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Grassroots quest for upward mobility: Non-elite young Japanese women's beliefs in global and localized English ideology

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Abstract

Previous studies have indicated that young middle-class Japanese women's stronger willingness to study English in the West can be attributed to Japan's gender inequality and women's longing for gender-equal Western societies. This literature-based study highlights an overlooked group of non-elite young Japanese women who make grassroots efforts to achieve upward mobility by studying English in Western English-speaking countries while participating in working holiday programs. Although socioeconomic and educational inequalities exist among international students, they are often invisible, particularly among the youth from developed countries such as Japan. This study provides new insights into the factors that influence unprivileged young Japanese women's investment in studying English abroad. For example, women's beliefs in the power of English skill development and overseas work experience are derived from the misconception dominant in Japan's non-multilingual corporate world that anyone with self-acquired English skills can perform bilingual jobs, such as interpreting. This factor enables academic and commercial agents (e.g., women's magazines and college prospectuses) to produce pro-women discourse that even non-elite young women can achieve career mobility by gaining English skills and overseas work experience. Implications are provided for international English education stakeholders positioned to emphasize global English promises while obscuring the reality of widening disparities. The gap between university-based elite researchers and non-elite research participants is also discussed as a challenge to the much-needed attempt to further examine the impact of global and localized English ideology on non-elite English learners' grassroots efforts toward upward mobility.

Introduction

Income inequality in developed countries is not necessarily a popular topic in the field of English language teaching (ELT). However, the effects of economic disparities on ELT at the grassroots level require greater attention, considering that socioeconomic inequality is widening among citizens living in advanced economies, including Japan. The world's third largest economy has been witnessing 'an increase in low-income population' over the years and an increasing number of people feel that 'differences in income in Japan are too large' (International Social Survey Programme 2020). In particular, compared to men, a higher proportion of women are employed as non-regular workers on temporary contracts. The Japanese government acknowledges that 'the percentage of young, female non-regular employees is higher than men' (The Government of Japan 2019, 10). Women with low socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to experience higher job insecurity and lower incomes. Thus, one may assume that they would be the most unlikely group to consider investing time and money in learning English, let alone studying English abroad.

However, unexpectedly, these socially disadvantaged women exhibit a willingness to quit their jobs to seek study opportunities and work experience overseas (Fujioka 2017; Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2014). Fujioka (2017) conducted interviews from 2007 to 2010 with 84 former or current Australia–Japan working holiday participants aged 18–25. The study findings supported his hypothesis that working holiday programs attract young Japanese women in the middle-socioeconomic bracket with a moderate level of education, whose educational and occupational backgrounds are not particularly 'brilliant' (p. 439; original in Japanese). Those women include Miho (pseudonym) who graduated from a social care vocational school and later worked as an elderly care

worker (p. 224) and Yuko (pseudonym) who graduated from a high school, followed by a nursing vocational school while receiving a scholarship from a particular hospital, and later worked as a nurse at the hospital for three years, a duration needed for scholarship exemption (pp. 241–242).

A larger-scale survey commissioned by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare reported similar findings (Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2014). It involved 1,583 Japanese participants in working holiday programs (WHP) (77%), overseas internship programs (OIP) (14%), or both (9%), who stayed in Australia (35.8%), Canada (19.1%), New Zealand (11.8%), and the United States (8.5%) (pp. 19–20). One caveat is that the United States has no bilateral working holiday agreement with Japan, resulting in no survey respondents answering that they stayed there as WHP participants. The former WHP and OIP participants were mostly women (75%) (WHP 77%; OIP 74%) (p. 22). Among the 1,191 WHP participants, approximately half of them had no university degree and were either junior high school graduates (1.8%), high school graduates (15.2%), vocational school graduates (15.3%), two-year college graduates (15.3%), or other (Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2014, 33). Compared to university graduates whose average monthly wage was over 200,000 yen at the time of the survey (2013), WHP participants earned a lower amount prior to departure from Japan and after re-entry and re-employment, respectively: no earnings (2.4% and 2.5%), less than 100,000 yen (7.1% and 11.9%), 100,000 to 150,000 yen (18.0% and 18.3%), and 150,000 to 200,000 yen (34.0% and 25.1%) (Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2014, 51). For reference, the exchange rate for Japanese yen to US dollar in 2013 ranged between 87.65 (January 9) and 105.89 (December 30), making 100,000 JPY equivalent to 100 USD (Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting n.d.).

