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Ying Wang[a] (iD) and Dong Jiang[b] (iD)

[a]Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK; [b]Law School, Renmin University of China, Beijing, China

ABSTRACT

In line with China's vision for international education, English medium instruction (EMI) is booming in Chinese higher education, which positions Chinese students in circumstances where they need to negotiate among different commitments, roles, identities, and desires involving individual, national and international agendas. This paper draws on the investment theory and model developed by Norton and Darvin to explore Chinese students' EMI experience in respect of their investment goals, capital, and future identities underpinning their engagement. Informed by the concepts of English as a lingua franca and translanguaging, the paper deconstructs the notion of language in EMI and draws on the data retrieved in one of the top universities based in Beijing that offers EMI courses to Chinese students to examine their investments revolving around the issue of language. The findings show that Chinese students focus on disciplinary identities and national identities that EMI courses facilitate but refrain from imagining their engagement in the international work environment due to low esteems about translingualism as linguistic resources and admirations for English monolingualism as capital that would enable them to embrace international identities. The paper concludes by calling for developing critical language awareness in EMI implementation.

Introduction

In line with China's vision for international education, English medium instruction (EMI) in Macaro's (2018, p. 19) terms that refers to '[t] he use of English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself)' in non-native English-speaking (NNES) contexts is booming in Chinese higher education. For individuals, English and EMI open opportunities to engage in intercultural, multilingual, and international experiences, but previous research has demonstrated that Chinese EMI participants have little awareness of global citizenship and intercultural awareness (Baker and Fang 2020; Fang and Baker 2018). While it is presumably beneficial for Chinese students to embrace intercultural and international associations, it is necessary to understand how they negotiate among various commitments and resources in

EMI experiences in the situation where they are positioned. Bearing in mind that EMI students are stakeholders in education, we are interested to interrogate how they engage in the process of EMI implementation, and what they desire and want through the EMI experience, by delving into their views of the relevance of national identity, which the national language policy values, and that of international identity, to which English opens up possibilities.

EMI has ideally two-fold potential benefits for NNES students, allowing them to learn disciplinary contents while improving their English proficiency. Nevertheless, researchers have observed the tension between the two potentials in NNES contexts. As researchers (Shohamy 2012; Zheng and Qiu 2023) point out, EMI can hinder NNES students' learning of disciplinary contents, cause confusing assessments of their learning outcomes and affect epistemic justice. NNES lecturers often focus on disciplinary delivery and see themselves as limited in supporting students' English improvement (Block and Moncada-Comas 2022). As English is undoubtedly crucial to accessing disciplinary contents in EMI courses, researchers have suggested two issues to be addressed in order to empower EMI participants. One is the reconceptualization of English in EMI. Researchers, such as (Jenkins 2014, 2019; Baker and Hüttner 2016; Murata and Iino 2018; Kuteeva 2020), argue that the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF) is more relevant for EMI than English as a native language (ENL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). Focusing on Chinese speakers, Jinghui (2023) argues that the concept of ELF that addresses Chinese speakers' L1 backgrounds benefits Chinese EMI students. The other is the reconceptualization of language in EMI from a perspective of translanguaging (García 2006; Cenoz and Gorter 2015; Makalela 2015; Li 2018). A considerable body of research has been conducted in this perspective to demonstrate the availability of translanguaging practice and the empowering effects of translanguaging on NNES EMI participants in general and Chinese EMI students in particular (Muguruza et al. 2020; Sah and Kubota 2022; Ou and Gu 2023; Tai and Wei 2023). Combining the ELF perspective and the translanguaging perspective helps us to understand the resources available to EMI participants, addressing the tension revolving around English as a monolingual device for EMI courses, which could ideally yield benefits in both disciplinary knowledge and linguistic capital.

Inspired by Norton's (Norton Pierce 1995; Darvin and Norton 2015) work on investment theories, this paper sets out to investigate students' engagement in EMI by focusing on a Beijing-based university included in the 985 project (Zhang et al. 2013), which flagships Chinese higher education provided to mainstream Chinese students at home and oriented towards internationalisation. It addresses how Chinese students make investments in EMI for the benefits in their disciplinary study, English practice, and potential identities in the future. In what follows, the paper will proceed by discussing the investment theory and its implications for EMI research and then report the study of EMI students' reflections on their EMI experiences.

