

Exploring Indonesian Student Interns' Motivation and Communication Strategies in English-Mediated Workplace Interactions in Taiwan

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Abstract

International internship programs expose International internship programs place students in multilingual workplaces where effective communication requires both language competence and adaptive communication strategies. However, limited research has examined how Indonesian student interns navigate English-mediated workplace communication in Taiwan. This qualitative case study investigated the motivations and communication strategies of five Indonesian student interns from the hospitality, food service, and manufacturing sectors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The findings revealed four major themes: (1) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to communicate, (2) communication barriers in multilingual workplaces, (3) communication strategies, including code-switching, translation applications, gestures, and support from bilingual coworkers, and (4) communication development through increased confidence, language growth, and workplace adaptation. The findings indicate that successful workplace communication depends not only on language proficiency but also on learners' motivation and their ability to employ flexible communication strategies. This study contributes to the literature on English-mediated workplace communication and international internships while offering practical implications for preparing students for multilingual professional environments.

Keywords: *International internship; workplace communication; communication strategies; multilingual workplace; English as a Lingua Franca.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become the primary language for communication in international professional environments, serving as a *lingua franca* among individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Rather than emphasizing native-like proficiency, English as a *Lingua Franca* (ELF) prioritizes mutual understanding and successful communication among speakers who do not share the same first language (Seidlhofer, 2011). In international internship programs, English functions not only as an academic subject but also as a professional tool that enables students to perform workplace tasks, participate in meetings, and interact with supervisors and coworkers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Communication in international workplaces, however, is considerably more complex than communication in classroom settings. Besides possessing adequate English proficiency, interns are expected to adapt to different workplace cultures, communication styles, and professional expectations. Previous studies have shown that international internship experiences require students to develop both linguistic competence and intercultural communication skills in order to function effectively within multicultural organizations (Lin & Tseng, 2020; Chen & Wang, 2023). In multilingual workplaces, communication difficulties frequently arise from language differences, unfamiliar accents, workplace routines, and culturally shaped interactional practices.

For Indonesian students undertaking international internships in Taiwan, these challenges become even more demanding because communication often occurs through multiple languages, particularly English, Mandarin Chinese, and Taiwanese. English commonly serves as the shared language among international employees, whereas local supervisors and coworkers frequently rely on Mandarin or Taiwanese in daily interactions. Consequently, Indonesian interns are required not only to communicate effectively in English but also to adapt continuously to multilingual and multicultural communication environments. Such conditions require learners to maintain strong motivation while simultaneously employing various communication strategies to sustain effective workplace interaction.

Motivation has consistently been recognized as an important factor influencing second language communication. According to Dörnyei (2009), learners' motivation affects their effort, persistence, and willingness to communicate when encountering communicative challenges. Highly motivated learners tend to continue using English despite experiencing linguistic difficulties or communication breakdowns. Alongside motivation, communication strategies function as practical resources that enable learners to overcome communication barriers through verbal, non-verbal, and technology-mediated means, including gestures, code-switching, and translation applications (Dörnyei, 2009; Chen, 2016). These strategies allow learners to maintain interaction and accomplish workplace tasks despite limitations in language proficiency.

Previous studies have investigated motivation, communication strategies, and international internship experiences from various perspectives. Research has demonstrated that motivation supports learners' engagement and persistence in second language communication (Lo & Lin, 2020; Chuang et al., 2025), while communication strategies help learners compensate for linguistic limitations during authentic interaction (Phisutthangkoon, 2024). Other studies have highlighted that international internships contribute to students' language development, professional identity, and intercultural competence (Lin & Tseng, 2020; Zhu et al., 2023). Nevertheless, these studies have generally examined motivation, communication strategies, and

internship experiences as separate constructs. Empirical research specifically investigating how Indonesian student interns' motivation influences their communication strategies in multilingual workplace interactions in Taiwan remains limited.