Based on the above figures, this study aims to discuss reasons why less privileged young Japanese women decide to seek overseas experience in Western English-speaking countries called the Inner Circle, where they study English at language schools while working, typically in Japanese restaurants (Fujioka 2017, 348–354). This inquiry is significant because they are an overlooked group of non-elite female English learners in Japan whose grassroots voices and actions have not yet received sufficient attention from the ELT field.

Contextual background

In general, young Japanese women exhibit more positive attitudes toward foreign language study and overseas travel than their male peers. Japan's largest travel agency (JTB) conducted a survey of 2,900 male and female Japanese aged 15 and over who had travelled abroad in 2018. One finding unique to young female respondents was that 'there were very few who responded that they 'had opportunities to speak a foreign language at work or socially'' (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. 2019, 71). Another finding was that women in their 20s responded the most frequently to the items 'I long to go overseas' (52%) and 'I'm studying/want to study a foreign language' (50.7%) (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. 2019, 71). Similarly, Japan's official statistics (Figure 1) indicate that women in their early 20s are the most active overseas travelers.

The JTB's research report describes young Japanese women's 'poor opportunities' to engage in intercultural communication as an explanatory or predictor variable of their 'yearning' for foreign countries, explaining that '[T]he strength of their yearning for the foreign countries may therefore reflect the poor opportunities they have for such communications with foreigners in daily life' (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. 2019, 71). However, the report provides no explanation as to (1) why young Japanese women have 'poor opportunities' to experience intercultural communication in their daily lives and (2) why their limited access to cross-cultural interaction strengthens 'their yearning' for such experiences in foreign countries.

Regarding the first question, Japan's corporate culture seems to be the primary cause of young Japanese women's 'poor opportunities' to engage in intercultural communication. Japan's business world has long maintained its practice of hiring male college graduates with a low command of business English as future managerial personnel and assigning them to positions that require foreign language skills, such as business with overseas clients (Kobayashi 2018c; Yamaguchi 2019). Kubota (2011, 256) collected interview data from Japanese male managers who had the authority to choose candidates for international postings. Her findings were summarized in Kobayashi (2018c, 733):

> Among the male managers representing Kubota's four research companies, 'Showa Motors' and 'Nippon Plastic' provide identical comments: 'we [Showa Motors] send those who don't speak English [to overseas branches] and we make them learn English there' because 'we can manage once we get used to it [conversation]'; exporting 60% of its products abroad and providing no language training, 'we [Nippon Plastic] send staff who can do their work and have them learn the language while working there' because 'once they are there, they can manage.'

In contrast, irrespective of SES, women in Japan are excluded from the core workforce and instead relegated to subordinate job positions that demand few opportunities to use English skills in the workplace. Gender inequality is entrenched in Japan's business world, with the nation ranked as 120th among 146 countries in the 'economic participation and opportunity' subindex of the World Economic Forum's gender gap rankings in 2024 (World Economic Forum 2024, 16, 32). This gender inequality is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows that the number of women taking trips abroad declines precipitously as they enter their late 20s whereas the number of male overseas travelers grows consistently until they reach their late 40s.

In answer to the second question of why young Japanese women's (awareness of) limited access to intercultural communication results in their desire for such experiences in foreign countries, two explanations are available as of now. One internationally well known account is that socially oppressed Japanese women 'reject Japan,' which is an example of 'the West-centric discourses' and 'some of the United States' most intractable stereotypes about Japan's "backwardness" in its treatment of women' (Kelsky 2001, 31). Another shared understanding among Japanese men is that

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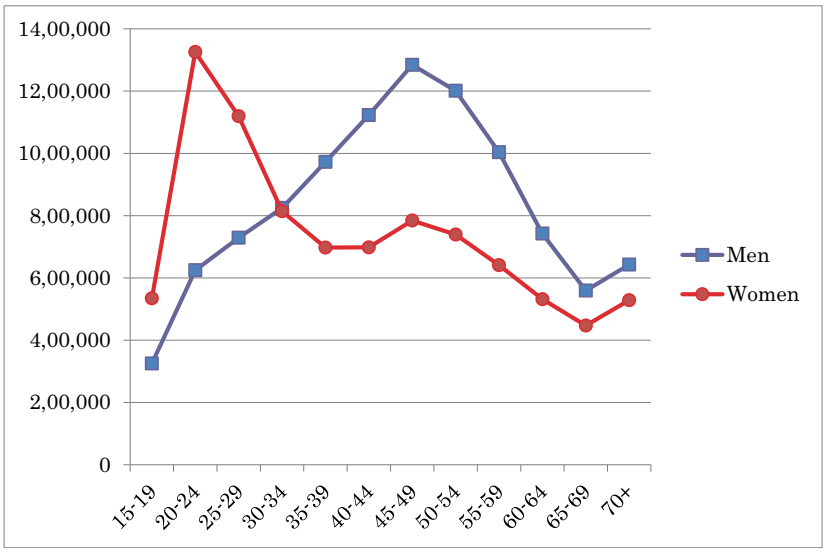