Investment and EMI

Norton's (Norton Pierce 1995, p. 17) work on investment addresses 'the complex relationship between relations of power, identity, and language learning' and lays the foundation for a further advanced model of investment, as postulated in Darvin and Norton (2015), that incorporates identity, ideology, and capital. The investment theory and model are built upon Bourdieu's (1977) work *The Economics of Linguistic Exchange* with a particular interest

in Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital, which is one of the three forms of capital that Bourdieu sees as essential in social theory – with the other two forms being economic capital and social capital. The investment theory and model consider learning in social, cultural, political and ideological environments and power relations, which have implications for a learner's commitment to the learning process that spans across spatiotemporal frames. As Arkoudis and Davison (2008, p. 5) note, 'a learner's motivation to interact with target language speakers is also mediated by other investments that may conflict with "the desire to speak" (Norton 2000)'. Agency and structure are key to understanding individuals' choices and behaviours in response to the systemic power imposition and mainstream discourses promoted by institutions. Seeing investment as a site of power struggle, Darvin and Norton (2015, p. 42) focus on second language learners' struggle for their right to speak in communicative events as 'indexical of' the communicative order predominated by native English speakers in the world economic order. In their work, ideology, as related to 'a normative set of ideas' which have the power to artificially construct the reality and, in turn, the communicative order (Darvin and Norton 2015, p. 43) is contested in non-native English speakers' interaction with native English speakers. In addition, the investment theory and model equalise an investment in a second language as an investment in the language learner's identity in the future (Norton and Gao 2008). Regarding imagination as a way of establishing community membership, researchers (Norton Pierce 1995; Gao et al. 2008; Gu 2008; Darvin and Norton 2015) seeking to understand language learners' motivations are interested in how language learners frame their futures in their present discourses and thus construct their imagined identities in interactive social practices.

Extending the investment theory and model developed in SLA to EMI research requires us to integrate two kinds of relations. First, linguistic or symbolic capital embodied in language and cultural capital embodied in disciplinary knowledge are possibly conflicting priorities for investments where resources, time and effort are not unlimited in a particular context. While the investment theory in second language acquisition (SLA) focuses on language learning, EMI research attends to both language and content learning. In a metaphorical sense, capital accruements as essential in investment can be examined in terms of teachers' and students' costs and gains of resources in respect of both language and disciplinary contents through investments in EMI experience. As English is key to EMI, many researchers have also considered the role of EMI teachers in supporting EMI students' English and content learning respectively (e.g. Gu 2008; Trent 2008; Block 2020; Block and Moncada-Comas 2022; Karakaş 2023). Dafouz (2018), which appears to be one of the earliest studies that extend the investment theories developed in SLA to content-focused EMI research, reports on teachers' investments for their professional competence and identities as the expected benefits through the implementation of EMI policy. As investment is essentially an issue of choice, an individual EMI participant cannot avoid mediating between the investments for linguistic improvement and content learning in the process of engaging in the EMI implementation.

Second, EMI policy and implementation increase the complexity of the structure-agency interaction that underpins investments made by EMI participants. In terms of EMI policy, the adoption of English rather than a national language in education cannot afford possible conflicts with national agendas, which form the bedrock of the national language policy, which positions the national identity at the core (Shohamy 2012). EMI policy helps to understand an institution's aspirations about students' language and content learning as

well as their imaginations of students' future identities. On the other hand, EMI participants are situated in a complex and multi-layered structure of power that brings together individual desires, institutional and national agendas, and international visions and aspirations. They are also exposed to a wide range of ideologies that institutions promote and mainstream societies produce. The notion of field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) should extend from capturing the power imbalance between native and non-native English speakers, which is core to second language learners' investment, to understanding the hierarchy between EMI participants, who engage in and shape EMI experience, and institutions, which provide policies and guidelines regarding EMI courses as well as the tension arising in desires, aspirations and identities between the two ends of the hierarchy.

In short, applying the investment theory and model to EMI research draws our attention to EMI students situated in institutional, national and international power structures, who make investments on the basis of agentive valuations of capital, expected benefits, rewards and potential identities in the future that current EMI experience could bring forth.

Methodology

The study focuses on the EMI courses provided in the law school in the examined university. EMI courses, such as *Introduction to Anglo-American Laws*, *An Introduction to Equity and Trusts in the Common Law*, and *American Tort Law*, were included in the curriculum as electives, among which students should select to fulfil credit requirements for their degrees. Notably, all EMI courses are related to the Anglo-American contexts. Given the focus of the paper, we can only point out that the connection between EMI and English-speaking contexts-based contents was reproduced in the discourse among EMI participants. This paper draws on the data retrieved through interviews with 18 EMI students enrolled in various EMI courses provided in the school, who volunteered to participate in the project. The research ethics were approved by the Faculty of Humanities and Arts, University of Southampton (Ref. 66983). Research design was discussed between the authors of the paper, and research data were collected by author B, who lectured at the law school in the examined university. The familiarity and shared understanding of the context between author B as the interviewer and the interviewed students facilitated the deepening of the conversations in the form of interviews. Research reflexivity was considered before, during and after interviews for the interviewer to try their best to avoid possible teacher-student power imbalance and make the interviewed feel ensured that they were safe and free to express their views and that they had control over how much they would like to say and how they would like to say.

