

The Impact of Cantonese Use in English-Medium Classes on Local Hong Kong Students' Identity from a Post-colonial Perspective

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Abstract. In the situation of a rapid increase in English-medium instruction (EMI) in world higher education, we are to examine the public universities in Hong Kong, within that multilingual post-colonial context, English is the major source of teaching and academic capital, and Cantonese also has its place. Previously most of the research has concentrated on the macro policies and ideologies that offer symbolic power for English yet seldom focused on the views of local students and the role of Cantonese in English Medium instruction (EMI) classrooms. Ten local college students are recruited through purposeful homogeneous sampling, and data are collected from semi-structured interviews and then subjected to reflective analysis. It is discovered that students consider English as an important capital source for entering the global world and use Cantonese inside and outside the class as the basis for understanding so as to reduce costs and reduce the communication risks in collaborative tasks. AI tools further make English an efficient source of information, elevating the status of Cantonese for quick understanding and community connection, thus creating the Third Space. The study advocate that Cantonese is a local resource instead of an interference factor, and we mean to make EMI courses and language policies make use of the local language as an interactive resource, thus reducing language burdens, enhancing engagement and learning effects.

Keywords: Post-colonialism, Cantonese Use, Hong Kong Higher Education, English-Medium Instruction

1. Introduction

In recent years, English-Medium instruction (EMI), which is a key sign of higher education internationalization and global competitiveness, has been widely introduced into university classrooms in non-English mother tongue regions, like in Hong Kong, China [1,2]. In order to consolidate their own international status and attract overseas students, the majority of Hong Kong public universities have established English as the main teaching language from an institutional perspective. However, in daily campus activities Cantonese and English coexist for a long time making the campus a place that is continuously negotiating competing and reconfiguring multi-language resources. In this framework, English is not merely a learning tool but is also constructed

into a crucial academic capital as well as a resource symbolizing power [1]. Despite the government constantly emphasizing the concept of "two scripts, three languages" balance among words [3], the university's enrollment strategies and society's view of English as an elite language actually continuously strengthen its privileged position in higher education [2].

Within this institutional framework, Cantonese, being the local language, holds a particularly significant position in the classrooms where English is employed for teaching all over Britain. The official discourse at the classroom level often secretly feels that English should have a dominant position in teaching. Existing research and classroom observations show that local students and teachers often use Cantonese to carry out group discussions, post-class explanations or immediately supplement and clarify in actual content-based teaching (EMI). This approach which is used to relieve the comprehension stress and expression difficulties that come from full English instruction [4,5]. These practices show that in the classroom of Chinese-English mixed teaching, Cantonese is not only a disruptive element but rather a resource that students cleverly take as a sort of. It can play a role in reducing the costs of understanding and expression, maintaining the collaboration among peers as well as the engagement in the classroom, and in some situations, it can bring about a kind of sense of belonging and identity positioning.

Generally speaking the existing research regarding EMI in Hong Kong mostly centers on the macro-level discourse of language policies the language selections of universities and post-colonial criticism which then shows how English is constructed as a resource of social capital and symbolic power at the institutional level. On the other hand, there is also such a situation where there has not been a continuous and systematic qualitative approach to show how local students interpret the value and pressure of English, how to understand the legitimacy and boundaries of Cantonese use, and how to clearly state the specific reasons and functional logic behind code-switching in the micro-learning context. Within this framework, this paper uses qualitative research methods to more elaborately tell about the language experiences and meaning construction situations of local students under the EMI institutional environment. What it intends to explain is the way that they allocate language resources in different learning situations so as to handle the difficulties in understanding and expressing, maintain classroom participation and complete learning tasks. Therefore, it has come up with insights that fit the context and are targeted for the learning support in the EMI classroom used by higher education institutions in Hong Kong.