Figure 1. Japanese nationals who departed from Japan in 2019.
Note: This figure is reproduced using statistics from the Ministry of Justice.

women are emancipated from managerial roles and job stress and thus can prioritize private life over work, whereas Japan's male-breadwinner family model imposes far more responsibility and pressure on men. One Japanese businessman is quoted as saying, 'Women can up and quit the job' but 'things won't work like that for men' because '[Y]ou have to stay employed, full-time. Otherwise, people look coldly at you' (Kobayashi 2018a, 69).

However, these accounts cannot explain why an increasingly number of non-elite young female adults in Japan leave work to participate in WHP, knowing that they must return to Japan within months and seek re-employment. The sections below explore whether non-elite young Japanese women's active involvement in overseas travel experience as English learners is their grassroots effort to combat gender discrimination in non-English-speaking Japan, and such involvement is endorsed by discourses that promote English-focused overseas study and work experiences for self-development and career advancement.

Discourses of overseas sojourn experience as a life changing event

Neoliberal discourses presenting overseas study experience as a life changing event encourage students worldwide to study abroad to differentiate themselves from others and confer a competitive edge in the job market: 'study abroad has become – and is promoted as such – a very individual-centered concept of personal investment. To succeed in today's market economy, students are told they must strategically invest in themselves by enhancing their own marketability in unique ways' (Moreno 2021, 98).

Meanwhile, a pronounced trait in the Japanese context is that neoliberal discourses are targeted at and attract attention from young working women in their 20s (Figure 1), who have little or no opportunities to use foreign language skills (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. 2019). For example, according to information about gender, age, and occupation of attendees who commented on seminars hosted by the Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers, most seminar attendees are young women (Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers n.d.). One 25-year-old corporate employee who decided to quit her job after attending the seminar posted the following 'thank you' message:

> I was really touched by people's actual experiences of leaving their jobs and becoming working holiday makers. I had been of two minds about taking a leave of absence from my job or abandoning it. But after attending the seminar, I was able to make up my mind and leave the company. I am very grateful for having attended today's seminar. Thank you very much. [Translated by the author]

Another 29-year-old female attendee also wrote that the seminar reduced 'her anxiety over leaving a job' to go abroad and gave her 'a kick in the back' after hearing 'many' stories about former participants who were able to 'connect work abroad experiences with employment after returning to Japan' [translated by the author] (Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers n.d.).

However, these young women do not necessarily 'reject Japan' and Japan's 'backwardness' in its treatment of women' (Kelsky 2001, 31) or irresponsibly 'up and quit' their jobs with no future plans (Kobayashi 2018a, 69). Thus, to answer the second question as to why young Japanese women's (awareness of) limited access to intercultural communication leads to their desire for such experiences in foreign countries, this study argues that young working women are encouraged by hearing from like-minded women that their participation in WHP increased their re-employment opportunities and they were able to utilize their work-abroad experiences. Notably, as discussed below, the overseas experience, which non-elite young women (are made to) believe to be a primary contributor to upward mobility, typically entails developing their English skills in the West.

Discourses of English skill development as a life changing move

A study commissioned by Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2017) collected data from 378 men (24.6%) and women (75.4%) who

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participated in WHP (85.4%), language study-abroad programs (24.9%), OIP (11.1%), and overseas volunteer programs (5.8%) (p.5). Most of them stayed in either Canada (41%) or Australia (40%) (p. 6). Again, Japan and the United States do not have a WHP agreement. The overwhelmingly most frequent reason for seeking overseas experience (multiple choices) was 'to improve language skills' (84.6%), followed by 'to widen perspectives' (56.9%) and 'to achieve career advancement' (46.8%) (p. 6).

