endangered language is replaced by another language and takes over its functions in the community (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Similarly, Crystal believes that global *lingua francas* put pressures on minority languages, resulting in language death or extinction (Crystal, 2000). Clearly, one consequence of the globalization of the English language is an increased amount of endangered languages throughout the world.

Reasons for why and how languages disappear can be categorized into three groups: population loss, forced language shift, and voluntary language shift (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Language shift is defined by Crystal (2000) as “the conventional term for the gradual or sudden move from the use of one language to another” (p.20). Forced shift is described for when a dominant group has control over a minority group and requires a specific language to be used, while voluntary shift is when a community of speakers decides to use a language other than their original one, for the good of the community (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Ammon (2010) notes that English has negatively impacted other global languages including French, Spanish, German,

and Japanese. For example, international scientific research were published in French and German just as frequently as English publications, but it is now much less likely to find research articles and presentations in languages other than English (Ammon, 2010). In this situation, speakers of French and German may have a desire to learn English in order to have access to current research publications, which would be categorized as a voluntary language shift.

When a dominant culture begins to replace another one's language, behaviors and more, the term used by Crystal is cultural assimilation. According to Crystal (2000), there are three stages of cultural assimilation beginning with large amounts of pressure on the people to speak the dominant language. Then bilingualism emerges as people are beginning to learn the new language while still using their original language. Lastly, the language dies when younger generations become proficient in the language, identify with it and believe that it is more useful than their old language (Crystal, 2000). The spread of the English language as a result of globalization may be a reason for language shift in some areas. In many cases English words are mixed into a language and gradually reducing the pureness of a language and in turn the original language becomes less desirable for speakers, and gradually the language becomes less useful in the community (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). On the other hand, the other languages are also affecting English because of this 'mixture' of languages (Crystal, 2000). It is nearly impossible to predict the future of English variations because of the abundant pidgin, creole, and varieties of the language that are used all around the world (Crystal, 2000). It is clear the globalization of languages is accurately described by interconnected components as seen in this example of interacting languages affecting one another.



*Language and Education in Senegal*

According to the most recent report in Ethnologue, Senegal is known to have great linguistic diversity throughout the country (Paul, Simons, & Fennig, 2016). The report confirms that there are 38 total languages in Senegal, 31 indigenous and 7 nonindigenous languages (Paul, Simons, & Fennig, 2016). The official language of Senegal is French, but there are 24 local languages and six other national languages that exist including: Wolof, Pulaar, Seereer, Joola, Mandinka, and Soonike. (USAID, 2015). In the education system, French is used in the majority of the classrooms since it is the official language in Senegal. More recently, however, there has been a movement to incorporate bilingual or multilingual instruction in the education system by including national languages (USAID, 2015). The English language is also highly valued in Senegal. According to Diallo (2011), about 86% of Senegalese people believe the education system should place more attention on learning English and the desire to learn English is very high.

There has been controversy in African education regarding incorporating English into the classroom instead of using native languages of Africa (Mazrui, 1997). The functionalist response suggests that English instruction is a logical choice “because of its global status, because of its wealth of publications, because of its ‘affinity’ with the inherited school system” (Mazrui, 1997). Supporters argue that learning English from a young age will enhance learning in all other subjects (Mazrui, 1997). On the other hand, nationalists and UNESCO believe that native languages should be used in education to enhance cognitive abilities early on and that instruction in the native language may support later language development (Mazrui, 1997). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund take the nationalist’s side and support education in the native language of the country (Mazrui, 1997). Brock-Utne and Hopson (2005)

discuss educational language issues in postcolonial Africa and defend that schools where multilingualism is prevalent ought to focus on promoting the maintenance of the mother tongue in addition to developing additional languages that are relevant in society in order to increase the functionality of the education. Hence, there is still controversy about language of instruction in many African education institutes and in other countries.

