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MOBILIZING MULTI-SEMIOTICS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF USING ENGLISH AS A MULTILINGUA FRANCA IN A TAIWANESE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

While much existing literature has shed light on the linguistic experience of Asian international students (ISs) in Anglophone contexts where English is the primary language for academic learning as well as for their social life outside the classroom, little research has explored Asian ISs' English use in a non-Anglophone context where both English and the local language are advocated as the academic lingua franca. Informed by the recent theoretical evolution of English as a lingua franca (ELF), which foregrounds the multilingual nature of communication in a super-diverse world (Jenkins, 2015), this research examines ISs' experience of using English as a multilingua franca (EMF) in their social and academic interaction at an internationalized university in Taiwan--a non-Anglophone country where English is frequently, but not always, used as the contact language. Drawing from a qualitative methodology, data were collected through background questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with four ISs and were analyzed inductively to map out the ISs' EMF interaction with their peer students and university faculty. The analysis shows that these ISs were able to creatively utilize their multilingual and multimodal repertoire to achieve mutual understanding and comity. Furthermore, they manifested an intercultural awareness in their EMF communication as they were able to strategically manage their language use to accommodate their interactants' language proficiency, personal backgrounds, and ideologies. These findings invite TESOL educators to expand learners' communicative repertoire and cultivate multi-semiotic language users to facilitate the interaction of the diverse student demographics brought by the internationalization of higher education.

Key Words: international students, Asian universities, English as a multilingua franca, multimodal communication

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has asserted tremendous influence on not only business, but also higher education around the world (Maringe & Foskett, 2010). Universities worldwide are increasing their global competitiveness by recruiting international students (ISs) because they contribute to the economic benefits, cultural diversity and human assets of the host institution. Although countries in North America and Western Europe have been attracting ISs to pursue their higher educational degrees for many decades, since the beginning of the 21st century, the direction of IS mobility has shifted to new Asian education hubs, such as China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan (Roberts, Chou, & Ching, 2010).

In Taiwan, to increase the global competitiveness of the nation, internationalization of higher education has become a critical issue in higher education policy (Chen, 2014; Zhang, 2005). With the aim of a tenfold increase in the number of ISs within 10 years (Ministry of Education, 2001), the Ministry of Education included the number of ISs as one of the indices to measure the degree of internationalization of a university. As a result, the number of degree-seeking ISs in Taiwan increased from 1,283 in 2002 to 12,597 in 2013, an increase of more than 10 times in 10 years (Ministry of Education, 2018). As of 2017, the number of degree-seeking ISs in Taiwan had reached a record of 17,788. The population of ISs in Taiwan is made up of students from 134 countries; nevertheless, due to the New Southbound Policy which aims to strengthen the relationship between Taiwan and nations of ASEAN and South Asia, the majority of ISs come from Southeast Asian countries. The largest group was comprised of 4,465 students from Malaysia, followed by 2,586 from Vietnam, 1,623 from Indonesia, 803 from India, and 791 from Japan (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The increasing number of ISs has created linguistically and culturally diverse demographics in many Taiwanese universities (Lin, 2018). To better serve these students, many universities are eager to establish an internationalized campus environment by providing student services, facility billboards, documents, and websites in English. Furthermore, in addition to offering Chinese as a Second Language instruction, universities also enthusiastically provide English mediated content courses/programs in the hope of accommodating the diverse linguistic backgrounds of ISs and integrating ISs with local Taiwanese students. In fact, a satisfactory level of English proficiency is an entry ticket when many academic programs admit their ISs. Similar to many international

programs/universities worldwide (Gardner, 2012; Jenkins, 2014), English has become synonymous with the language of internationalization, and it is institutionalized as the academic lingua franca in many Taiwanese universities along with the primary language of the nation—Mandarin Chinese.

While much existing literature has shed light on Asian ISs' linguistic experience in Anglophone contexts (e.g., the United States, Canada, and Australia) where English is the primary language for academic learning as well as for their social life outside the classroom (see Duff, 2010; Morita & Kobayashi, 2008), relatively little research has explored Asian ISs' English use in a non-Anglophone context where both English and the local language are advocated as the academic lingua franca. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by exploring Asian ISs' experience of using English in social and academic interaction in a highly internationalized Taiwanese university, a non-Anglophone context where English is used as an academic lingua franca among speakers of different first languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Asian International Students' Linguistic Experiences in Anglophone Countries