These findings are unsurprising, considering that today's young people living in non-Anglophone countries are exposed to a neoliberal ideology that promotes the acquisition of English skills and Western cultural knowledge as a pathway for upward mobility in global society. A case in point is South Korean parents and their children with middle-to-high SES. For example, 23 Korean upper-middle class parents in Lee (2016, 44) all 'believed that speaking English would work as a minimum safety net to guarantee their children a high SES in Korean society.' A more recent study revealed that such English skills are now required to be acknowledged as legitimate middle-class Korean citizens and workers. Lee's (2021) research participants – nine Korean middle-class adults – conceived 'the level of English proficiency valued by Korean society' as 'the necessary qualification or knowledge to be in the middle class' (p. 231).

Notably, in Korea, relatively privileged youth invest time and money in studying English in both at-home and study-abroad contexts. However, in Japan, underprivileged young women are willing to study and work in Inner Circle nations. Moreover, similar to WHP associations and former participants that endorse young working women's decisions to quit their jobs to participate in WHP, both academic and commercial institutions produce discourses promising that acquiring English skills transforms them into 'international' women. One type of such institutions is non-prestigious, two-year (women's) colleges (Nonaka 2018). These schools attract female students by drawing on a socially pervasive (mis)belief that the learning of English and culture from Western college teachers is the key to internationalization. A typical 'formula' or equation these schools use is: 'Christian [universities/colleges] + "Western and white" = English therefore *international*' (Nonaka 2018, 98; parentheses and emphasis in original). One instructor at a junior college cites this 'formula' as 'explaining why there is a large number of students (especially female) who aspire to master English and become *international*' (Nonaka 2018, 98; parentheses and emphasis in original). Not only junior colleges with Christian affiliations but also Japanese women's magazines (Kitamura 2006; Kobayashi 2018b) and study-abroad agencies (Kitano 2020) construct hopeful texts and images that induce young women to believe that by banking on their English skills and obtaining positions within female-dominated professions, they can 'get away from gender discrimination' (Giustini 2021) even though that does not mean that such bilingual female workers in Japan can achieve equality with male counterparts.

Japan's business world as an endorsement factor

As noted above, most Japanese male employees have low English proficiency (Kobayashi 2018c, Yamaguchi 2019). This section further argues that the low percentage of Japanese businessmen with English skills and overseas experience may catalyze the production of women's empowerment discourses that even less-privileged young working women can achieve upward mobility by utilizing self-acquired or school-trained English skills to obtain English-related employment outside male-dominated occupations.

This causal relationship between Japan's male-dominated business world and less-privileged women's beliefs in the power of English is partly true for interpreters. Japanese male managers with a low command of business English tend to (mis)perceive that anyone with self-acquired English skills can work as an interpreter, as reflected by the lack of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree required for interpreter positions (Kobayashi 2020, 74). In other words, Japan's business world (mis)perceives freelance interpreters as untrained personnel fluent in the language rather than certified English language professionals educated in interpreter training programs. This (mis)understanding allows Japan's women's magazines to feature former ordinary housewives who have studied English on their own and started a new life as freelance interpreters (Kobayashi 2020, 72). This is in stark contrast to South Korea's business world, where an increase in young businesspeople educated abroad and equipped with advanced English proficiency has lowered the demand for interpreters. This has led to severe competition for jobs among highly trained female interpreters, who are graduates of either postgraduate interpreting degree programs offered by nine institutions or bachelor's interpreting degree programs offered by three major universities in Seoul (Cho 2017, 152–153).

In summary, the privileges accorded to Japanese men with a lack of business English fluency lower the demand for degree-based professionalism in the English language service industry. This landscape cultivates room for the emergence of a localized ideology that English skills and overseas work experience can expand non-elite women's prospects for career advancement.

The gap between dreams and reality

Unfortunately, non-elite young women's grassroots efforts to achieve upward mobility through their investment in English study and overseas experiences are rarely fruitful. When attending seminars, prospective WHP participants are not informed that their peers with no college degree are bound to find themselves in the same low SES after re-entry and re-employment (Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2014). They are instead made to believe that 'overseas life experience can change you,' as articulated on the website of the association (Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers n.d.; original in Japanese). Other women-friendly discourses indicating that they can experience 'dramatic alteration' (Kitamura 2006) and become 'international' women (Nonaka 2018) by acquiring English skills are also devoid of information about the reproduction of social and gender inequality (Bourdieu and Passeron 1996).