Due to the linguistic diversity within the country, Senegal is impacted by the globalization of languages and several national languages are at risk of becoming endangered in the future (UNESCO Endangered languages, n.d.). According to the report on Ethnologue, there are eight languages in Senegal that are at risk of being placed on the endangered languages list, and there are two languages that are currently endangered, including the following languages: Badyara, Bainouk-Gunyaamolo, Bainouk-Samik, Ejamat, Kobiana, Mlomp, Palor, Wamey, and Xasonga (Paul, Simons, & Fennig, 2016). The risk of losing languages has a negative effect on the perseverance of historical and cultural information (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). The impact on language deterioration in Senegal has varying effects on different communities. Sallabank (2013) states that language is part of one's cultural identity, and when the language becomes endangered, a part of their identity is lost. Crystal (2000) agrees that language is a component of personal identity and identity creates unity among community members. Additionally, each and every language provides us with historical information through its words; it contains stories about the first speakers of the language and the evolution of the language (Crystal, 2000). Consequently, as languages begin to disappear, pieces of history will also disappear if there is no translation.

The existing literature provides numerous sources relating to the effects of globalization on language spread and how English has transformed into a global language. Moreover, there are

publications that indicate that the globalization of languages, mainly English, has resulted in many endangered languages (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). There is not much research comparing the perspectives of university students learning English in West Africa to the perspectives of students learning English in the United States. Relating to research question one, this study focuses on expanding on the current literature regarding the perceptions of globalization affecting the spread of English as a nonnative language around the world. Specifically, to answer the first research question, information is gathered from observations and interviews in Senegal and the U.S. to gain qualitative data on perspectives of English as a global language. This information is essential in gaining a better understanding of how the globalization of language affects different areas of the world and how people perceive what is happening.

#### *Functions of World English*

The second research question relates to existing research about the principal functions of English for nonnative speakers within the context of education. One explanation of the spread of English is described by Mufwene (2015) as a product of globalization, or essentially the ‘Americanization’, or ‘McDonaldization’ of the rest of the world. He explains that “global English” is simply a product of the Americanization. As seen earlier in the literature review, language endangerment is undoubtedly a consequence of the spread of English (Nettle & Romaine 2000; Crystal 2000; Mufwene 2015). As English continues to spread throughout the world, there is a greater chance that other languages will become extinct because of English dominance (Mufwene, 2015). Many do consider English as a ‘killer language’ because of the increased numbers of extinct languages as a consequence of the spread of English; however, Mufwene (2010) argues that this is a mischaracterization of the English language. Through his research, he has concluded that although English has spread in many areas, especially big cities,

there will always be cultural diversity because English becomes embedded in local cultures and is influenced by the original languages (Mufwene, 2010). Rather than a “killer language”, Mufwene and other linguists view English as a communicative tool that allows individuals to access education, employment, and other services. Focusing on education, Mufwene (2015) points out that due to the role that the United States and England play as leaders in science and technology, English is more desirable to ministries of education all around the world.

According to the other linguists who oppose this view, English acts as an oppressor to other languages and does not positively affect other cultures. Phillipson (2008) argues that the English language is not just a tool used for communication, but is also part of the social identity embedded within communities. The argument is that language is unavoidably a component of social identity and it does not serve only for communication purposes. That being said, Phillipson (2008) says that U.S. expansionism is continuing through a linguistic manner as English is spreading throughout the world. He advocates for linguistic human rights by stating that linguistic diversity should be maintained through policy, and attempts should be made to counteract the endangerment of minority languages (Phillipson, 2008). In the context of Africa, another scholar, Mazrui, agrees with Phillipson that English is acting in an imperialistic and dominating manner (Mazrui, 2004). The globalization of English has resulted in the marginalization of African people and the erosion of African languages and cultures (Mazrui, 2004). From this perspective, English as a result of globalization has negatively impacted other minority languages and cultures, including ones in Africa.

The existing literature regarding the function of English provides two principle sides of the argument. One states that English is used as an instrument for communication and is useful to gain access to services such as education and employment (Mufwene, 2015). The second

argument opposes this by saying that English is acting as an oppressor and is detrimental to other languages and cultures (Phillipson 2008; Mazrui 2004). At this point, there is no evidence proving that either explanation is more correct than the other in regards to how English is affecting other cultures. This study, however, in relation to research question two examines the perceived functions that English has for nonnative speakers in Senegal and the United States. The purpose is to compare the results in order to determine if any generalizations can be made about how global English affects those in an Anglophone country versus a Francophone country. The results of this study will help determine if the English language is viewed as a positive influence, particularly in gaining access to educational services.