Since the direction of IS mobility has predominantly flowed from non-Western countries (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan) to Western English-speaking countries (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) in the past decades (Roberts, Chou, & Ching, 2010), much research has investigated how Asian ISs' language use may shape their learning experiences in Anglophone universities. Findings of these studies have shown that the primary language of the host community—English—plays a key role in mediating ISs' social and academic experience. Particularly, much research has shown that the linguistic barrier is one of the major challenges for Asian ISs in Anglophone universities. For example, in the context of North America, several researchers found that Asian ISs rarely speak up in classrooms because they lack confidence in using English (Lewthwaite, 1996; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Senyshyn, Warford, & Zhan, 2000) and are threatened by losing face due to making mistakes in public (Jacob & Greggo, 2001). In the context of New Zealand, Chinese ISs were documented as having poor discussion skills and listening comprehension of extended lectures due to their unfamiliarity with academic discourse patterns

(Holmes, 2004). Vietnamese ISs in Australia also reported on their difficulties understanding the Australian accent and the overwhelming reading load due to their limited language proficiency (Wearing, Wilson, & Arambewela, 2015). These findings indicate that ISs' academic performance can be inhibited by their perceived low level of English proficiency and their difficulty assimilating into the Anglophone linguistic and cultural norms.

Instead of perceiving ISs as disadvantaged and problematic linguistic novices, some recent research recognizes not only Asian ISs' multiple sociocultural identities in making strategic, selective learning investments, but also their human agency in transforming their subjugated positions in Anglophone universities (Chang, 2011; Halic, Greenberg, & Paulus, 2009; Morita, 2000; Tran, 2011). For example, in order to successfully deliver oral presentations, the Japanese IS in Morita's (2000) study chose a familiar topic (i.e., education in Japan) and therefore successfully projected an expert identity by employing his insider perspective. Tran (2011) found that Vietnamese students in Australian universities exerted their agency by combining the Vietnamese academic writing style and the English academic writing style to fulfill the course requirements while simultaneously manifesting their heritage culture identity. Chang (2011) found that Taiwanese ISs in the United States could use formulaic mathematics language to showcase their professional identity and made selective learning investment in relation to the identities they desired to align with in their future aspirations.

In sum, pertinent literature on Asian ISs studying in Anglophone countries has shown that English could be a barrier that hinders ISs' life in Anglophone universities. Nevertheless, as Hirvela and Belcher (2001) pointed out, ISs do not enter English-speaking academic communities as blank slates; they are active agents who knowingly assert agency and make use of their different forms of capital to invest strategically in their learning and negotiate their identities in order to be recognized as legitimate and competent members in their host institutions.

International Students' Linguistic Experiences in Non-Anglophone Asian Universities

While much research has shed light on Asian ISs' experiences of studying at Anglophone universities, as a result of the influx of ISs in new Asian education hubs, some recent research has investigated ISs' social and academic adaptation in the new Asian education hubs, such as Thailand (Ha, 2009), South Korea (Jon, 2012; Kim, 2016; Kim,

Tatar, & Choi, 2014), China (Du, 2015), and Taiwan (Chen, 2012; Chou & Lin, 2011; Lau & Lin, 2017; Lin, 2018; 2019; Wang, 2012). This strand of research has found that English, although not the primary language in these newly developed educational contexts, is used as the de facto academic lingua franca. Nevertheless, current research has portrayed a mixed picture of ISs' experiences of using English in Asian universities. On the one hand, some researchers found that ISs' insufficient English proficiency may hamper their social and academic life in non-Anglophone Asian universities (see Chen, 2012; Kim, 2016). For example, Chen (2012) looked into the educational experience of Southeast Asian students in three Taiwanese universities and found that limited English fluency may inhibit these students' participation in English-mediated course discussions. Nevertheless, ISs' English use in non-Anglophone Asian universities is a complex picture that cannot merely be portrayed by individual language proficiency. Some research has shown that ISs' English use may intersect with their ethnolinguistic identities. For example, focusing on two ISs who were advanced English speakers, Wang (2012) found that although the participants used English extensively in their academic and social interaction, they also reported on their experience of racial discrimination, as local Taiwanese tend to valorize ISs with Caucasian physical features or those speaking English with a native-speaker-like accent, while marginalizing non-Caucasian ISs. Furthermore, some research has shown that ISs developed a stronger ELF user identity as a result of engaging in ELF interaction (Ha, 2009; Kim et al., 2014; Lin, 2018). For example, comparing ISs and Korean students' learning experience in English-medium instruction at a Korean university, Kim et al. (2014) found that in contrast to local Korean students who identified themselves as EFL users and emphasized structural accuracy in English use, ISs tended to emphasize the function of English use and perceive themselves as better English users. Similarly, comparing local Taiwanese students' and ISs' participation in English mediated courses, Lin (2018) also found that ISs in Taiwan tended to regard English as a communicational tool with less concern about deviating from native English speaker norms.