2. Literature review

2.1. Language application in Hong Kong's EMI classrooms

2.1.1. The role of English in Hong Kong's EMI classrooms and policy influences

EMI refers to the use of English to teach academic subjects, other than English itself [6]. In the context of Hong Kong's higher education, the system which takes English as the medium of instruction originated from the colonial period. During the years when Hong Kong was taking shape, the English colonial authorities had designated English as the teaching language. In 1910, Frederick Lugard stated that mastering English would be "the key that belongs to the grand literature and the ticket which is for the big trade" [1]. Evidently the colonial forces have equated the English language with personal and social prosperity. After Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 the Hong Kong government still continued this tradition in education regarding teaching in English as a symbol of internationalization [3]. For example the University of Hong Kong made itself the first

institution to adopt full English teaching in this place thus having a unique position as an English-teaching university in the Asian education market [1], implies that English has a privileged status.

However, there are obvious differences between the policy statement and the classroom practice, though. Most of the teachers mostly use English for teaching the whole class and giving instructions. The students almost completely use Cantonese in group or paired activities, and only use English at some times when responding to the teacher's questions. Oral communication is usually dominated by Cantonese, and the teaching of truly pure English is quite rare. In college, as was observed in [7], local students mainly use Cantonese during classroom discussions, and only switch to English when having formal questions or making presentations. These studies show that in the local situation in Hong Kong, although EMI is the thing that is stipulated institutionally to be carried out, teachers and students will flexibly make use of Cantonese according to the requirements.

In this study the concept of post-colonialism in the EMI context refers to the situation that countries or regions with a colonial history usually use English as the medium of instruction in higher education. From the perspective of postcolonialism, this institutional English hegemony and the practice of the parallel use of English and Cantonese in the classroom do not merely involve divergent teaching strategies but also reflect the tensions that English as symbolic capital pushes students towards the imagined status of international elites while Cantonese continues to bear the weight of the local belonging and daily identity in the actual interactions [8]. In other words although the EMI policy sets English as the only legitimate academic language at the discursive level at the micro level of classroom practice local students continue to rely on Cantonese to carry out knowledge construction and identity negotiation. The tension that exists between policy discussions and classroom practices brings to light a crucial issue: the ways in which Cantonese is engaged in the learning process of local students within the EMI framework have not been examined and analyzed in a systematic manner up to now.

2.1.2. The actual status and function of the local language in EMI classrooms in Hong Kong

Within this institutional framework dominated by English, the local language Cantonese plays several practical roles in the classrooms where English serves as the medium of instruction. Among group discussions, classmate explanations, and after-school reviews, students depend particularly heavily on Cantonese; only when communicating with teachers or in public places where there are non-local students present do they tend to use English [2,7].

Recently, research from the perspective of language shift has further emphasized that there are some teachers who specifically teach in English and will consciously create a teaching space that both uses English and Cantonese. For instance, in the EMI math class, academic content is presented in English, yet concepts and steps are explained in Cantonese, which lessens the cognitive load and can improve students' understanding and involvement [5]. Therefore, Cantonese in the EMI class is not simply a temporary translation tool; in reality, it is used as cognitive support and emotional comfort.

To summarize, in the EMI classes in Hong Kong, English is positioned institutionally as the only legitimate academic medium while Cantonese plays the roles of academic assistance emotional belonging and community cohesion during classroom interactions. This functional division implies that the dynamics of English and Cantonese usage themselves form an issue closely related to the learning experiences of local students. Although existing research has revealed the widespread situation of English-Cantonese bilingual usage, there is still a lack of in-depth analysis from the students' perspective, such as how they understand these choices, how they actively use Cantonese

in different learning contexts, and what role Cantonese specifically plays as a learning resource when facing the challenges of EMI language.