### Observations

Observations were made in both Senegal and the United States relating to language usage in varying social contexts. The study abroad program in Dakar, Senegal required involvement at the local university, University of Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), which allowed for observations in a university setting. In the United States at Western Michigan University, observations were made of international students learning English as a second language. These observations were made to identify the perceived functions of English language as a nonnative language relating to accessibility of education. Below, Table 3 shows the observations that were recorded in the field notes.

Table 3		
<i>Observations of language use</i>		
<b>Social context</b>	<b>Dakar, Senegal</b>	<b>United States Midwest</b>
In the classroom	Students spoke English to participate in class, ask questions, and discuss among classmates.	Students spoke English to participate in class, ask questions, and discuss among classmates.

Between classes in the hallway	Students mainly spoke in Wolof or French. Some English was used with professors or native English speakers.	Students mainly spoke English. Other languages were used when groups of students who speak the same language were together. Other languages were used for telephone calls.
At the university café	Students mainly spoke in Wolof or French. The students seemed motivated to greet visitors in English if they appeared American.	Students mainly spoke English. If students were with other students who speak the same language, they commonly used the other language.
Outside of university (restaurants, markets, sporting events, etc.)	Students mainly spoke in Wolof or French. The students seemed motivated to start conversations in English when they saw Americans.	Students mainly spoke English when they were with American students. If students were with other students who speak the same language, they commonly used the other language.

### *Comparison of observations*

As seen in Table 3, there are similarities and differences between language use in the two countries, the United States and Senegal. In Senegal, I observed classes that were conducted in English and were part of the African studies laboratory in the English department at UCAD; the classes observed in the United States were also conducted in English and were part of the Center for English Language and Culture for International Students (CELCIS) program at Western Michigan University. It is noted that students from both countries used English as the primary language in the classroom. The assumption is that students will use English in classes that are taught in English. In both countries, the students appeared to be engaged in the class because of their participation. The students in Senegal were particularly eager to be included in the classroom discussion; at any given point during the discussion there were multiple hands in the air indicating their desire to contribute.

Language usage differed slightly when students were not inside the English classroom. Before and after classes, the majority of the students in Senegal used a local national language or French instead of English. It was noted that if the students needed to speak with a professor, they would initiate conversation in English. Additionally, if English speakers were encountered, the students would greet them in English, but rarely would initiate conversation. Between classes, students mainly use a language such as Wolof that is more familiar than English. It appeared that the students preferred to use their first language when speaking with another individual who also spoke that language. Similar observations were made in the United States about language usage between classes at the university. Primarily, even outside of the classroom the students used English to communicate. The exception was if they were with other students that also speak their native language. That being said, the main factor in language usage in this context was the people with whom the students were conversing.

At the university cafés and events outside of the university, the observations indicated the language used by the students again was determined by who the conversational partners were at the time. In Senegal, the students spoke Wolof or French during the majority of their interactions. If English speakers walked by or approached the students, they would switch to English to greet or speak with the English speakers. In the United States, English was used by the international students for most of their conversations. However, like the other social contexts, other languages were used between speakers that shared a common first language, but if one member of the group spoke English, it was more common for everyone to use English.

### **Ethnographic Interviews**

The information collected from the ethnographic interviews provided valuable insight to perceptions regarding English use in both countries. The information gathered from the

interviews provided a greater understanding about the perceptions regarding English language learning, as well as the perceived functions of English. There were differences between the results of the interviews, particularly when comparing the information from Senegal with the information from the United States. There were also common themes found in many of the interviews. The information is organized by the following themes that were pulled from all of the interviews: introduction to English, motivation to learn English, functions of English, societal perceptions of English, and the effect of English on native languages.

### **1. Introduction to the English language**

During the student interviews, I initially asked about their process of learning English in general. All of the students, both in Senegal and the U.S., began learning English from a young age. The students in Senegal are required to take English classes after primary school, beginning in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, for a total of seven years (SF1, personal communication, June 2, 2015). The class is a basic introduction to English and the class runs twice a week, totaling four hours of English class per week (SF1, personal communication, June 2, 2015). One student mentioned that the classes were not intensive at all because it was only four hours a week (SS1, personal communication, May 26, 2015).

