

Negotiating language ideologies and identities in interactions in multilingual contexts: Transnational students in a Hong Kong university

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Internationalisation is an irrevocable trend in higher education worldwide. Students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds study in international universities alongside local students, adding linguistic and cultural diversity to international universities. With such a diversified student body, multilingualism is the norm in international universities, and the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is increasingly commonplace for intercultural communication (Jenkins 2014; Seidlhofer 2011). This paper will report on findings of an ethnographic project on transnational students' language and communication experiences in a multilingual university setting in Hong Kong, with particular attention to their language ideologies and identity construction in interactions. Based on data collected from ethnographic fieldwork in a Hong Kong university, including naturally-occurring spoken interactions involving transnational students and local students on the university campus, in-depth interviews with a group of transnational students, and the researcher's field notes, the study found that transnational students held different language ideologies regarding the roles of English and the local language, multilingualism on campus, and hierarchization of different varieties of English, and that these ideologies were oriented to both explicitly and implicitly in their everyday interactions. It was also found that their different language ideologies impact on their language practices, especially their willingness to speak the local language and to engage in translanguaging practices. Analysis also found that transnational students' identities appear to be shaped by their access to participation in different social networks in the university, and that their participation could be contingent upon whether they possess the linguistic capital necessary to be granted entry to different social networks. While the transnational students were welcomed and recognized as valued participants in communities where ELF was the norm, their participation was severely constrained in communities where the use of the local language, Cantonese, was imposed as the norm by the local students. The findings also show that the use of ELF could be an empowering and enriching experience for transnational students in order to seek legitimacy and develop desirable identities in various communities in the university. It is hoped that this paper will illustrate transnational students' diverse language and communication experiences in the university, and will offer some insights into the complexity surrounding the role of language practices and ideologies in transnational students' identity construction.

Jenkins, J. (2014). *English as a lingua franca in the international university: The politics of academic English language policy*. London: Routledge.

Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.