2.2. Language use and local identity in Hong Kong's EMI context

2.2.1. Local identity

Local identity is the attachment of an individual or group to a place based on experience, memory, and attachment [9]. In the context of Hong Kong the local identity generally refers to the sense of belonging that is of the Hong Kong people's own cultural social characteristics and language affiliation. This identity has multiple significances, which not only include the image of Hong Kong as an international and modern city but also the close connection with local cultural symbols like Cantonese. It was also found that there was no significant difference in the attitudes of different identity groups towards Cantonese and English; both languages are positively viewed, which reflects their deeply-rooted presence in the social identity system of Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, English is often linked with elitism and internationalization, whereas Cantonese is seen as a symbol that maintains local culture and emphasizes the sense of community belonging.

2.2.2. The influence of English and local languages on local identity formation

English also forms part of its local identity. Research indicates that English proficiency is generally regarded as a crucial indicator of social status and academic achievement, which is an important resource for distinguishing competitiveness [3]. In other words English is not simply in opposition to the local identity instead it together with Cantonese gives rise to the dual pillars of the contemporary local identity in Hong Kong. English which is reinforcing that international and competitive self-image while Cantonese which is bearing the local culture part and the community belonging part. When these two elements interweave, a complex scene of local identity comes into being [8].

From the postcolonialism perspective, it is precisely this dual linguistic identity centered on English and Cantonese that shapes the unique contemporary identity landscape of Hong Kong, and this landscape inherently carries a contradiction. English, which is a typical symbol of colonial legacy, and at the present time, is continuously endowed with instrumental value, becoming a channel for modernization, internationalization, and upward mobility, and turning into a significant cultural and symbolic capital. Therefore, English proficiency is to a great extent utilized to distinguish between individuals who are valuable or the others. It is precisely because of this reason that language choice itself has become a key site for identity practice in Hong Kong. On the one hand English represents aligning with global standards and can meet the expectations of international elites, on the other hand using Cantonese can preserve local emotional connections and cultural inheritance. This dual language system supported by English and Cantonese has strengthened the unique identity landscape of Hong Kong. Meanwhile it makes people constantly waver between being global citizens and being locals thus giving rise to one of the core sources of the internal contradictions within the contemporary local identity in Hong Kong [8].

2.2.3. Use of local languages and local identity formation in Hong Kong EMI classrooms

In the classroom environment, an actual manifestation of identity identification is indeed the choice of language. Empirical research shows that switching between English and Cantonese in the classroom usually carries different social significances: using English in public and formal occasions

may signify academic and international identities, while using Cantonese in group discussions or informal teacher-student interactions helps to foster peer trust, reduce power distance and enhance local sense of belonging [2]. In an English academic presentation, and at the same time using Cantonese to explain the specialized terms or complex concepts. This way of conducting things not only enables people to have a better understanding and achieve better learning results but also provides students with practical ways to construct mixed identities that connect academic matters with local connections [2,5]. From a post-colonial perspective, the difference between what happens in the classroom and the official policy shows students' ways to reduce the negative effects of the classroom-only English elements by using language. They keep being absorbed in their studies while maintaining their local identity. In other words, in the immersive Cantonese teaching classes in Hong Kong, Cantonese is not merely an auxiliary resource for knowledge transmission but has become an important channel for identity construction. Overall, the frequency at which Cantonese is used in EMI classrooms, and its functions, as well as teachers' and students' attitudes towards this matter, do provide significant insights into how they position themselves among local culture and globalized situations.

2.3. The practical application of the third space and hybridity theory in EMI classrooms

The concept of the Third Space initially put forward by post-colonial theorist Bhabha in [10] is used to refer to the critical area between the binary opposition of colonizers and the colonized. In this space, cultural meanings and identities are not unidirectionally transmitted from the center to the margins, but are continuously re-constructed through negotiation, resistance and re-interpretation within an asymmetric power relationship. Therefore, the Third Space not only functions as a theoretical metaphor, challenging the orthodoxy of a single culture in the colonial context, but also serves as an analytical framework, emphasizing the self-re-expression of the subject from a middle position.