The language adopted in the fieldwork was generally Mandarin Chinese because it, as a shared L1-based lingua franca between the interviewer and the interviewed, helped to realise easy communication. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2012) was conducted to deal with the data. We first examined the meanings of the discourses in Chinese and then translated them into English when writing up the research results. Given the space limitation, this paper will provide only the English translations of excerpts taken from the data. The translation was conducted by author A and checked by author B, both of whom are proficient users of English and Chinese.

Research findings

Interviewed students reported various performances in attending EMI courses and engaging in EMI activities. Interview analysis highlighted three major themes, namely, (1) investment priority, (2) linguistic capital, and (3) future identities. The three themes interrelate and explain each other to form a generic picture of EMI students' investments. What follows will illustrate the three themes in detail with some data extracts.

Investment priority: language versus content

In general, the data demonstrated that interviewed students desired the accruements in both content knowledge as the cultural capital and English as the linguistic capital in the EMI experience. The finding thus confirms the predominant assumption that EMI serves two-fold purposes, namely, the improvement in English proficiency and the mastery of disciplinary knowledge. The two desires, nonetheless, were not evenly ranked by students, with a general priority given to the mastery of disciplinary knowledge over the improvement in English proficiency. English was seen as both a means for learning disciplinary knowledge and a side benefit of learning disciplinary knowledge through it as a medium of instruction. In extreme situations, students would skip EMI if they perceived English as unhelpful for their learning of disciplinary knowledge; in other situations, they would struggle through the EMI experience if they perceived English as helpful for their learning of disciplinary knowledge. The divided practices combined to illustrate the desire for disciplinary knowledge attainment as core and primary and, in contrast, the view of English as additional and supportive.

As illustrated in Extract 1, students would like to withdraw their investment in EMI, when they felt that the investment in EMI would lead to less benefit than what the participation in Chinese medium instruction and other activities could offer.

Extract 1.

1	S1	I didn't do very well in this course. If you ask me the attendance rate,
2		perhaps only around thirty percent of the classes. This estimate, eh,
3		takes in some online classes at a later stage. So the engagement, the
4		engagement in the course, eh, actually when I decided to take this
5		course, I really hoped to be dedicated to it, so that I could improve the
6		legal English, the law subject knowledge, and the English proficiency.
7		But, uh, because there were other (things) during the term, like the
8		internship, and other courses, such as other subject courses provided by
9		the school, and other things which needed to be dealt with, I was
10		diverted away from my original thoughts during the implementation
11		(of the original plan). I also felt, uh, for the study via EMI perhaps I
12		was too narrow-minded and short-visioned, but I was affected by
13		objective factors, so, uh, the course was left aside a bit, so, uh, not
14		many people stayed in the course until the very last. Uh, my own
15		feeling, actually I feel regretful, I mean, I should have attended more
16		and experienced more.

In response to the interviewer's invitation for some comments on his own performance in an EMI course that he reported to have attended, S1 provided rich information about his own investment in EMI and a glimpse of fellow students' investments in EMI. He

admitted that his attendance rate was low and expressed complex feelings about his involvement. Echoing all other students, he articulated his belief that an EMI course could offer him opportunities to improve in legal English, content knowledge and English proficiency in general (lines 5–6). In practice, however, he skipped some EMI classes to give time to other courses and things (lines 7–10). At the contextual level, other courses refer to non-EMI courses provided by the department, as S1 reported earlier in the interview that he only registered on one EMI course provided by the department. It is possible to say that EMI was treated by S1 as additional to what was regarded as necessary and more important preparations for his career development.

The extract tellingly reveals S1's negotiation between English and other commitments related to his career development. Skipping some EMI classes was not a pleasant option, as it caused S1's regret and self-criticism (line 12). The self-judgement of narrow-mindedness and short-vision implies his view of EMI as a long-term investment that could bring him long-term benefits. He soon excused himself by owing to 'objective factors' (line 13), which, at the textual level, pointed to roles and duties more urgently required for his career development. The notion that *not many people stayed in the course until the very last* (lines 13–14) served the effect of supporting his choice between EMI attendance and other commitments. Simultaneously, it provided a glimpse into fellow students' engagement in the EMI course, aligning with the general picture that uncovered other students' reflections on their performance in EMI courses.

The prioritisation given to non-EMI courses implies that the medium of instruction makes a difference in students' investment in learning activities. This interpretation finds its support in broader data that revealed students' struggle with English as the medium and the preference for a non-EMI course for the sake of disciplinary content learning, although all students admitted that EMI offered opportunities for English learning.

Linguistic capital: English monolingualism versus translingualism

By delving into EMI students' engagements with EMI courses, we were able to examine how they perceived linguistic capital involved in EMI experiences. Students' evaluation reveals an interesting contrast between English monolingualism as desired capital, which, however, appears to be a bondage at the implicit level, and translingualism as a 'shameful' resource at the explicit level. Either was a thorny choice for students.