The three international students in the United States all started learning English in primary school in their home countries. One student said that he took 8 years of English classes in his home country, but did not learn more than vocabulary and basic grammar (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). He came to the United States in his third year of high school to become fluent in English (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). The second student said that he is from India and the country was taken over by Britain, so the English language was imposed on its citizens (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). He added that they are



required to start learning English in Kindergarten and are not able to move on to the next grade if they do not pass the English test (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). The last student is from the Dominican Republic originally and he was also required to take English classes starting in Kindergarten (US3, personal communication, September 22, 2015). When he was twelve, he attended an English institute, where the English lessons were more intensive than in the public schools (US3, personal communication, September 22, 2015).

## **2. Motivation to learn English**

In Senegal, a majority of the students had a high level of motivation to learn English. One student points out that “people in Senegal are more motivated to speak English than the national language, French, but it is restrictive to learn English because there are not many native English speakers in Senegal to practice” (SS2, personal communication, May 28, 2015). It seems that education is a large motivation for students in Senegal. One student continued learning English at university for 3 years for a Bachelor’s degree and 2 years as a Master’s student. She currently is finishing a doctorate degree in English (SS1, personal communication, May 26, 2015). A faculty member in the English department reveals that English is important at the university level because every department at the university uses English for research purposes. Many books and articles are only published in English (SF1, personal communication, June 2, 2015). Similarly, the second faculty member argued that most of the notable research is conducted and written in English, so many students want access to current literature (SF2, personal communication, June 4th, 2015). Tourism in Senegal is another motivator to learn English; one student said “since English is a world language, it’s desirable to be able to communicate with individuals from other countries who also know English” (SS2, personal communication, May 28, 2015).

The students interviewed in the United States, like the ones in Senegal, were highly motivated to learn English and to come to the United States to continue learning English. One student expressed motivation by saying that when he came to the United States for the first time in high school, he loved English and he decided that he wanted to come back for university (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). The student from India stated that “if I wanted to survive, I had to learn English” because of the language imposed by Britain (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). Additionally, he added that he wanted to appreciate and connect with others around the world by using English (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). The last student was motivated to learn English for educational purposes. He revealed that he needed to learn English so that he could attend a university in the United States and get a better education (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015).

### **3. Functions of English**

In Senegal, the interviewees suggested that while English is highly respected in society, it does not play a large role in daily life. One student says “English is really not used in daily life in Senegal, but it is useful to get jobs and in the education system” (SS3, personal communication, May 30, 2015). Another student agreed by saying that she needed English in her workplace and that some employers will only hire those who speak English (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). A faculty member adds “English is the most important language when seeking employment” (FS2, personal communication, May 29, 2015).

Apart from occupational, English also plays a role in education. A faculty member claims that “the primary function of English is for education, for your degree. The second function of English is for scientific purposes. There are research publications that are only available in English. Faculty members in the English department are often asked to translate student theses

into English in order to get published” (FS2, personal communication, May 29, 2015). The students agree that English has played a positive role in their education.

The last function that was mentioned in many interviews is that English is commonly used to connect with others from around the world. One student revealed that nearly everybody in Senegal learns a few basic words in English to communicate with visitors and for business reasons (FS2, personal communication, May 29, 2015). Another student enjoys learning English because it allows him to speak with individuals from other countries who share both speak some English, thus unifying them by means of a common language (SS2, personal communication, May 28, 2015).

In the United States, one student claims that English is primarily used in education and social settings (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). He says that “learning English opened the door to university and furthering my education” (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). Another student believes that language is used as a tool to survive and English is used to compete in the world, especially in education (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). The last student added that not only has English contributed to his education, but he was able to start working at the university because of his English skills (US3, personal communication, September 22, 2015).

#### **4. Societal perceptions of the English language**

As mentioned earlier, English is highly valued in Senegal, which has been confirmed by the results of the interviews. One student claimed that “English is considered a sophisticated language and the main language for communicating in the world” (SS1, personal communication, May 26, 2015). Another student added that in Senegal if you do not speak English or French, you are not “educated enough” (SS1, personal communication, May 26,

2015). It is evident that English is a valued language and if you speak English, you are perceived to have a higher social status.