In addition to English, some researchers have found that the local language of the host society may also play a role in ISs' interaction at non-Anglophone Asian universities (Lau & Lin, 2017; Lin, 2019; Kim et al., 2014). Even if local educational policies promote English use in internationalized Asian universities, the local language (e.g., Mandarin Chinese and Korean) still penetrates ISs' daily interaction and may impede their participation in social and academic

interactions. For example, Kim et al. (2014) showed that despite English-mediated classroom interaction, Korean is frequently used in the classroom to accommodate the local students. Nevertheless, using the local language in the classroom may lead to ISs' frustration in English-mediated courses because they feel at a disadvantage compared to local Korean students who have contact with the professors and course materials in two languages. Lin (2019) found that both English and the local language (i.e., Mandarin Chinese) were flexibly used to structure the research lab meetings for science-major graduate students in a Taiwanese university. While Chinese facilitates the local students' learning, it marginalizes ISs' participation. In addition to academic interaction, using the local language also challenges ISs' social interaction in non-Anglophone universities. For example, ISs have been reported to have limited social relationships with their local Taiwanese peers due to their limited proficiency in Chinese (Lau & Lin, 2017; Roberts, Chou, & Ching, 2010). It appears that the local language of the host society was identified as a barrier to advance ISs' social and academic interaction in non-Anglophone Asian universities.

To sum up, while current research on ISs' linguistic experiences in non-Anglophone Asian countries has illuminated the multilingual nature and ISs' linguacultural barriers or affordances in the broader learning contexts, much current research has neglected the fact that ISs are multilingual subjects (Kramsch, 2009) who may utilize their multiple linguistic and cultural resources to assert their agency. Although a few recent studies have attempted to examine ISs' experience through a multilingual lens (see Lin, 2018, 2019), Lin (2018) suggests future research that focuses on "situated practices that are interconnected with cultural and linguistic identities developed in relation to their interlocutors within particular sociolinguistic contexts" (p. 199) are needed to understand the multilingual and multicultural learning contexts in internationalized Asian universities. This study, therefore, draws on English as a multilingua franca in intercultural communication (Jenkins, 2015, 2018) as a theoretical conception, looking into how four Asian ISs utilize their multilingual and multi-semiotic resources to navigate their social and academic activities in a Taiwanese university.

English as a Multilingua Franca in Intercultural Communication

Since the early 2000s, ELF has been explored in diverse sociolinguistic contexts, and has emerged as a field of inquiry that challenges the pervasive conception of the native vs. non-native

English speaker dichotomy in applied linguistics. Jenkins (2015) depicted the theoretical evolution of ELF in three phases. In the ELF 1 phase, empirical research focused on codifying ELF varieties and linguistic features that contribute to mutual intelligibility and accommodation strategies used by interlocutors in intercultural communication. This strand of research led to the establishment of the Lingua Franca Core (see Jenkins, 2000) as well as several ELF corpora (see Seidlhofer, 2011). Upon realizing that the fluidity and hybridity of ELF use was insufficiently explained by fixed sets of linguistic features, ELF researchers switched from focusing on forms and varieties to focusing on the variability of ELF as its users engaged in meaning negotiation within specific communities (see Kalocsai, 2014; Smit, 2010). Although the ELF 2 paradigm has started to see intercultural communication through ELF as a dynamic process in which interlocutors may draw from diverse resources to negotiate meaning and identity (Baker, 2015), the concept of multilingualism is still underdeveloped in ELF 2 research (Jenkins, 2015, 2018).

Evolving from ELF 2, ELF has recently been reconceptualized as a multilingua franca (Jenkins 2015, 2018). Informed by critical language theories on multilingualism, English as a multilingua franca (EMF) positions "English-within-multilingualism" (Jenkins, 2018, p. 63) rather than multilingualism being one of the many characteristics of ELF. Jenkins (2015) defines EMF as:

> multilingual communication in which English is available as a contact language of choice, but is not necessarily chosen. … English as a multilingual franca refers to multilingual communicative settings in which English is known to everyone present, and is therefore *always potentially 'in the mix'*, regardless of whether or not, and how much, it is actually used. (pp. 73-74, emphasis as in the original).

Unlike earlier ELF paradigms which conceptualized English as "the communicative medium of choice, and often only option" in intercultural communication (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7), EMF conceives mixed language as the norm in intercultural communication and highlights an individual's multilingual repertoire, not their English (Jenkins, 2018). Put differently, although English is accessible to everyone engaging in intercultural communication, an individual may choose to strategically mobilize the various semiotic resources within their entire communicative repertoire rather than speaking exclusively in English. Furthermore, the notion of a multilingual repertoire highlights an individual's "integrated competence"

(Jenkins, 2018, p. 67) which consists of an individual's linguistic competence as well as their intercultural competence. In addition, EMF emphasizes the notion of "repertoires in flux" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 76), which conceives that an individual's existing linguistic repertoire is unstable and may be changed during the course of interaction.