English monolingualism

Interviewed students highly regarded English as valuable for potentially accessing the knowledge of law scholarship and profession in three different but interrelated contexts, which are English-speaking countries, the West, and the world. By deconstructing the notion of English, we were able to comprehend that the notion was often valued by the students in a monolingual sense, which related English to definite, bounded territories, which were coincidentally the powerhouse of the law scholarship in the students' eyes.

A shared logic among interviewed students was that both English and the leading law scholarship reside in Anglo-American countries to make EMI the best choice for learning law subject contents. As illustrated in Extract 2, S1 made a statement about the connect

among EMI, the law subject area, and the origin of both English and the law subject area in Anglo-American contexts.

Extract 2.

1	S1	Uh, through EMI, you can understand some, uh, for example
2		comparative law, for example trust, they are originally part of
3		Anglo-American law systems. If you approach them through EMI,
4		you could better understand the terms, the terminology … EMI can
5		make you understand the disciplinary subject, the terms, their
6		development, how they have become them today, this will help us
7		China to incorporate the understanding with our local practice, so
8		we can transform the knowledge creatively for application.

The focus on territory and ownership reproduced the language essentialism, which underpinned the desire for EMI. Extract 3 reinforces the connect between language, knowledge and ownership, by bringing in the idea that Chinese as a medium of study suits the study of the Chinese law system (lines 2–3).

Extract 3.

1	S16	Uh, I would say, the law system at home, the Chinese law system,
2		would be better taught through Chinese as a medium of instruction,
3		because the law system is Chinese itself, if you ask me to use
4		English, switch to English for learning the topic area, I don't think
5		it is useful for understanding the law system. But for laws, foreign
6		laws, Anglo-American laws or European laws, I would prefer they
7		are taught through EMI. Really depending on the content of the
8		course.

Moving beyond the default connection between English and knowledge in Anglo-American contexts as the perceived birthplace of the English language, S16 situated English in a broader context and presented the view that EMI facilitates the understanding of laws in the West that highlights *Anglo-American* and *European* countries (line 6). However, the perceived connection between English and contexts beyond the bounded English-speaking territories cannot be merely interpreted in descriptive terms, revealing a view of English with ideological values – such as modernity, advancement, advantageousness, leading position, and power, in favour of English-speaking countries. In the same vein, many interviewed students tended to see the potential value of English for accessing the knowledge of the world. In an attempt to justify the value of EMI, for instance, S13 regarded the Western laws as nurtured in the modern times and the West comparably more advanced and advantageous than other unnamed parts of the world in general in the law subject area (see Extract 4).

Extract 4.

1	S13	… in the modern times, Western laws have been more, uh, more
2		advanced, uh, and then more advantaged, if we adopt EMI, we
3		would be closer to the authentic context of modern laws, let's say,
4		for example, 法制 (law system) and 法治 (rule of law), the two
5		things, if you explain in Chinese, you would spend much more
6		time and give a lengthy account of their meanings, their
7		implications, but if you use English, just a proposition can help you
8		to easily understand the relationship between *rule* and *law*, I think
9		so.

The West is regarded as the owner of modern laws and ascribed as the authority, with the discourse that notes its authenticity (line 3). English is compared with Chinese to be more efficient in expressing ideas related to modern, advanced and advantageous places of law studies, through the examples of *law system* and *rule of law* (line 4, line 8) and the example of an English proposition (line 7).

Echoing the recurrent voice for English as the best medium of instruction for accessing advanced knowledge in the law subject area, S5 made a claim that brought home the power of English-speaking countries in producing both English and the knowledge of law in the world (see Extract 5).

Extract 5.

1	S5	EMI is for, like some international organisation, higher education
2		institutions, university collaborations, I just feel, uh, in the field of
3		law scholarship, the academic discursive power are actually in the
4		control of universities, like Oxford and Cambridge (in the UK), and
5		Stanford in the US, I mean, the law schools in the Chinese-speaking
6		country, in China, are not that high-positioned in the global
7		scholarship of law.

S5 began by relating English as a default language for international arenas to knowledge in the global context. In explaining the link, she reproduced the discourse about the 'control' of the UK- and US-based producers of knowledge (lines 4–5) in contrast with the lack of competitiveness of law schools in the Chinese context. English as linguistic capital is better valued than Chinese as linguistic capital in exchange of the knowledge for laws in the world as cultural capital, with a focus on English monolingualism.

In short, 'the social conditions of the possibility of linguistic production and circulation' that Bourdieu (1977) considers in the theory of 'relations of linguistic production' appears to be in favour of English, given the spread of English as a global language. The high value of English is thus desired by the students in the data, explaining their understanding of English as mobilised linguistic capital in the world that could be exchanged for cultural capital in the form of disciplinary knowledge.