From the perspective of language practice, the Third Space that can be understood as a new discourse domain emerging from the interaction between the global and the local can have language hybridity acting both as an intermediate tool of knowledge and as a mechanism for generating identity discourse. This phenomenon is by no means merely a simple code mixing; through code conversion, style layering, and the mobilization of cross-language resources, it has covered the meaning systems that were previously divided into global English and local dialects. This makes the speaker able to flexibly move among multiple identity positions so as to deal with the competing demands of global capital, national discourse, and local community norms [11]. From this perspective the language activities within the third space which are not only for information transmission also take part in demarcating identity boundaries and shaping social imaginings by indicating which languages are considered authoritative.

In the educational context, the third space further highlights its importance in the learning aspect indeed. Research that is based on cultural-historical activity theory shows that the classroom is not a single and stable institutional space but rather a mixed activity arena that is made up of diverse mediating tools, role divisions, as well as formal and counter scripts; within this arena, family experiences and school discourses, together with the mother tongue and the dominant language, can lead to new development areas [12]. When learners are simultaneously exposed to their familiar mother tongue and the necessary academic language, the re-coding of key concepts can reduce the cognitive load of understanding complex content and also expand the available meaning resources as well as the participation modes. In other words, the mixed language use in the third space not only reflects multiple identities but also generates cognitive resources that can support

understanding and participation. The acquisition of professional knowledge also comes from the interaction among various languages.

However, the recent discussion about the third space is to remind researchers not to turn it into something that has no political implications. On the one hand, regarding the third space as a safe haven where differences can be naturally eliminated and conflicts resolved may possibly ignore the existing language hierarchy and institutional power dynamics that are always present. On the other hand, the third space itself is fluid and easy to be occupied, it may have the potential of being key and crossing boundaries, but it can also be reconstructed by the discourses of neoliberalism or essentialism [13]. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate the matter of micro-politics into the analysis of the third space at that time. Here in micro-politics, which refers to the delicate power distribution concerning language choices, turn-taking, and evaluation criteria in specific interactive situations, that is, who can use what language to speak, and how these choices are treated.

Based on this theoretical framework this research takes the EMI classroom in Hong Kong as a third space that emerges within the framework of post-colonial structures and university internationalized governance. English, which is the institutionalized orthodox academic code, and Cantonese, which is the local vernacular code, coexist and interweave within the classroom. In this space, Cantonese is regarded as a crucial mediating resource and identity resource. When local students are in group discussions, classroom Q&A sessions as well as informal communications, they use Cantonese to reinterpret abstract theories and professional terms, at which time they simultaneously utilize familiar languages and experiences to reduce comprehension barriers and thus reconstruct the pathways to disciplinary knowledge. Meanwhile, they selectively switch between Cantonese and English to negotiate their attitudes towards English authority and position their local sense of belonging. Through examining the language choices of Hong Kong students within the theoretical framework of the postcolonial third space, this research aims to reveal from the students' perspectives the ideological basis of language practices in EMI classrooms and its actual impacts on the learning process and identity construction. It also tries to provide theoretical foundations for the language policies of universities as well as the language strategies in classrooms. Thus, the following are the three questions this research concerns:

RQ1: How do Hong Kong local undergraduate students perceive the role and value of English in their EMI programme and university in Hong Kong?

RQ2: How do Hong Kong local students view and use Cantonese in their everyday and classroom learning in an EMI university?

RQ3: What reasons do they give for choosing Cantonese, English, or mixed codes in different situations?