Not informed of the reality, but rather exposed to celebratory discourses about the power of English skills and

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overseas experience gained in the West, non-elite young women might need years to come to terms with the reality of their situation. For example, based on her experience of workplace discrimination and subsequent transition to working as a temporary interpreter, a 54-year-old woman came to the realization that whether they are office workers or freelance interpreters, working women in Japan will be relegated to a subordinate role of supporting monolingual male superiors:

> There is a general belief that women can be interpreters because they are hierarchically subordinated to men in the market and more flexible to be employed, because we are used to serve in the house. Also clients are predominantly male in my experience, so it's like women 'serving' clients through linguistic assistance. (Giustini 2021, 545)

However, as discussed above, Japanese businessmen with limited English skills and overseas experience would refute their responsibility for gender inequality in the workplace, arguing that female employees have more freedom than male breadwinners who are burdened with fundamental tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, commercial institutions would not acknowledge their complicit role in reproducing gender disparity, but rather portray themselves as advocates for women's empowerment through overseas experience and English skill development. For example, the Japan Association of Overseas Studies urges former WHP participants – predominantly young women with low competitive education background – to 'keep believing in the arrival of the day' when their overseas work experience will help them obtain their dream job:

> Many of those with overseas work experience expect to obtain international jobs that entail the use of English. When unable to do so, they tend to conclude that they have made a mistake in seeking international work experience. However, they should not forget that they have gained invisible capabilities through such experiences that many others have not yet gained. The day will surely come when these precious assets will bear fruit. We hope that they will keep believing in the arrival of that day and keep trying positively by capitalizing on their strength in having completed overseas life plans. (Japan Association of Overseas Studies 2014, 119; translated by the author).

ELT researchers and educators are also involved in the social reproduction of inequality through their affiliation with academic institutions and programs that capitalize on the worldwide ideology that English is the key to a successful life. The concluding section addresses the fundamental issue of ELT professionals' role in encouraging young people to invest in English study-abroad experiences for career advancement without informing them, and the less privileged groups in particular, of the social reproduction of inequality.

The limited impact of the global English ideology on young Japanese men

Although this study has focused on non-elite young Japanese women, some space should be allocated to explaining why their male peers with a low-to-high SES are less willing to study and work abroad. First, this study acknowledges a limited number of non-elite young men who believe in the promising global English ideology. A case in point is a 26-year-old Japanese man without a college education: 'I am not typical Japanese. I did not go to university ... Clever Japanese often enrol in famous universities ... My purpose [to come to Australia] is to learn English, to speak English ... I hope to find a good job' (Bui et al. 2013, 142; parentheses in original). Further studies are needed to examine how a small number of male high school graduates come to nurture the dream of finding a good job by studying English and working in Australia.

Meanwhile, the dream is not attractive to a far larger number of same-gender peers. That is partly because non-elite male high school graduates are often hired and trained as technical employees together with an increasing number of foreign 'specified skilled workers' (Japan International Trainee & Skilled Worker Cooperation Organization n.d.). Their typical workplaces are 'small and medium-sized companies' and any other 'industries that are having difficulty in recruiting human resources' and have become more international than ever with their desperate employment of 'foreign human resources' (Japan International Trainee & Skilled Worker Cooperation Organization n.d.). Many companies facing labor shortage are located outside metropolitan areas, 'struggling to stem the flow of skilled foreign workers to urban centers' for higher pay (e.g., Sage Prefecture, Kagoshima Prefecture, Fukui Prefecture) (Asakura and Tamaki 2022). Working in multinational workplaces both in urban and rural areas, Japanese blue-collar workers and technical workers develop a modest interest in quitting their jobs to study English or work abroad and seek intercultural experiences.

Second, similar to male students at technical colleges, a large number of male college students are enrolled in male-dominated departments, such as science and technology. These institutions do not feature English language programs provided by 'international'-looking (i.e., Western) English teachers, unlike female-dominated colleges, departments, and programs that brand themselves with 'international' images and texts about English-speaking environments (Nonaka 2018). Hence, many male students majoring in technical disciplines are less exposed to 'English = international' discourses. Moreover, they are aware that Japan's large and 'global' companies favor domestically educated, non-bilingual male college graduates from prestigious universities, who are subsequently sent on overseas assignments as managerial-level or management-track employees (Kobayashi 2018c, 2021). Consequently, as shown in the survey data discussed above (JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co. 2019) and Figure 1, young men in Japan exhibit a significantly lower level of interest in studying abroad or participating in WHP.