Translingualism

What is labelled as EMI courses in the curriculum takes various forms in implementation, which include monolingual EMI, bilingual EMI and even CMI. This is not only observed in classroom practice but also reported by EMI participants who were interviewed. In a broad sense, all other forms of practice than English-only medium instruction can be categorised as translanguaging practice, which highlights the transcending between and across bounded languages and modalities. Translanguaging as a way of coping with EMI courses occurs across learning, teaching, and assessing processes.

In Extract 6, S5 comments on her EMI experience, providing us with insights into how translanguaging worked as a resource in the accumulation of disciplinary knowledge as cultural capital:

Extract 6.

1	S5	It's quite difficult for me to do assignment, and I know, uh, I'm
2		not the only one, most of my classmates also relied on the Baidu
3		Translate when they did the final English-medium assignment,
4		and some of them even wrote the [whole] essay in Chinese first, then
5		put it directly in the Baidu Translate, then they adjusted the translated
6		version. But I try to write on my own and see if I can write it in
7		English, if there is something I can't express in English, I would
8		use Baidu Translate, it is very challenging indeed, much more
9		Challenging than writing my Chinese essay.
(a few turns later)		
10	S5	The [EMI] teacher switched to Chinese sometimes, but most of time he
11		used English, so he interspersed English medium teaching with
12		Chinese, it was easier for me to understand, like um, for some of the
13		difficult questions he spoke [English], he then repeated them in
14		Chinese, I think that was very good.
15	B	Many students said similar things, and they said bilingual teaching
16		could be more advantageous.
17	S5	Yes, bilingual classroom is more advantageous indeed.

S5 values Chinese, bilingualism (consisting of English and Chinese), and machine translation as useful resources and strategies for effective engagement in the EMI experience. When the interviewer noted the advantageousness of bilingual teaching, she agreed without any hesitation. Despite its pragmatic value, however, translingualism is often disregarded as unfavourable. After acknowledging the helpfulness of translingualism in coping with EMI courses, S5 turned to express a negative feeling about Chinglish, which formed a source of low esteem (see Extract 7).

Extract 7.

1	S5	I can express myself indeed, but I am rather, uh, I am a perfectionist,
2		I mean, you either don't speak or speak standard, uh, because I'm that
3		kind of test machines born in small towns, my oral English is not
4		very good, many of my classmates, uh, they are from Beijing,
5		Shanghai, or other big cities, they received good education of
6		English, uh, perhaps I haven't worked hard enough, their spoken
7		English, I mean, I often feel low esteemed in front of them, if I speak
8		in the big class, I would feel, if I speak Chinglish, I would seem to be
9		stupidly showing off my weakness.

S5 explicitly relates speaking Chinglish to stupidity and weakness (line 9). The discourse about 'test machines from small towns' (line 3) in her expression has a strong resonation in the society that describes those with less economically advanced backgrounds who are only good at exams but have failed in many aspects of a 'perfect' person with a colourful and dynamic life. She expressed her low esteem in comparison with other students who spoke better Englishes. Her frustration is tellingly revealed in the extract in the textual context that she self-defined as a 'perfectionist' and looked to 'standard' English as a benchmark. She blamed herself in a gentle way by saying, 'perhaps I haven't worked hard enough', revealing a sense of failure. Thus, Chinglish is not only associated with those who lack a good education in English but also with those born in disadvantageous backgrounds.

While S5 expressed the complex feeling about translingualism, which was shared among many interviewed students, the notion of *native language shame* attracted our attention as alarming in S13's interview data (see Extract 8):

Extract 8.

1	S13	I mean when I speak, the words would pop out of my mouth one
2		after one clumsily.
3	B	Uh, are you mindful of your English when communicating with a
4		foreigner, I mean your teacher, a foreign teacher, are you mindful
5		that other people would say, uh, we are speaking Chinglish?
6	S13	I am very mindful. There is a notion, that is, native language, native
7		language shame. I think this is mainly about a second language, it
8		makes one feel a lack of full control and scruple when
9		communicating in a second language.

After S13's expression of her unhappiness that she was not fluent in expressing herself in the EMI experience (lines 1–2), the interviewer raised a question about Chinglish, a notion that was frequently used in the data when students described their own language performance. S13 immediately related Chinglish with a 'native language shame' (lines 6–7). As she explained, the shame was caused by the presence of a 'native language' in a second language, which reminded us of the term 'L1 transfer' in second language learning. In her view, L1 transfer shows a lack of full control and shamed her.

Therefore, translingualism as a salient strategy that students adopt in coping with EMI courses is often valued unfavourably. Whilst English monolingualism is often associated with prestige, advancedness and modernity, translingualism is devalued for lacking these connections.