The results of the interviews conducted in the United States did not reveal specific data about societal perceptions of the English language. From the information gathered, it appears that many of the students were required to learn English and society expects students to learn English if they want to advance their education or careers in the United States.

### **5. Effect on native language**

The last theme that was drawn from the interviews was the impact of learning English on the individual's first language. All of the interviewees in Senegal mentioned the idea that English was affecting French and the national languages of their country. One student said that "some people are forgetting the importance of local languages such as Wolof. For example, Wolof is not used in the education system anymore" (SS2, personal communication, May 28, 2015). This student also believes that it is necessary for people in Senegal to maintain their original culture while they learning English or other languages for communication purposes (SS2, personal communication, May 28, 2015).

Similar effects on native language were also noted in the interviews in the United States. All three students that were interviewed described deterioration of their original language after living in the United States and speaking English. One student explained how he forgets words or phrases in his first language because he is constantly thinking in English (US1, personal communication, June 23, 2015). Additionally, another international student said that he is no longer able to write proficiently in his native language. He can still speak it, but that his oral abilities are also declining (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). The last student confirms "I have difficulty and I forget some of my original language. I stay in contact with my

family and friends in the Dominican Republic so I won't ever lose the language completely" (US2, personal communication, August 10, 2015). The faculty member at a bilingual elementary school said that it is common to have culture nights, where students and families participate in cultural and language activities (UF2, personal communication, September 24, 2015). This is an example of an outreach tool being used to preserve language and culture within bilingual students in the United States.

### **Discussion**

The observations, ethnographic interviews, and literature review in this study were analyzed by the researcher in order to answer the original research questions. The following items will be discussed in this section: themes gathered from the data set, comparison of data from Senegal with United States, commonalities between literature review and information found in observations and interviews, limitations, and future research.

When looking at the first research question regarding the perceptions of English language learning as a result of globalization, the results of this study revealed that in both Senegal and the United States, English is a highly valued language to members of society. In Senegal, the students who speak English are considered to be associated with higher social status because English is valued even more than French, the national language. In the United States, the data from the observations and interviews suggest there are societal expectations to speak English in the United States, a predominantly English speaking country. However, the ESL students in the United States have a higher social status in their original countries because they are able to study English, a highly valued language.

Another principal theme that appeared in the results is the impact that English as a world language has on the first languages of English language learners. There was 100% agreement

among all participants in the study that learning English has resulted in the deterioration of their first languages. The literature confirms that the spread of English leads to language endangerment in many cases (Ammon, 2010; Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). An interesting finding that the data reveals is the students in United States appear to have experienced greater loss of their first language compared to the students in Senegal. This may be due to the limited number of speakers of their native languages in the United States.

In answering the second research question relating to the role English plays in access to education, the results of the study affirm that opportunities within educational settings are more readily available for students learning English in both countries. The data from the study expose that one of the main purposes of learning English in the first place is to have educational opportunities that are not available in other languages. For example, many current research studies are published in English and translations may not always be accessible. The motivation to learn English, in the majority of participants, stemmed from the desire to have educational opportunities, but ultimately the motive was to get a desirable job after university. Although motivation was not initially addressed in the research questions, it was a recurring theme that appeared in the data. Some scholars believe that in the globalized world today, there is less of a desire to learn English to identify with native speakers of English (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). The results of this study corroborate this theory because the students in Senegal expressed their motivation to learn English as a lingua franca to have access to communicate with individuals from all around the world who also speak English as a foreign language. However, the students interviewed in the United States did have a strong desire to assimilate to the language and culture present in the United States.

Regarding the function that English has as a global language, the findings align with the theory of Mufwene (2010) that English is used by nonnative speakers as an instrument that aids in the overall success of the individual. There is no doubt that the spread of English has negatively impacted native languages, but the central focus of learning English is to acquire opportunities that are not available without knowledge of the English language. Although all of the participants have noticed deterioration of their native language, English was not perceived by the participants as being an oppressive language, contrary to what Phillipson (2008) and Mazrui (2004) believe.