Addressing this gap, the present study explores Indonesian student interns' motivation and communication strategies in English-mediated workplace interactions during international internships in Taiwan. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How are Indonesian students motivated to use English during their international internships in Taiwan? and (2) What communication strategies do Indonesian student interns use to overcome English communication barriers in English-mediated workplace interactions? By examining participants' lived experiences through qualitative inquiry, this study contributes to the growing literature on English as a Lingua Franca, second language motivation, workplace communication, and international internship programs. The findings are also expected to provide practical insights for universities in preparing students for multilingual professional environments through more effective language and intercultural communication training.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation in Second Language Communication

Motivation has long been recognized as one of the most influential factors affecting second language learning and communication. Rather than being a fixed personal characteristic, motivation is considered a dynamic process that changes according to learners' experiences, goals, and learning environments (Dörnyei, 2009). In multilingual communication contexts, motivation determines not only learners' willingness to initiate interaction but also their persistence when facing communication difficulties.

Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) conceptualizes motivation through three interrelated dimensions: The Ideal L2 Self, referring to learners' future self-image as successful language users; they Ought-to L2 Self, reflecting external expectations and responsibilities; and the L2 Learning Experience, which represents learners' immediate experiences within their learning and communication environments. These motivational dimensions influence learners' effort, confidence, and willingness to continue communicating despite linguistic limitations.

Previous studies also indicate that motivated learners demonstrate greater communicative engagement and psychological resilience. Lo and Lin (2020) found that students with stronger motivation showed higher levels of well-being and more positive attitudes toward learning English. Similarly, Chuang et al. (2025) reported that learners' perceptions of task value significantly influenced their motivation to communicate in professional settings. Ye and Hu (2022) further argued that motivation contributes to learners' willingness to communicate while simultaneously reducing communication anxiety.

In the context of international internships, motivation extends beyond classroom learning because students communicate to accomplish authentic professional tasks. Consequently, communication becomes both a learning process and a workplace responsibility, making motivation an essential factor supporting successful workplace interaction.

Communication Strategies in Multilingual Workplaces

Communication strategies refer to the techniques employed by language learners to overcome communication difficulties when their linguistic resources are insufficient to express intended meanings (Phisutthangkoon, 2024). Rather than indicating language deficiency, these strategies enable speakers to maintain interaction, negotiate meaning, and prevent communication breakdown during real-life conversations.

Previous studies have identified various communication strategies commonly employed by second language users. These include verbal strategies such as paraphrasing and repetition, non-verbal strategies including gestures and facial expressions, and technology-mediated strategies such as translation applications (Phisutthangkoon, 2024; Lin & Tseng, 2020). In multilingual workplace environments, communication strategies become increasingly important because employees frequently interact with colleagues who possess different linguistic backgrounds.

Lin and Tseng (2020) emphasize that communication strategies gradually develop through authentic workplace interaction, observation, and repeated participation in professional activities. Similarly, recent studies have highlighted the growing role of digital translation technologies in facilitating communication across linguistic boundaries, although these technologies still require users to verify meaning and negotiate understanding during interaction.

English-Mediated Workplace Communication

English-mediated workplace communication refers to professional interaction in which English functions as the primary medium of communication among speakers with different native languages. Within the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), successful communication is evaluated according to mutual understanding rather than native-speaker accuracy (Seidlhofer, 2011).

In international workplaces, communication extends beyond linguistic competence and involves intercultural awareness, workplace norms, and professional collaboration. Employees are expected to negotiate meaning, interpret contextual information, and adjust their communication according to different interlocutors. These demands become particularly evident during international internship programs, where students must communicate with supervisors, coworkers, and customers while simultaneously adapting to unfamiliar cultural environments.

Cross-cultural communication therefore becomes an integral component of workplace communication. Zhu et al. (2023) argue that successful communication in international internships requires students to understand both linguistic and cultural expectations in professional settings. Likewise, Lin and Tseng (2020) explain that workplace interaction provides opportunities for learners to develop intercultural competence through continuous participation in authentic communication.

International Internship and Previous Studies

International internships have increasingly been recognized as valuable opportunities for developing students' language proficiency, professional competence, and intercultural communication skills. Unlike classroom learning, internships expose students to authentic workplace situations where communication directly influences task completion and professional performance.

Several studies have demonstrated the educational value of international internships. Lin and Tseng (2020) found that tourism and hospitality internships in Taiwan significantly enhanced students' English communication through continuous workplace interaction. Zhu et al. (2023) similarly reported that internship experiences contributed to students' professional identity construction and intercultural development. Chen et al. (2023) further emphasized that international internships strengthen both language competence and employability skills.