Future identities afforded by EMI

Future identities as an important aspect of investment drew our attention to interviewed students' imaginations about their future selves and communities in which they desire to engage. We were particularly interested to comprehend the affordance of EMI to the imaginations. Where EMI was relevant, the interviews unsurprisingly brought to light a sharp focus on the professional identity in the students' imaginations about their future. Surprisingly, while EMI presumably opens opportunities for improving English proficiency and preparing students for international work environments where English serves as a lingua franca in the global context, interviewed students rarely imagined international identities that EMI experiences could afford them personally. By contrast, many students acknowledged the value of EMI for national development and, in turn, the national identity in international commitments. Notably, throughout the data, the pragmatic value of EMI underscored students' evaluations of what EMI could offer to their future selves and potential contributions to communities with which they hope to connect. What follows will present three extracts to illustrate the said identities that students imagined or refrained from imagining.

As illustrated by Extract 9, professional skills and competence are core to the interviewed students' imagination of their future selves.

Extract 9.

1	B	Do you think attending EMI courses would give one a sense of
2		superiority over those who don't attend? Uh, EMI makes you a better
3		student? This kind of thing?
4	S16	I don't think we can view it as superiority, perhaps it makes one more
5		competitive, I should say.
6	B	Uh, what do you mean by competitive?
7	S16	I mean, uh, no matter if you, uh, apply for some project fundings or
8		look for a job after graduation, in the sector of law profession,
9		English is regarded as rather important, uh, if your English level is
10		higher than competitors, or if you have English competence, you
11		would be more competitive in the job-hunting, your knowledge
12		would, because you have learned more knowledge than others, I think
13		that would make you more competitive.

S16 envisioned a professional identity to which he thought EMI experience would contribute. Explicitly, he commented on the advantages of English in funding applications and job hunting (lines 7–13), suggesting that EMI offered opportunities to enhance English competence that was valuable for professional duties and commitments (lines 9–11). Implicitly, he implied that an EMI student would 'have learned more knowledge than' non-EMI students (line 12). It is necessary to draw on the knowledge of the curriculum provided to law school students to figure out that S16 meant that EMI courses provided not only an alternative means of instruction but also exclusive disciplinary contents. The two benefits were viewed by S16 as advantageous elements in a competitive candidate for professional service. In commenting so, he presented himself as a knower of the professional field.

While his comments on EMI focused on its pragmatic value for professional opportunities, S16 rejected to view EMI as ideologically dividing people between superiority and inferiority (lines 4–5), foreshadowing a respect for equal memberships within the national community and thus a commitment of national identity. Extract 10 brings S16's national identity home, illustrating how S16 discursively constructed the national identity and how he considered the role of EMI in maintaining the national identity in the global setting.

Extract 10.

1	S16	[…] the courses serve the purpose of connecting you, uh, China
2		with foreign countries, getting connected with the world. […] I think
3		they mainly serve trading, the economic communication and
4		development […] if you don't have the mastery of English, you
5		can't develop the trade and economy, so you offer the English
6		(medium courses), […] to train law professionals who understand
7		foreign laws or who can use English to […] deal with law-related
8		work, […] your ultimate destination is […] the society, […] your
9		employment still has something to do with the development of the
10		society […] I learn the language, I can better connect with the
11		international, or increase our impact in the world, as a student, I
12		learn those things, when I enter the society, I contribute to the
13		development of the society, I think, you are actually still keeping
14		the Chinese identity, your contribution at the end of the day, is
15		indeed the contribution to the nation.

The extract is a response to the interviewer's question about the impacts of EMI, which takes the place of Chinese medium instruction, on students' national identity. In the

lengthy reaction, S16 noted two direct connections that EMI courses served. One is the connection between China and the world; the other is that between Chinese students on EMI courses and Chinese society. In the first half of the extract (lines 1–6), S16 used the pronoun *you* to refer to 'China', as clearly illustrated in line 1. EMI courses were regarded by him as useful to serve China's needs to connect with the world, by training law professionals who could understand 'foreign laws' (line 7). The word *foreign* implies a perceived boundary around China and a perceived relation between *us* and *them*, which, in Anderson's (1983) work, suggest a sense of national identity. In the second half of the extract (lines 7–15), S16 turned to comment on the future identity of an average Chinese student in EMI courses, by focusing on employment and contribution. By using the pronoun *your* (line 8), S16 adopted the position of speaking to imagined audiences who he thought should be aware of the purposes of studying in EMI courses. He then switched to using the pronoun *I* (lines 10–12) to adopt a narrative identity that presented a sort of inner monologue about the relations among 'I' 'as a student' (line 11), the Chinese society, and the world. In his words, the connection between 'I' and 'the international' materialised through the competence in English serves the purpose of increas(ing) 'our impact in the world' (lines 10–11). The notion of 'our impact in the world' implies both a 'we-group' and a 'future orientation' on the community, which reveal a sense of national identity (Wodak et al. 2009). In a consistent manner, S16 ended the comments by emphasising individual EMI students' contribution to 'the nation', foregrounding a commitment to 'the Chinese identity' in the future (lines 14–15). By strengthening the two connections, the direct links between individuals and the international selves appeared to be softened and marginalised.