The conception of EMF invites us to move from identifying English vs. non-English features to portray an individual's multilingual repertoire. Instead of perceiving English as the only choice in intercultural communication, EMF encourages researchers to "explore how ELF's multilingualism is enacted in different kinds of interactions" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 63) and the reasons for the "use, non-use, and partial use of English" in multilingual contexts (Jenkins, 2015, p. 75). Drawing on the conception of EMF, this study examines how four Asian ISs mobilize their multilingual repertoires in their social and academic interaction at an internationalized university in Taiwan.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative methodology (Freeman, 2009; Merriam, 1998), looking in-depth at four ISs' language use at the University[i]—an internationalized university which offers doctoral, master, and bachelor degrees, and where the colleges of science and technology have a world reputation. Located in northern Taiwan, the University enrolled 517 ISs in the 2016-2017 academic year, and the majority of which (80%) were registered in graduate and postgraduate programs (Ministry of Education, 2018). About 60% of the ISs at the University come from other Asian countries, such as India (24%), Indonesia (14%), Vietnam (13%), and Malaysia (8%).

Participants

Four participants were recruited from ISs enrolled in a course on academic English writing for graduate students taught by the researcher and her colleague in the fall semester of 2016. Table 1 shows the background information of the participants. Although from different Asian countries, they shared some similarities in their backgrounds. First, Taiwan was the first overseas study experience for all participants, and they barely had any experience of learning and using Mandarin Chinese before coming to Taiwan. For most participants, except for NJ, who learned English through learning school subjects before coming to Taiwan, their experience of using

English in daily communication in their home countries was very limited. Finally, all participants were science and technology majors and had taken English-mediated courses at the University.

Table 1

Background Information of the Participants.

Participants	Gender	Age	Nationality	Native Language	Degree Objectives	Frequency of Using ELF	Comfort level of Using ELF
TH	M	31	Vietnam	Vietnamese	PhD	Frequently	comfortable
NJ	M	29	India	Tamil English (L2)	PhD	Always	ok
H	M	29	Jordan	Arabic	PhD	Frequently	comfortable
N	F	24	Indonesia	Bahasa	Master's	Always	comfortable

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected between the fall of 2016 and the spring of 2017 through a background questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The background questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was distributed to the participants before the first interview and was designed to provide the researcher with a preliminary understanding of the participants before conducting the interviews. It included background information of the participants, such as their biographical data, their previous experience of learning/using English before coming to Taiwan, their comfort level and frequency of using English in the university, and the places and people they frequently used English with. Two to three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, and each interview lasted between 60 and 100 minutes. The initial interview probed each participant's historical background and future aspirations, including previous schooling experiences, previous English and Chinese use/learning experiences, academic goals at the university, and future career goals. Such background information provided a holistic perspective to understand the participants' current language use and educational experience at the University. The follow-up interviews probed the participants' experience of social and academic interaction at the University, such as their interactions with their academic advisors, course instructors, and peer students. All of the interviews were digitally recorded and all the verbatim recordings were transcribed[ii] for data analysis.

As qualitative data analysis is an iterative and reflexive process

(Freeman, 2009), preliminary analysis of the data was carried out at the early stage of the research by coding the data into categories, including ELF interactions with a) academic advisors, b) course instructors, and c) student peers (i.e., other ISs, Taiwanese students, and co-nationals), since these are the major interactants the participants reported in the questionnaire and the interview. Subsequent analysis was conducted by following the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); that is, salient themes were generated after reviewing the preliminary analysis several times and comparing/contrasting the data iteratively across different categories.

RESULTS

Three themes emerged from the data analysis: a) using English as a social and academic lingua franca, b) ISs as adept multilingual users, and c) developing intercultural awareness through ELF. They are described in detail in the following sections.

Using English as a Social and Academic Lingua Franca

Data from both the questionnaire and the interviews show that the participants used English as the primary language in social and academic interaction with the faculty members and their student peers, despite the fact that they showed different comfort levels and different degrees of using English at the University (see Table 1 for the participants' self-report on their comfort levels and frequency of using English in the background questionnaire). Their experience of using ELF at the University could be portrayed as three sub-themes: a) accommodation and intelligibility, b) using English with co-nationals, and c) influence of local language ideologies.

Accommodation and Intelligibility

The participants highlighted accommodation and intelligibility in their English interaction with the faculty members and student peers at the University. When asked if he used English to interact with his academic advisor, H, who self-reported as frequently using English, responded:

Of course, yes. From the beginning he got my accent. Because,

> he traveled a lot Middle East. And he has been travel to many, most of the world countries. He is fifty-five years old, and he was chosen as a keynote speaker in many different conferences in many different countries, so that's why he is good in involve with many foreigners, many foreigners, so I think that's why he can get my English easily. He never like said, repeat it again, say it again, he never said it to me, while others, they always say it.