3. Methodology

This study intends to thoroughly explore the role that Cantonese plays in the code-mixed Chinese-English teaching classes among university students in Hong Kong under the background of post-colonization and how it functions as a resource for learning and dealing with situations. The research that uses a qualitative methodology for interviewee sampling through purposive homogeneous sampling has selected ten local undergraduate university students in Hong Kong as participants. The purposive sampling is the one in which the researcher consciously selects those who are most likely to offer abundant information for the research objective instead of randomly selecting. Homogeneous sampling that has participants who have common backgrounds, which are their local situations in projects and English teaching, can be used to ensure the accuracy of analysis results. Data collection made use of semi-structured interviews. These interviews, which make use of pre-set

outlines as frameworks, also permit flexible subsequent questions and order adjustments. This kind of method which can ensure the comparability between interviews and can also provide respondents with sufficient space to elaborate on their accounts in detail is quite suitable for exploring students' subtle views on research questions [14]. Interviews were conducted in English, each approximately lasting thirty minutes, and after obtaining the participants' informed consent, the interviews were recorded on mobile phones. After recording, an automatic transcription software is first employed to generate a text draft, and then researchers manually proofread word by word in order to guarantee data accuracy and semantic integrity [14]. Meanwhile, member checking, which means sending emails after the interview to follow up and confirm semantic accuracy, is also carried out, with two strategies used to safeguard the quality of qualitative research [14,15].

The interview guide went through a process of adaptation-pilot-finalization. First, semi-structured interview premises were established. Then, existing literature was retrieved and compiled. After that, an initial version was drafted, and pilot tests were conducted and revisions were made. Finally, non-directive primary questions and supplementary follow-ups centered on interviewees' perspectives were reached [14]. This study adapted and integrated the questionnaire from Song's and Pun's appendix in [16,17], replacing key terms, such as changing "Chinese" into "Cantonese", so as to ensure that the well-modified tool can address the research issues.

The data analysis has employed the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) as presented by Braun and Clarke in [15] because the RTA can allow researchers to keep theoretical sensitivity when carrying out in-depth coding and also in the construction of themes related to language practices and identity narratives. The analysis steps include becoming familiar with data, coming up with initial codes, summarizing potential themes, repeatedly reviewing and refining themes, as well as giving names to and writing out the analysis report. The researchers will make use of interview questions and inquiries to make sure that the responses of the respondents are key, and at the same time the themes are constructed through the interaction between the researchers and the data, and also continuously returning to the original corpus to review and refine the interpretations [15].

From an ethical perspective all the interviewees have consented to the recording of their responses and the subsequent use of the texts and they have already received informed consent forms in written or electronic forms prior to the interviews. This consent form clearly lists the research objectives, data usage, anonymization methods, and the right to withdraw. Guided by Lincoln and Guba's four-dimensional framework, the credibility of this study is enhanced through stepwise focusing and consistency checks during data collection. Following the initial interviews, there is an insignificant iteration of the interview guide so as to make sure that key themes directly related to the research questions are covered among all participants. Meanwhile, negative case analyses will be carried out and systematic efforts will be made to identify narrative contents which deviate from the main trends, and these will be incorporated into the theme refinement and explanation boundaries so as to enhance the interpretability and stability of the conclusions. By elaborately describing so as to achieve transferability which means fully integrating the research scenarios and participant backgrounds into the context in the paper the research findings will clearly distinguish and present different activity contexts thus enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of the conclusions in similar scenarios. Reliability is ensured by establishing a clear audit trail. The records of the interview implementation and the transcription verification process are retained by the researchers, thereby ensuring that the research process is traceable and can be subject to review. Through reflective logs to achieve confirmability, during the analysis period the researchers are constantly recording their stances as well as how theoretical presuppositions might impact coding and theme construction. Each theme in the report is verified with abundant direct quotations from

participants, clearly distinguishing data statements, researchers' interpretations and theoretical linkages [14,15].