Like S16, other interviewed students acknowledged the value of EMI for national development and national identity but refrained from imagining themselves in international work environments in the future. Aligning with previous research on Chinese speakers' language ideologies revolving around ELF (Wang 2018, 2020), the data show that Chinese students saw the Chinese national community as part of the wider international community and rejected the view of nationalism in conflict with the globality. The reason behind the conservation in imagining an international identity lies in practical terms. All the interviewed students tended to conceive of EMI courses as limited in preparing them personally for potential international work environments.

For instance, S12 was pessimistic about the future possibility of engaging in international communities on the basis of his EMI experience (Extract 11):

Extract 11.

1	S12	[…] perhaps my performance in the classes was not good enough,
2		it (EMI experience) has effectively shattered such a kind of belief and
3		goal that I could have had.

Another student, S14, who was confident in his English, argued that the EMI courses were limited in preparing students for the disciplinary knowledge and skills needed for international work environments in the law profession (Extract 12):

Extract 12.

1	S14-178	If I am going to choose that career path, the courses provided by the
2		university at home cannot suffice and I would definitely go abroad
3		to study on a one-year programme, or something like JAD. After
4		that, you can really manage to handle the international work, I think,
5		the courses taught at home can only introduce you to the area, it is
6		not possible that a few courses could prepare you well for a job like
7		that after your graduation, it would be far from enough.

In a word, EMI students' imaginations of future identities afforded by EMI focused on professionality, nationality, and international connection-making. While EMI is perceived as helpful in accumulating both linguistic and cultural capital in the national job market, students lack confidence in the capital that EMI brings to their engagement in the international environment.

Discussion

The current study followed Darvin and Norton (2015) understanding of the interconnections among identity, capital, and ideology within the sociological construct of investment. In general, such understandings productively explain that EMI students' investment decisions hinge on expectations of returns, assessments of capital, which they either possess or can accumulate through learning, and imaginations of future identities. Necessarily, the current study developed a few steps further from Darvin and Norton (2015) work on investment in SLA, which focused on English as a subject of learning, to allow for a conceptual mapping of investment in EMI, which focuses on English as a medium of learning and explains the complexity that increases due to the dialectical relations and the dilemmatic decisions between disciplinary content and language development at multileveled and multifaceted social and ideological contexts. The stepping stones benefit from and align with works by a few other researchers that present increasingly deepening and complicated integrations between investment and EMI. Initial attempts are found among researchers interested in EMI students' L2 English investment in EMI environments (e.g. Trent 2008; Sung 2019), which automatically treat disciplinary knowledge as an objective, outcome or means of L2 English proficiency development and thus leave the possibility unattended that EMI students might prioritise the learning of disciplinary contents over the development of L2 English. This does not mean that researchers are unaware of the significance of disciplinary knowledge in engaging future identities relevant for EMI students' imagination. Sung (2020), for instance, points out that EMI students find that L2 English proficiency does not sufficiently support their needs for out-of-classroom communication about disciplinary content due to the gaps in disciplinary knowledge. Sung (2023) takes a step further to develop a concept of multilingual investment by integrating the concept of multilingualism with the sociological construct of investment, offering explanations for the complicated and dynamic interactions among identities and language ideologies revolving around multilingual investment in EMI environments. Dafouz (2018) departs from treating EMI as a space that holds various learning experiences to conceptualise EMI within the framework of ROAD-MAPPING and provides a pioneering integration between EMI and investment

at the conceptual level. Her work focuses on EMI lecturers' identities and reveals many concerns about bilingualism (Spanish and English) and teachers' commitments to EMI. Qin's (2022, p. 83) report on Chinese teachers and students' bilingual ideology and identities in EMI concludes that 'the predominant ideology of bilingualism influenced the micro-level stakeholders' ideological stances and imagined identity construction', which highlights the role of language ideology in EMI experience. The current study pieces together the insights provided in previous studies and extends to the perspective of translingualism to map an understanding of EMI experience onto the sociological construct of investment. It thus offers theoretical contributions to EMI investment that outgrows Darvin and Norton (2015) model of investment in three aspects, namely, (1) English as a medium of learning vis-à-vis English as a subject of learning, which invites our attention to the dilemma between disciplinary knowledge and semiotic resources in EMI, (2) a research perspective that differentiates English monolingualism and translingualism, and (3) the centrality of language ideology in EMI experience and expectations.