N, who self-identified as always using English, also reported English as the major language that she used when interacting with her advisor:

> Because [this is the] first time I come to Taiwan, I don't understand Chinese at all, and I ask my professor, can I speak English to him. At first, he had difficulty speaking English to me because he knows about several terms and also he can speak English but not that well. But as the time goes, he can speak better than before we meet at the first time. Uh, actually, he is not, I mean, he's not really good in English. He's not talking in English in daily life. So, his English is Taiwanese English. But several professors can speak English really well, right? But my professor, his everyday dialogue is Taiwanese, but he can speak English.

It seems that although not all faculty members at the University are fluent English users, their overseas education and work experience have contributed to mutual accommodation in their communication with ISs. In fact, similar to most ELF users' experiences, intelligibility appears to outweigh structural accuracy and standardization for the ELF interaction at the University. Commenting on the English interaction in her lab, N said,

> N: Because [my lab mate] sometimes explain to me with broken English, I just speak to him with broken English also.
> C: What do you mean he spoke to you in broken English?
> N: Sometimes he just said un-understandable things, uh, how can I explain it, I don't know, in my lab, it's always weird English, it's not the English we are talking like this. It's like simple English, and there's no grammar, just as long as you understand what you two are talking about, then it's fine.

Although intelligibility is highlighted in the ELF interaction at the University, mutual understanding usually takes time and exposure for the participants to train their ears and get used to such an interactional dynamic. N's comments on how she was socialized into the ELF

communication at the University portrays the common experience of the participants:

> The first time I came here, I never speak to any English speaker besides Indonesian and I found Indian students, they speak English with their accent and it's really difficult to understand what they are talking about at first. [But] because I have several Indian friends and I talk to them much, as much as I talk to other international students, and then I got used to it. So nowadays I can understand what they are talking about.

The participants' ELF experience shows that for ISs with limited previous experience of ELF communication, it takes exposure over time to expand their repertoire of different varieties of English including "broken English" and to "[get] used to it."

Using English with co-nationals

While it is not uncommon to use English as the primary contact language with faculty members and student peers at the University, the participants also reported occasionally using English with their co-nationals to sharpen their English interaction and to create solidarity with the other ISs. Speaking of the interaction with a co-national who is one of her lab mates and also roommates, N said:

> N: We talk most of the time. We talk in lab, we talk in the room, and when we go out because it's too boring in the dorm so we went together somewhere. We talked a lot.
> C: So you talked a lot in Bahasa?
> N: Yeah, but sometimes she said because we talk too much in Bahasa and our English will keep decreasing because, you know, if we don't talk in a language for some time, your ability will be decreasing, so sometimes she will talk with me in English.

Speaking of the language used on a trip with his lab mates who consisted of students of various nationalities, including his Vietnamese co-nationals, TH said:

> We all use English. Even Taiwanese, when they talk together, Taiwanese to Taiwanese, they also use English, because if they talk Chinese with each other, maybe they feel it's not good for other people, because [we have] lot of international students. So, they said to us like this, we should use English, please don't use

> Vietnamese or Chinese, or French or Indonesian, because maybe it's not good for our relationship. … So when I speak to the other Vietnamese students [in my lab], I speak in English. That's [how] other people understand what we would think. … It's like a rule. It's polite. If you talk together by our national language, maybe other people think it's not good.

The phenomenon of using English with co-nationals, even when the local students are not around, highlights ISs' desire to maintain peer comity and their perceived need to continuously develop their English language competence in a context where English is their primary contact language.

Influence of Local Language Ideologies

While English is frequently used in communication with faculty members and student peers, the participants reported that English interaction with local Taiwanese students is particularly difficult. They commented on the struggle of interacting with local Taiwanese students due to not only insufficient English proficiency, but, more importantly, local students' native speaker ideology which valorizes American English as a more desirable variety of English. For example, while feeling confident using English with his advisor and the other international students, H felt that interaction with his local Taiwanese peers was more difficult than with the other ISs because his Taiwanese peers constantly asked him to repeat his utterances. He attributed such a difficulty to his Taiwanese peers' ideology which regards American English as more desirable:

> I would like to say that, ah, when I talk to all international students, they don't find any problem with me. So, the point here is Taiwanese, they just learned the American accent only. They don't like to learn other accents, because they think that American accent or the U.S. accent is the native language.