Although previous research has examined second language motivation, communication strategies, and international internship experiences, these variables have generally been investigated independently. Existing studies have primarily focused on classroom learning, study-abroad programs, or participants from countries other than Indonesia. Consequently, empirical evidence concerning how Indonesian student interns' motivation influences their communication strategies during English-mediated workplace interactions in Taiwan remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between motivation and communication strategies within authentic multilingual workplace environments.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore Indonesian student interns' motivation and communication strategies during English-mediated workplace interactions in Taiwan. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it enabled an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and communicative practices within authentic multilingual workplace settings (Sugiyono, 2018; Moriarty, 2011).

The participants consisted of five Indonesian university students who had participated in international internship programs in Taiwan for more than three months. They were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) they were Indonesian students undertaking internships in Taiwan; (2) their work required regular communication with supervisors, coworkers, or customers in multilingual workplace environments; and (3) they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The participants represented several professional sectors, including hospitality, food service, and manufacturing.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which served as the primary source of data. The interview protocol was developed based on Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System and theories of communication strategies, enabling participants to describe their motivational experiences, communication barriers, and strategies used during workplace interactions. Supporting documentation, including internship-related photographs and workplace records, was used to provide contextual understanding and strengthen data credibility. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom, Google Meet, or WhatsApp Call according to participants' availability, and all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent before being transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, supported by the qualitative data analysis procedures proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The analysis began with familiarization and open coding, during which meaningful segments of interview data were identified and assigned descriptive codes. Related codes were subsequently grouped into categories through axial coding before being integrated into broader themes through selective coding. This iterative analytical process generated four overarching themes

representing participants' motivation, communication barriers, communication strategies, and communication development throughout their internship experiences.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was conducted by comparing interview responses with supporting documentation. In addition, member checking was employed by returning interview summaries to participants for confirmation, ensuring that the interpretations accurately represented their intended meanings and experiences (Sugiyono, 2018; Moriarty, 2011). Ethical considerations were also maintained throughout the study. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, and pseudonyms (Respondents A–E) were used to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality.

FINDINGS

The thematic analysis of interview data generated four overarching themes that explain Indonesian student interns' motivation and communication strategies during English-mediated workplace interactions in Taiwan. The themes comprise (1) Motivation for Workplace Communication, (2) Communication Barriers in a Multilingual Workplace, (3) Communication Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers, and (4) Communication Development and Adaptation. Each theme is presented below with supporting excerpts from participants' interviews and interpretative analysis.

Motivation for Workplace Communication

All five participants demonstrated strong motivation to communicate despite working in multilingual environments where English was not consistently used by local coworkers. Analysis of the interview data revealed two major sources of motivation: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation was reflected in participants' desire to learn new languages, experience Taiwanese culture, develop professional competence, and pursue personal interests. Respondent A explained that daily interaction with Mandarin-speaking coworkers encouraged him to improve both his cultural understanding and language ability.

"I want to learn Taiwanese culture, about discipline, and also learn Chinese language because every day I'm working using Mandarin."

This statement illustrates that communication was viewed not merely as a workplace requirement but also as an opportunity for personal growth. Similarly, Respondent D regarded the internship as an opportunity to broaden his experiences by engaging in new professional and cultural environments.

"This is one of my plans to increase experience, and there is an opportunity to do internship in Taiwan."

Respondent E expressed intrinsic motivation through personal passion for the profession itself.

"I really enjoy cooking, and this job matches what I like to do. That is why I feel happy and excited to work every day."

These responses suggest that participants perceived communication as an integral part of achieving their personal aspirations rather than simply fulfilling workplace obligations. Their willingness to communicate was closely associated with curiosity, self-development, and enjoyment of professional activities.

Extrinsic motivation emerged primarily from supportive workplace relationships and professional responsibility. Several participants emphasized that encouragement from supervisors and coworkers increased their confidence to communicate despite frequent language barriers.

Respondent B stated:

“The environment itself and how my coworkers welcome me and treat me well they even try to speak with me.”

Likewise, Respondent C described a workplace atmosphere characterized by encouragement rather than pressure.

“My boss, coworkers, and my chef are all kind and don't put any pressure on me.”