### **Limitations**

The study was conducted in a methodical manner; although, there are a few limitations that may have affected the results. The first limitation seen in this study is the small sample size of participants. Ideally, this study would be duplicated with a larger sample size to make the generalizations from the data more credible to readers. Additionally, the study only included students who are learning English at the university level, and are part of the middle to upper class. It would be interesting to recruit participants from all socioeconomic statuses and those who are not learning English to gather information from diverse backgrounds. Lastly, another limitation that was found in this study is that the observations in Senegal did not distinguish between French and Wolof usage in different social contexts. It would be interesting to take field notes on when each language was used to identify differences in language usage when English is not being used.

### **Conclusion**

This study has examined the perceptions of English as a world language as a result of globalization in Senegal and the United States. The purpose of the study was to determine the

effects of globalization on the process of English language learning and to analyze the perceived functions of the English language in a global context. Through completing a literature review, making observations, and conducting ethnographic interviews, this study compiled results in order to answer the research questions.

It has been concluded that English as a world language plays a critical role in accessibility to education. Access to educational opportunities is one of the principal motivators for students to learn English worldwide. This study revealed that another reason for students to learn English, particularly the students in Senegal, is to be able to communicate with others from around the world who also speak English as a foreign language. There was less of a focus on using the language to connect and assimilate with native speakers of English. In the United States, educational and vocational motives were the driving forces for learning English, but there was an inevitable consequence of assimilating to the culture. Due to the fact that the central reasons for learning English were for education and employment, it can be concluded that the English language is used as an instrument to achieve goals rather than an oppressive entity.

There have been negative effects on first languages noted by English language learners both in Senegal and the United States. This finding is in agreement with other scholars who have researched language endangerment as a result of the spread of English (Ammon, 2010; Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). The conclusions drawn suggest that individuals who use English as an instrument for success recognize the deterioration of their first language, and are not threatened by the consequences. It has been noted that the participants from the United States experience a greater impact on their first language and culture.

Based on the limitations and the results of the study, the need for additional research in this area of study is crucial in order to expand existing knowledge about the impact globalization



has on English usage and function. Future studies that would enhance the current study include focusing the research on motivation of language learning and the effects of English on first language and culture. These two themes appeared numerous times within the data and they are an important aspect of studying English as a world language.

In a society where globalization will continue to affect our lives, it is crucial to understand how languages are interacting and the impact this has on speakers. The outcome of the study provides a foundation of qualitative information regarding the perspectives of English language learners worldwide and the role that English plays in education systems. Future research will allow a more comprehensive understanding in this field of study and will encourage educators and other professionals to appreciate cultural diversity among languages.

## Appendix A: Raw Data from Interviews

Interview 1- SS1 (Senegal Student 1)

1. I started learning English in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (first day of secondary school). There were 7 mandatory years of English in school.
2. The English classes were not intensive and lasted 4 hours a week.
3. Other languages besides English were offered as well such as Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Portuguese.
4. I continued learning English at university for 3 years for my Bachelor's degree and 2 years as a Master's student. Then I studied English for an additional 3 years during my doctoral studies while completing a thesis in English.
5. English has played a positive role in my education.
6. I use my English skills to help younger students learn English and I translate for my church services
7. I use her English skills to communicate with foreigners in Senegal who mainly speak English and French.
8. Certain jobs in Senegal will not hire if the applicant does not speak English.
9. Everyone in Senegal learns at least a few basic words in English to communicate with visitors and for business reasons.
10. In Senegal, English is considered a sophisticated language and the main language for communicating in the world
11. There are computer programs and other products that are only in English so it is important to know how to read English
12. I want to keep improving my English every day. My goal is to learn two new vocabulary words each day.
13. If possible, I would like to visit the U.S. for a while to improve her English even more.

Interview 2- SS2 (Senegal Student 2)

14. English is necessary to communicate with people from other countries.
15. People in Senegal are more motivated to speak English than the national language French, but it is restrictive to learn English because there are not many native English speakers in Senegal to practice.
16. It is important for Senegal to maintain their original culture while learning English for communication purposes.
17. The perception of society is that if you don't speak English or French you are not considered "educated enough".
18. With the increased influence of the English and French languages, some people are forgetting the importance of local languages such as Wolof. For example, Wolof is not used in the education system anymore.
19. Language is a component of one's identity.

20. With globalization, you have to deny part of your original identity and local language and use French or English.
21. English is beneficial for individual growth, but not good for the culture of Senegal.