4. Results and analysis

4.1. The symbolic status of English is diminished in the learning process

The interview shows that the interviewees generally consider English as a certain institutionalized capital form within the EMI framework, which is rather important for academic endeavors and employment. A certain interviewee directly stated that universities' adoption of English teaching is for the purpose of elevating their international status. And it can also attract overseas students with aspects such as QS rankings and the like. This shows that students are aware of the value of English as an institutional resource and link English teaching with the global orientation and image of the institution. This finding dovetails with the critical interpretations of the internationalized discourses of English-medium instruction (EMI) in related research, which emphatically points out that English is often naturalized as a key resource for global mobility and employability in higher education and is continuously replicated through the interaction of neoliberal logics and postcolonial histories [1,6]. Within this framework, learners' attitudes towards English often manifest as instrumental rationality, in which the rationality of learning English stems from its transferable social returns, such as educational backgrounds, career development prospects, and international opportunities, rather than emotional dependence on or identity projection of the British culture itself [16]. The majority of respondents all point out that the Hong Kong society and employers attach quite a lot of importance to English proficiency, and fluent English means enhanced competitiveness as well as the display of a professional image. For example, there is one respondent who emphatically emphasizes that fluent English is the prerequisite for "making others convinced of your professionalism", otherwise the communication in the workplace will appear to be lacking in persuasiveness. This has confirmed that in Hong Kong, English is not only a communication tool but also an identity marker representing the background of having received a good education and an international perspective as well.

In addition, although the post-colonial language landscape in Hong Kong has not vanished, in the narratives of the interviewees, it has been made normal and has turned into a certain kind of language habit or urban style instead of the source that incites strong identity-related tensions. This phenomenon accords with the views of the third space and hybridity studies where language mixing may be a habitual practice reflecting strategic survival and resource mobilization under multiple norms not necessarily equivalent to identity transformation [10,11]. In this study, the code switching in English is more described as a language habit among Hong Kong people, so when English is mainly used as a tool for communication and competition its cultural attributes are more likely to be downplayed at the level of learners' classroom experiences. Moreover, the tool rationality does not necessarily mean rejecting language learning; instead, it might give rise to a competitive orientation towards the utilization of the multilingual capital. People feel that English is an important capital and learners also feel that mastering other languages is a way of broadening cultural horizons and creating more opportunities [3].

4.2. Further enhanced the tool attributes of English

The infrastructure role of AI tools in EMI learning is indeed becoming increasingly obvious. Functions like automatic translation, transcription, summarization and interpretation make English

more like a technologically mediated information channel, which relieves the risks from direct understanding and also guides learning activities more closely to the institutionalized goals centered on task completion and academic output. This result validates the existing research that depicts the language difficulties which EMI students in Hong Kong encounter in relation to course progression, academic vocabulary, and classroom interaction. When the cognitive cost of English comprehension gets raised, learners will resort to compensatory strategies so as to maintain the coherence of learning [2,7]. With artificial intelligence being introduced these strategies assume more distinct characteristics of technical outsourcing making language change from simply an issue of ability into a part of processes that can be managed through tools as in [5].

Moreover, in the practice of the respondents, AI tools are by no means just optional additional items; instead, they further turn English into a tool that can be controlled. The reduction of cognitive load in decoding content, which otherwise demands immediate language proficiency to break it down into steps so that content can be replicated and simplified through technology during or after class, is what thematic analysis shows. This strengthens the role of English as a means to an end, allowing learners to reduce cognitive load and more attentively refocus attention on disciplinary understanding and academic production [2,5]. The interview data further shows that the applications of AI in the process of students' English learning are quite widespread. Multiple respondents mentioned that lectures are recorded and then converted into Chinese through transcription and translation software so as to have a deeper understanding. Others commonly use ChatGPT to translate English reading materials into their own languages or use automatic summarization to get key points. Such technological support approaches show that students are taking the initiative to use AI for language-related tasks. They delay taking in English information immediately in class and do it later with tools. In this way, English learning becomes more streamlined and mediated by tools, which indicates that students increasingly feel that it is no longer a continuous test of their personal language ability but a manageable and optimizable learning process achieved through technology so as to ensure the successful completion of academic tasks.