Similarly, NJ perceives local Taiwanese students' ideology of valorizing the American variety of English has made them feel themselves to be illegitimate speakers of English. Describing his interaction with the local Taiwanese students, he said,

> I have seen many of [my Taiwanese friends], they feel very inferior to speak in English, they don't come forward, and they don't speak. … They won't come talk to me. They think they are,

> like, there are complexities, like they feel very inferior about the way they speak English because they don't speak perfect English. They think they are, like they are very low in English and they don't come forward and they don't speak English ... My Taiwanese lab mates, they say they can easily understand U.S. English, but they couldn't understand British English. And that's the problem, they couldn't understand Indian English.

From ISs' perspectives, local students' language ideology not only prompts them to perceive themselves as illegitimate speakers of English, but it also interferes with the interaction among Taiwanese students and ISs who do not meet the native speaker criteria.

ISs as Adept Multilingual Users

Although English plays an important role in ISs' social and academic interaction at the University, contrary to the common belief that English is the more desirable lingua franca or the only language choice in an academic context, the analysis shows that English is not always a more appropriate medium of communication for ISs in Taiwanese universities. Daily life at the University usually requires the participants to utilize diverse semiotic tools, including their multilingual resources (i.e., English, the local language, and L1) and multimodalities (e.g., translators, written text, slides, and hands-on demonstrations) to achieve mutual understanding and establish comity. N described how social interaction with the other ISs at the Muslim Student Association, which predominantly consists of Arabic and Indonesian speakers, may take place in English, Arabic, and her L1—Indonesian Bahasa.

> When we are just Indonesian, we will speak Bahasa. But if one of them is not Indonesian, it's because most of them won't understand what you are talking about, we will speak in English. But we have material that we are talking about, if the speaker can't speak English well, one of us will translate Bahasa to English. … Because not all of us are confident enough to speak in English and the material that we talk to each other is not easy English conversation. Mostly, the talk is in Arabic or in Indonesian. The material is in Indonesian. And it's easier for us to understand Indonesian compared to English, so the speaker will speak in Indonesian and Arabic and one of our friends will try to translate it to English to make the other understand what we are talking about.

TH's description of his interaction with lab mates further illustrates that in ELF interaction, ISs not only utilized the multiple linguistic codes in their repertoire, but also developed a sophisticated understanding of how to mix different linguistic codes to create group comity.

> With other international students, of course, your use of English can build a good relationship. However, if you use English with Taiwanese most of the time, it's not a good idea. … Because, the problem is that, if you use English, and other [Taiwanese] people do not understand, so they, I think, they feel nervous, not comfortable. So at least, you must use Chinese, basic Chinese to communicate with them, with Taiwanese. It's better than you chat in English. However, of course with international students, like with Indonesian, Indian or French, Japanese, we use English, it's OK. With Taiwanese, you use English, but you use simplified English, and besides, you should use Chinese. That helps to make a good relationship with them. But it's not just use all of your English. Especially, when I speak, I speak slowly. … When I studied IELTS, I speak faster than now. However, if I speak with Taiwanese, I must speak very slow, very clear, and simplified.

In fact, the data show that ISs had learned to not only strategically mesh different linguistic codes, but also utilize different modalities in their daily interaction at the University. Describing his experience of taking courses at the University, NJ shared his experience of moving in and out of English and Chinese and relying on different modalities, such as written text on the board and Power Point slides to comprehend the message delivered in the course.

> I feel, like, all the courses should be in English because they do take international students, right? But most of the professors, I am not talking about specific professors, it's like there are professors who speak in English and also in Chinese in order to make them understand what's going on, because some students, they don't grasp English that easy. So, they do speak in two, like after they speak in Chinese and then they go with English.
> C: So they switch?
> NJ: They don't switch actually; they'll explain it twice. Like once in Chinese and once in English. A lot of professors do that. There are some professors, they don't speak a single word in English, they just speak only in Chinese, so that becomes really hard to understand. … But because they write some key points on the

> board in English, that helps us to understand "oh they're speaking something." Also, like what the presentation just showed, that will be in English, the presentation slides will be in English.

In addition to slides and keywords on the board, the participants reported utilizing modalities, such as TAs who reviewed course materials in English, hands-on demonstrations, learning materials delivered through YouTube videos, and notes taken by their co-nationals in their L1in their academic interaction.

Developing Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural awareness is defined as "a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time" (Baker, 2011, p. 202). That is, a highly developed intercultural communicator needs to understand how to use language(s) in a flexible and context-specific manner and what ideologies, beliefs, and personal backgrounds that interlocutors may carry when using language(s). The analysis shows that ISs have developed an intercultural awareness through their ELF interaction at the University. They began to strategically monitor their English use (e.g., simplifying language forms, modifying pronunciation, and slowing down their speech rate) to accommodate their interlocutors. For example, when commenting on how he consciously monitored his language use when interacting with people of different language proficiencies, TH showed that he was a flexible multilingual user who was able to adjust his language use based on his understanding of the interlocutors.