Interview 3- SS3 (Senegal Student 3)

22. I started learning English my first year of secondary school. I went to university at UCAD and studied English literature.
23. I loved the process of learning English so it was an easy thing for me to study. English has contributed a lot to my education and has helped me become more successful.
24. English is really not used in daily life in Senegal, but it is useful to get jobs and in the education system.
25. I use my English skills to get jobs translating and teaching English. It is necessary for anyone searching for a job.
26. My goal is to finish my PhD and become an English professor at UCAD. If that doesn't work out, I want to work for the United Nations using my English skills.

Interview 4- SF1 (Senegal Faculty 1)

27. English is introduced immediately after primary school for about four hours each week for 4 years in junior high and 3 years in secondary school.
28. There is a test administered once a student finishes secondary school. If the student scores high enough on the English section, they will be admitted into the English department at the university.
29. There are about 4,000 students in the English department at UCAD. They are currently transforming the English department to make it more selective.
30. Every department at the university uses English for research purposes. Many books and articles are only published in English.
31. The English language is the key to many opportunities in an educational setting. Students with an English degree can go to the U.S. or Europe.
32. Everywhere around the world people are starting to learn English. It is the most widely spoken language.
33. English use in Senegal affects the Wolof language and culture. For example, many musicians such as rappers are incorporating English into their music. The way they talk, dress, and act imitate that of black American rappers.
34. There is now a mixture of cultures in Senegal because of the increase of English. The Wolof language and original culture is preserved, but the French influence is decreasing. France hasn't succeeded in completely colonizing Senegal in a linguistic manner. It is moving towards a melting pot society.
35. For the past 20 years, people in Senegal are less and less interested in the French language and more interested in learning English because it is more practical and useful.

Interview 5- SF2 (Senegal Faculty 2)

36. People need to have a more open mind about language used in education and research. All notable research is conducted and written in English. I learned Spanish and English in order to teach.
37. The main goal of learning other languages is to communicate and be understood, as well as to understand.
38. Learning languages gives you access to jobs and English is the most important language when seeking employment.
39. The younger generations believe that knowing English means to be official and to be connected with America,
40. English is an unavoidable language since it is a lingua franca of the world. Any language of America is a language of the world. English is the language of modern life. At the university, it's the largest department at UCAD.
41. The primary function of English is for education, for your degree. The second function of English is for scientific purposes. There are research publications that are only available in English. Faculty members in the English department are asked to translate student theses into English in order to get published.
42. French and local languages are both endangered by the influence of the English language.
43. English is the language of globalization. Globalization speeds up the process of teaching and learning English. English is the only language that connects the world.

Interview 6- US1 (United States Student 1)

44. I am originally from Spain where I took English classes for 8 years starting in middle school.
45. In Spain, I didn't learn a lot besides basic vocabulary.
46. During my junior year of high school, I went to Minnesota for a study abroad opportunity to become fluent in English.
47. I thoroughly enjoyed living in the United States which sparked my interest in coming back to the U.S. for university.
48. At Western Michigan University, I learned a lot more slang and vocabulary related to being a college student.
49. Learning English opened the door to university and furthering my education.
50. I still speak Spanish (his first language) when I meet other people who speak Spanish, but it is less common for me to use Spanish in conversation.
51. Sometimes I will forget certain Spanish words or phrases because I am constantly using English. I have to use English to fully explain myself if I can't think of it in Spanish.
52. It was very difficult to understand slang and pronounce certain sounds that don't exist in the Spanish language.

Interview 7- US2 (United States Student 2)

53. I am originally from India and there are over 10 different languages in southern India alone.
54. India was taken over by Britain and imposed the English language on the country.
55. I started learning British English in kindergarten and continued throughout my education.
56. If I wanted to survive, I had to learn English. You need to pass English to move on after kindergarten.
57. When I came to the United States, American English was difficult to learn because I was used to British English and also because of the slang and pronunciation.
58. I can no longer write in my original language. I can still speak it, but it is deteriorating because I am using English so much more. I can't use a sentence without using English.
59. A person's standard of living and social status depends on their level of English.
60. English is a common language; it unifies countries throughout the entire world.
61. Language including English is used as a tool to survive. English is used to compete in the world, especially in education.
62. To appreciate others, I learned English so I could connect with others around the world.