4.3. Cross-language division of labour is clearer

When the cost of decoding English is significantly reduced by technology, the classroom language ecosystem, which has a clearer functional division, will come into being. English is increasingly shouldering the intermediary function of institutional academic tasks while Cantonese more prominently demonstrates its irreplaceable nature as a social cognitive resource, especially in low-risk cooperation and meaning negotiation. This indicates that in the institutional structure dominated by English learners will strategically mobilize the local language to maintain comprehensibility and learning quality [5], thus creating a negotiation practice similar to the third space between normative pressure and practical needs [10,12,13].

Meanwhile, interviews show that learners are making slight adjustments between immersive English learning and the demand for comprehension efficiency. For example, some respondents like to take notes in English in order to maintain that immersive feeling in an English environment, but when it comes to professional terms, they switch back to Cantonese, which can facilitate immediate understanding and related memory right away. This phenomenon should be understood as the allocation of cross-linguistic resources according to tasks, not simply because English is not good enough [2,16]. That is to say, the learner's choice of language is not mechanically determined by the strength or weakness of the language but is based on the consideration of the nature and efficiency of the current learning task. English has the authority of professional terms and academic contexts, and Cantonese can ensure the cognitive absorption of complex concepts. Just as one respondent put

it they would "stay immersed in English while using Cantonese so as to ensure the real understanding of the content", which reflects that students clearly recognize and flexibly utilize the strengths of the two languages.

With the further strengthening of the tool attribute of English brought about by artificial intelligence, the irreplaceability of Cantonese is manifested in another two ways: 1. When learners are not able to accurately express concepts in English, Cantonese offers a remedy with low risk; if communication partners do not understand Cantonese, learners immediately convert their Cantonese ideas into English by using translation software, and then cross-language communication becomes convenient. The practice of instantaneously switching between English and Cantonese via technological tools shows the characteristics of resource piecing-together and strategy negotiation in the third space [11,12]. The students do not rigidly adhere to one language nor directly abandon one language but instead flexibly adjust their language choices in accordance with actual situations solely for the purpose of effective communication and attaining relevant learning objectives.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of post-colonialism, this study is to examine the effect of the use of Cantonese in Hong Kong English-medium classrooms on local students. It is discovered that in that institutional academic environment dominated by English students through strategic language practices actively create a third space between global demands and local belongingness. English is regarded as a key capital for academic and professional development, thus its symbolic meaning weakens when it comes to learning, while Cantonese is an irreplaceable cognitive and social-emotional resource that plays a key role in cooperation and identity negotiation. Meanwhile, the integration of artificial intelligence technology further strengthens the practical attributes of English, making students more clearly distinguish functions and more flexibly switch between English and Cantonese.

These findings show that the language practices in English-medium classrooms in Hong Kong are far from just giving priority to English or bilingualism alone; instead, they represent the actual manifestation of students' subjective initiative under structural constraints. By flexibly mobilizing various language resources students not only respond to the colleges' expectations regarding English proficiency but also retain the continuity and a sense of belonging of the local culture this process which not only eases the language pressure in learning but also reconstructs the path of identity formation under the post-colonial context is carried out. It is not an entirely compliant globalization following English nor a rigid adherence to local languages but rather a hybrid identity that is constantly being integrated through mutual coordination. Therefore, in the context of Hong Kong, the third space is not the mediation between English and Cantonese but a micro-political domain that is created by the institutional regulations, the technical infrastructure, and the learners. Through the technology of immediate mediation between two languages students who maintain visibility in the global academic space also reproduce understanding and a sense of belonging in local language resources which manifests as a practice-centered hybrid identity.

Regarding the teaching practice and language policies in which English is used as the medium of instruction, universities need to come to understand the functions and roles of local languages within the academic process and then appropriately integrate those local languages into the teaching support system. When promoting internationalization one should respect and guide students to construct an inclusive and multi-perspective learning space which can enhance academic effectiveness and enable students to integrate their own identities and realize self-worth under the background of globalization and localization. Future research can further focus on the differences in

language use among different disciplines and different student groups in EMI environments as well as the long-term impacts of the continuous evolution of technology on language learning and identity construction.

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