> C: You mention that you are close with a postdoc and a senior who are both Taiwanese. So, when you communicate with these two people, what language do you speak?
> TH: With the post doc, I mostly use English. Chinese, sometimes. I use some sentences in Chinese. But most of the time I use English, because this postdoc, his English is perfect. So it's very OK. We can use English.
> C: Do you have to speak slower or simplify your English?
> TH: No need, I can speak fast, he can understand. It's no problem with him. And besides, he wants to improve his English, I know that he wants to go to America, to have a good job there. So he tried to use English every time. Even if I use Chinese with him,

> he also uses English. So, it's no problem with the postdoc. For the senior, I use English and Chinese and it's OK for him. Because, with my senior, his English is poor. However, I speak very slow, and just use basic words, he can understand. He can also use English with other people. However, he doesn't like us to always use English, really. Not all the time. So sometimes you use Chinese, sometimes you use English.
> C: What about your advisor? When you interact with him, do you have to simplify your English?
> TH: No, no need, our professor, he is excellent. He studied lots of year in America. Actually, he is one of the few professors in my department who use English when teaching.

In addition to flexibly using language(s) based on interlocutors' language proficiencies and personal backgrounds, the participants also reported monitoring their language use based on local students' language ideology. H described how he would change his English pronunciation when interacting with local Taiwanese students:

> I'm trying to change my accent a little bit to look like the American accents. Because Taiwanese people they get, most of them get the American accent. So, when I speak to Taiwanese, I change a little bit. I try to speak slowly and why I speak slowly, not because the Taiwanese students they don't have the vocabulary, I bet they have the good vocabulary, but because I need to watch my pronunciation, I need to change like, for example all pronunciation to "a" so they will get it.

As shown in the data, through extensive exposure to ELF interaction, the participants had developed an intercultural awareness. They were able to flexibly mix different languages, and strategically monitor their language use to accommodate their interlocutors' language proficiencies, personal backgrounds and ideologies.

DISCUSSION

Similar to many institutions in the world, the analysis of the four Asian ISs' linguistic experiences in a Taiwanese university shows that English is an important academic and social lingua franca in ISs' daily interactions. These ISs' ELF interactions highlighted mutual accommodation, intelligibility, and group comity; their ELF experience, however, was susceptible to the local language ideology

which valorizes a particular English variety. Furthermore, in light of the concept of EMF, which foregrounds one's multilingual/multimodal repertoire and intercultural competence in intercultural communication (Jenkins, 2015, 2018), the study suggests that English alone is insufficient to explain Asian ISs' language experience at non-Anglophone Asian universities. The participants' language experience at the University shows that these ISs are not only adept ELF users, but also sophisticated multilinguals and competent intercultural communicators. As shown in the findings, the participants mobilized their multilingual repertoire, moving in and out of different languages (e.g., English, Mandarin Chinese, and their L1) and communication modalities (e.g., translators, key words on the board, hands-on demonstration, notes taken by their co-nationals) to achieve mutual understanding and group comity. They also demonstrated an intercultural awareness in knowing how to strategically use the diverse semiotic kits in their linguistic repertoire in ways that are contextually sensible and flexible. As TH eloquently said in the interview: "it's not just use all of your English." In fact, the participants' EMF communication at the University shows that it takes an individual's "integrated competence" (Jenkins, 2018, p. 67) —an integration of multilingual and intercultural competence to participate in interaction at the University. Furthermore, the participants' language experience at the University illustrates the EMF concept of "repertoires in flux" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 76) by showing that an individual's existing linguistic repertoires are always in flux and change during the course of interaction. As commented by the participants, their English interaction at the University may not be easy in the earlier stage of their study abroad, as it takes time and exposure to expand their repertoire of different varieties of English and to learn to mobilize their multilingual resources to achieve mutual understanding in their social and academic interactions.

Along with other studies that have explored ISs' learning experience in non-Anglophone Asian countries (Ha, 2009; Kim et al., 2014; Lin, 2018), the study affirms that studying abroad in non-Anglophone Asian countries affords ISs the opportunity to develop an ELF user identity. As shown in the study, the participants highlighted mutual understanding over structural accuracy and were able to strategically mix diverse linguistic codes/modalities and monitor their language use to accommodate the interlocutors' language proficiencies, personal backgrounds, and ideologies. Since such a linguistic identity is not commonly found in the literature on Asian ISs studying in Anglophone countries, it is suggested that studying abroad in non-Anglophone countries may allow ISs to gain