Interview 8- US3 (United States Student 3)

63. I am from the Dominican Republic and I first started learning English in kindergarten. It was required to take English all throughout school.
64. I attended an English institute when I was 12 years old where I learned more intensive English. When I was 15 years old, I visited my uncle in Hawaii for one month and my English significantly improved, but it still wasn't great.
65. I chose WMU because I got a full ride scholarship here. When I came to WMU, I still was not fluent in English and there was a lot of information that I did not understand in class.
66. Sometimes my friends mocked me when I said something incorrectly or didn't understand the meaning, but they also helped me learn more and taught me slang.
67. I started working in the dining hall at WMU where I was forced to quickly learn more English to do my job.
68. Also, I got a job in the admissions office where I had to make phone calls and give tours in English which improved my English even more.
69. I didn't hang out with many other Dominican students because I wanted to meet Americans and learn with them.
70. English has affected my education a lot. It has helped me with my critical thinking skills. I started to read more because it was interesting and I could understand it. I also listened to English songs and I could understand the lyrics.
71. Learning English encouraged me to learn more and try new things. After learning English, I felt much more confident and not afraid.

72. Sometimes after not speaking Spanish for a while, I have difficulty and I forget some of the language. I stay in contact with my family and friends in the Dominican republic so I won't ever lose the language completely.
73. The grammar in English was really difficult for me and slang was one of the hardest things to learn.

Interview 9- UF2 (United States Faculty 1)

74. Developed ESL teaching graduate program at Western Michigan University to teach educators how to teach English as a second language.
75. I taught English in the Philippines and focused on building vocabulary and expressive language. I wanted to immerse my students in expressive language since most of them absorb more receptive language. My students were required to speak to me in English anytime they saw me even outside of the classroom.
76. English is a common language throughout the world.
77. Students are motivated to learn English because of cultural assimilation; they want to fit into the American culture and learn more about the people. They want to associate themselves with the people.
78. Many of the ESL students move to the United States because of their parents' careers or because of the parents' desires for their children to have a better education and better opportunities.
79. There are instrumental motivations to learn English such as for future careers.
80. Other motivators to learn English include self-efficacy and social motivation or used in everyday life to communicate with others and discuss readings.
81. Technology has helped increase the use of English and make it easily accessible for many all over the world.
82. English language teachers can connect online about teaching ideas that have been successful and allow them to share information. In third world countries, resources may be limited.

Interview 10- UF3 (United States Faculty 2)

83. I taught ESL to younger students in a bilingual elementary school. In the classroom, some of the students only spoke Spanish and some only knew English.
84. Some parents of the students also knew English, but some did not.
85. The main motivation for the students to learn English was to socialize with their friends in school. They needed to be able to speak English to talk with the other kids at school.
86. At times, students refused to use Spanish at home because they wanted to assimilate to American culture. Their parents want them to continue speaking Spanish so they can speak to their grandparents.

87. The main function of the English language for the students is to be able to communicate. They learn content in school and need to be able to read in English for educational purposes.
88. English affects the students' original language because many students reject the Spanish language and culture once they begin learning English and assimilating to American culture.
89. At the elementary school, they aim to incorporate the Hispanic culture by celebrating holidays and having culture nights where students can learn about and appreciate the culture.
90. There has been more emphasis on expanding ESL and bilingual programs because of the growing population of Spanish speakers in the United States.

## Appendix B: Table of Interview Themes

<i>Interview data categorized by theme</i>	
Interview theme	Statement number
Introduction to English as a foreign language	1, 2, 3,4, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 44, 45, 46, 48, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 63, 64, 65, 66, 73, 74, 75, 81, 83, 84
Functions of English	5, 6, 7, 11, 19, 21, 24, 25, 31, 36, 37, 38, 41, 43, 49, 56, 60, 61, 67, 68, 70, 71, 82, 87, 90
Motivation to learn English	8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 26, 47, 62, 77, 78, 79, 80, 85
Societal perception of English	9, 10, 17, 32, 35, 39, 40, 59, 76
Effect of English on native language/culture	16, 18, 20, 33, 34, 42, 50, 51, 58, 69, 72, 86, 88, 89



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