The investment approach to EMI helps us to go beyond what EMI can offer to discern what EMI students should have achieved through EMI experience in what conditions. It is well recognised that EMI has the potential to prepare students for the engagement in international communications (Block 2020; Block and Moncada-Comas 2022). In Iwaniec and Wang (2023, p. 1563) questionnaire survey among 247 university students in a range of universities in China, motivations to enrol in EMI courses appear to include 'opportunities for contact with an international communication'. From a view of investment, Sung's (2020) research participants report that such opportunities could be affected by the cultural capital that they possess. The current study illuminates that realising the aspirations for such opportunities could be affected by evaluations of linguistic capital. As far as the current study is concerned, the distance between aspirations and affordances can be considered in terms of a translingual shame, a constrained imagination on identities, and a knowledge gap in understanding what language is.

In discussing the economics of linguistic exchange, Bourdieu (1977, original italics) makes a distinction between '*relations of communication*' and '*relations of symbolic power*' to understand linguistic issues from the perspective of capital. The current study reveals a delicate symmetry between translingualism as valuable in *relations of communication* and English monolingualism as desirable in *relations of symbolic power*. The former is often aligned with a sense of shame in contrast with the latter, which is highly valued in terms of capital but hinders students' engagement in disciplinary learning. To empower EMI students, a critical understanding of translingualism vis-à-vis monolingualism is necessary to be developed rather than simply letting translingualism silently work as a shame. Associated with the translingual shame is a constrained imagination of future identities. While focusing on professional and national identities, Chinese students refrained from imagining international identities as individual participants in international communities. The limitation on imagination relates to what Chinese students regard as insufficient preparation that EMI courses could provide in terms of both linguistic and cultural capitals. The issue with linguistic capital takes us back to the question of language in EMI. Researchers have increasingly established the need to conceptualise language in terms of translanguaging and ELF to narrow the gap between practice and ideology where EMI is relevant (Baker and Hüttner 2016; Jenkins 2019; Li 2018; Minakova and Canagarajah 2020; Sah and Kubota 2022; Tai and Wei 2023; W. Wang and Curdt-Christiansen 2019).

Nevertheless, what is known to researchers might not be known to general Chinese students. In the current study, students tend to desire English monolingualism and devaluate translingualism, although they struggle with English monolingualism in power and benefit from translingualism in practice. The knowledge gap thus needs to be addressed to minimise the discrepancy between practice and ideology in EMI. In turn, students can become more courageous to imagine their engagements in international work environments to make the most of their EMI experience.

Conclusion

This paper draws inspiration from the investment theory and model developed by Norton (Norton Pierce 1995) and Darvin and Norton (2015) to explore Chinese students' EMI experience in a top university based in Beijing. Informed by the concepts of ELF and translanguaging, the paper deconstructs the notion of language in EMI and brings in a translingualism perspective to conceptualise EMI investment that captures the complicated dynamics of interactions among identity, capital, and investment hinged on language ideology. From the perspective of capital, we can see that Chinese EMI students are situated and struggling among translingual resources available to everyday EMI experience, agentive needs for future identities, and the perpetuation of English monolingualism in a wider context of the disciplinary domain. The findings show that Chinese students focus on disciplinary identities and national identities that EMI courses facilitate but refrain from imaging their engagement in international work environments due to a devaluation of translingualism as linguistic resources in contrast to an overvaluation of English monolingualism that presumably serves international communication exclusively.

The study thus suggests that two issues should be addressed to empower students as the agents in EMI experience and increase the effectiveness of EMI agendas in Chinese higher education. One issue lies in the devaluation of translingualism as capital. The other resides with the restrained imagination about future identities which English, the notion of which is problematically associated with English monolingualism, contributes to in the international work environment. The two issues call for the development of critical language awareness that focuses on translanguaging and ELF (Jenkins 2015; Pennycook 2017a, 2017b; Canagarajah 2018, 2020) and that, for the sake of Chinese students, illuminates how Chinese speakers effectively engage in intercultural communication through translanguaging and claim their ownership of English (Wang 2020, 2024). As developing critical language awareness requires institutional and teacher support, it is helpful to raise the concerns to the institutional level.

Whilst it is an institutional objective to maintain Chinese students' sense of national identity, it is vital to develop students' sense of global citizenship by which they could contribute to rebuilding the sociolinguistic profile in the professional domains at the global scale. The aspiration for English monolingualism in the current study relates to the belief of the native English speakers as the default producers of knowledge and NNESs as the learners or consumers of knowledge, echoing scholars' concern about the underrepresentation of the global south in knowledge dissemination (e.g. Demeter 2020). Only when more NNESs are engaging in the disciplinary fields at the international level can the profile of English speakers in the professional domains at the global scale be enriched to counter the dominance of English monolingualism in the profession.

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ORCID

Ying Wang 🔟 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8332-8500
Dong Jiang 🔟 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6686-9153

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