an alternative linguistic capital that better positions them in a globalized world rather than acquiring a standard variety of English. Furthermore, although existing research on ISs in non-Anglophone countries tends to perceive the local language of the host society as a barrier to ISs' social and academic interaction at host universities (Lau & Lin, 2017; Lin, 2019. Kim et al., 2014), in light of the multilingualism highlighted in EMF, the study shows that ISs' truncated proficiency in the local language may corroborate their ELF user identity as they developed an awareness that, in certain interactional contexts, mixing English with Mandarin Chinese would facilitate group comity and social solidarity. Finally, the study indicates that ISs' ELF identity may not allow them to eschew the ethnolinguistic bias of the broader social milieu. Along with other research on ISs' learning experience in Taiwan (Lau & Lin, 2014; Wang, 2012), the study found that local Taiwanese students' ideology of native speakerism may prompt them to valorize American English as the standard variety and white Caucasians as more desirable English speakers. It appears that the participants' non-Caucasian physical features and non-native English speaking accent misalign with such a language ideology. Hence, despite being competent EMF users who strived to get in contact with the local students by monitoring their language use, the participants still lamented the social distance with the local students, for example as NJ commented, "they don't come forward …They won't come talk to me." It seems that in ELF communication at non-Anglophone Asian universities, the struggle between broader social ideologies and ELF users' ethnolinguistic identity deserves future scholarly attention.

The study also has practical implications for English language education in Taiwan. As Jenkins (2015) suggests, "to be truly international, a university needs not only to adopt a more international approach to the English language itself (i.e. an ELF perspective), but also to be multilingual" (p. 78). To establish a multilingual environment in Taiwanese universities, the English language curriculum at the tertiary level should aim to expand learners' communicative repertoire and cultivate multilingual users in the globalized world, rather than merely reinforcing the internalization of native speaker norms (Ke, 2018). Such a curriculum goal accords with Kubota's (2015) idea of border-crossing communication, which "involves not only English used as a lingua franca but also other languages and promotes active, critical, and reflective engagement in communication across differences" (p. 52). Perceiving English language education as expanding learners' communicative repertoire underscores not only the multilingual/multimodal nature of

intercultural communication, but also the critical reflection on the linguacultural experience. Such a language curriculum would facilitate the interactional dynamics of the diverse student demographics (e.g., ISs and local Taiwanese students) brought by the internationalization of higher education in Taiwan.

CONCLUSION

Employing a qualitative methodology and the conception of EMF, this study investigated how four Asian ISs utilized their multilingual and multi-semiotic resources to navigate their social and academic interaction in a Taiwanese university. Although limited in the number of participants, the study provides an in-depth understanding of how EMF practices take place on the ground within particular sociolinguistic contexts. Such an empirical endeavor is significant in not only enriching current literature on ISs in the new Asian education hubs, but also has practical implications for English language education in Taiwan. Nevertheless, since the study focused on Asian ISs' EMF experience, future research could investigate Caucasian ISs' EMF experience to gain a holistic understanding of how ethnolinguistic identities intersect with EMF use. In addition, lumping Asian students as a single population, the study may have overlooked the nuanced influence of the participants' sociocultural and historical backgrounds on their language experiences at non-Anglophone Asian universities. Future research may adopt a case study approach to take ISs' unique sociocultural and historical backgrounds into consideration.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to understand your background information and experience of learning and using English. It will take you about 10 minutes to fill out the questions.

Part 1 Background Information

1. Gender: □ Male □ Female

2. Age: _____

3. Nationality: _____

4. Native Language(s): _____

5. Academic Department: _____(Department)

_____(year of study)

6. Degree Objectives: _____(e.g., Masters, PhD.)

Part 2 English Learning Experience

1. How long have you been learning English? _____year(s) _____month(s)

2. Have you ever been to countries where English is spoken as the native language?

□ Yes Which country(ies):_____

For how long:_____

For what purpose:_____

□ No

3. Have you ever taken any English proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL, TOEIC and IELTS)?

□ Yes The name of the test: _____

Your score: _____

When: _____(year)

□ No

Part 3 Experience of Using English in Taiwan

1. How often do you use English during your study in Taiwan?
□ Always (100%) □ Frequently(80%) □ Sometimes(50%)
Occasionally (30%) □Rarely(5%)

2. Have you ever taken English-mediated courses?
□ Yes
Name of the course(s):_____
□ No

3. Please rate your comfort level in using English during your study in Taiwan.
□ Very Comfortable □ Comfortable □ OK □ Not Comfortable

4. What social locations (e.g., classrooms, labs, offices, shops) do you use English during your study in Taiwan?
_____
_____

5. Who do you frequently speak English with during your study in Taiwan?
_____
_____

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your patience. ☺

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[i] All names are pseudonym.

[ii] To reflect the participants' ELF use, the transcripts presented in the paper are only minimally modified to increase their readability. Hence, sentence fragments and grammatical errors that do not hinder the intelligibility of the oral response were present in transcripts.