Research implications

This study posits that living and working in a domestically-educated Japanese male-dominated space makes non-elite young Japanese women vulnerable to globally pervasive and localized ideologies that associate overseas English study and work experience with upward mobility. At this point,

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it remains unclear whether English language teachers in Australia and other Inner Circle nations are aware of the widening socioeconomic diversity and inequality among international students from developed countries. Non-elite students from Japan are presumably ashamed to disclose their socioeconomic and educational disadvantages not only to their teachers but also to their classmates from more affluent backgrounds. Thus, studies with non-elite young Japanese women are needed to make their voices heard regarding their grassroots efforts to study English abroad and gain overseas work experience for career mobility. Such findings should help Western ELT researchers and practitioners resist the stereotyped essentialization of young female students from Japan as victims of patriarchal Asia who desperately need Western saviorism (Park 2010) and re-education in gender-equal Western societies (Brutt–Griffler and Kim 2018).

While calling for studies on the invisible inequality in English study-abroad contexts, this study foresees researchers finding it challenging to implement such studies because they are likely to be 'in privileged tenured and tenure track positions' (Kouritzin et al. 2023, 1538) and 'privileged plurilingual scholars' affiliated with 'neoliberal academic institutions' (Kubota 2016, 490). The gap between privileged researchers and non-elite research participants in Japan and beyond constitutes a fundamental impediment to the former's attempt to reach out to the latter, forge trustworthy relationships with non-elite participants, and collect rich and authentic data from them.

Considering the probable challenges university-based researchers may face, it should be feasible for them to conduct collaborative research with English as a second language (ESL) educators working at private ESL schools or university-affiliated ESL programs in Inner Circle nations. Alternatively, these ESL teachers in study-abroad contexts can conduct solo research. However, the implementation of classroom research with or by ELT practitioners appears to be slimmer than before. A limited number of studies suggest that 'the gap widens between researchers and practitioners' (Kramsch 2015, 458–459) and that an increasing number of English teachers work as low-paid gig workers (Kouritzin et al. 2023). Some Western ELT practitioners are acutely reminded of their low SES when teaching Middle Eastern students born with the guarantee of wealth who have not only taken for granted their privilege but also 'questioned the authority of the instructors who were oftentimes coming from a lower social class' (Altun 2021, 34). Thus, English teachers struggling with their own lives might be unmotivated to invest time and energy in conducting collaborative or solo research on the sensitive theme of SES gap among international students.

Overall, the implementation of studies on invisible non-elite English students in study-abroad contexts is likely to be met with challenges. As such, the number of these studies may not increase in the near future. Therefore, the present study is intended to draw attention of the presumably privileged global readership of *English Today* to the overlooked group of unprivileged English learners from developed countries who (are made to) believe that English skill development and overseas experience will enhance their future career prospects.

Concluding remarks

> Isn't there some degree of career mobility if proficiency in English allows one to get a job, even if it does not make such women equal to men?

This peer reviewer comment concerns a fundamental dilemma between women's choices and gender inequality. Certainly, the aforementioned corporate employee in her mid-20s made her own decision to quit her job after feeling 'very grateful for having attended' a seminar for prospective WHP participants. Her decision, which is popular among young working women in Japan, should be respected even though it is unlikely to lead to their achievement of gender equality but rather would perpetuate gender inequality in the labor market. However, the acknowledgement of women's autonomy to choose female-typed life paths could undermine the significance of raising their 'critical' awareness that women's decision to acquire and use English skills in female-dominated professions 'remains a professional chimera in terms of equality' even if 'it holds an instrumental force for career advancement and a renewed sense of self' (Giustini 2021, 546).

This study claims that exercising self-reflectivity as well as calling for others' critical awareness is needed more than ever before on the part of ELT professionals who, on the one hand, capitalize on their English skills acquired as a first, second, or foreign language for employment and career advancement. On the one hand, the ELT field's well intended promotion of learning English, which appeals to less privileged young women in pursuit of 'international' professional lives, is entangled with the risk of obscuring the reality that English proficiency is not a magic wand to compensate for educational and socioeconomic disadvantages.

More ELT studies and discussion are needed that make this dilemma between English investment and gender inequality the focus in the ELT field. The insights gained from such academic dialogues should constitute core disciplinary knowledge in the ELT field where ELT professionals in at-home or study-abroad contexts are involved in the lives and dreams of many non-elite young women in/from developed countries such as Japan. This study hopes to contribute to the accumation of much-needed literature on the impact of global and localized English ideology on non-elite English learners' grassroots efforts toward upward mobility at a time when the ELT field is increasingly and inadvertently implicated in the reproduction of global and localized English ideology amid worldwide English learners' quest for English skill development and better lives.

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