For Respondent E, communication was motivated by a strong sense of professional responsibility.

“My motivation is to make sure I do not make mistakes that could increase my coworkers' workload.”

Across all participants, supportive interpersonal relationships consistently strengthened their willingness to communicate. Positive interactions with supervisors and colleagues appeared to reduce anxiety while encouraging continuous participation in multilingual workplace communication. These findings indicate that both personal aspirations and social support jointly sustained participants' motivation throughout their internship experiences.

Communication Barriers in a Multilingual Workplace

Analysis of the interview data revealed that all participants encountered various communication barriers during their internship programs. Despite working in environments where English functioned as a common language, communication was frequently complicated by the coexistence of Mandarin, Taiwanese, Thai, and limited English proficiency among coworkers. Two sub-themes emerged from the data: language barriers and miscommunication incidents.

Language Barriers

The most frequently reported challenge was the lack of a shared language between Indonesian interns and their local coworkers. Several participants explained that many employees communicated primarily in Mandarin or Taiwanese, making English insufficient for daily workplace interaction.

Respondent A described how tonal differences in Mandarin created additional communication difficulties.

“Most of them cannot speak English just Mandarin or Taiwanese. Even using Google Translate, the tone gives a different meaning.”

This quotation illustrates that communication problems were not limited to vocabulary or grammar. Even when participants attempted to use Mandarin through translation applications, incorrect pronunciation and tonal differences often altered the intended meaning, leading to misunderstanding.

Similarly, Respondent D highlighted the complexity of working in a multilingual environment where communication involved coworkers from different national backgrounds. “Many of my colleagues lack English, especially those from Thailand, making it difficult to communicate with them.”

Rather than interacting only with Taiwanese employees, participants frequently communicated with coworkers from several countries, each possessing different linguistic repertoires. Consequently, communication required continuous adjustment depending on the language abilities of each interlocutor.

Several participants also reported limitations of translation technology. Although Google Translate was widely used to facilitate communication, it did not always produce accurate or contextually appropriate translations.

Respondent C explained:
“Sometimes there are chefs who don't understand English, and Google Translate is sometimes inaccurate or misses the point.”

These findings indicate that multilingual workplace communication involved multiple layers of complexity, including differences in language proficiency, pronunciation, and the limitations of machine translation, all of which influenced everyday workplace interaction.

Miscommunication Incidents

Beyond general language differences, participants described numerous workplace situations in which communication barriers directly resulted in misunderstanding of work instructions.

Respondent A recalled misunderstanding a supervisor's instruction regarding a cleaning task. “My coworker told me to clean the rolling door, but I did the other thing. I felt sorry and apologized for the misunderstanding.”

Likewise, Respondent B described retrieving the wrong object after misunderstanding a coworker's request.

“My coworker told me to get something and I took another thing because I didn't understand what she said.”

A similar experience was reported by Respondent C.
“I was told to cut fruit smaller but I cut it larger. I was reprimanded, but later he explained it to me using Google Translate.”

Although these misunderstandings temporarily disrupted workplace activities, participants consistently emphasized that the situations became valuable learning experiences. Instead of avoiding communication after making mistakes, they generally sought clarification, apologized when necessary, and gradually became more attentive to workplace instructions.

Across all participants, miscommunication occurred primarily during task instructions, object identification, and routine workplace interactions. These incidents demonstrate that communication barriers were not merely linguistic challenges but also practical workplace issues that required immediate resolution to maintain effective job performance.

Communication Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers

Despite encountering persistent communication barriers, all participants actively employed a variety of communication strategies to sustain workplace interaction. The thematic analysis identified four major strategies: code-switching, translation applications, gestures and demonstrations, and human mediators. Rather than relying on a single strategy, participants flexibly combined these resources according to the communication context and the linguistic abilities of their interlocutors.

Code-switching

Code-switching emerged as the most frequently used communication strategy across all participants. English, Mandarin, Indonesian, and non-verbal expressions were often combined within a single interaction to facilitate understanding.

Respondent B explained how English functioned as a bridge when his Mandarin vocabulary was insufficient.

“Usually, it's the mix of English and Mandarin. For example, ‘wanban is in i ling ba.’ I use English as a connecting word between my limited Mandarin vocabulary.”

Similarly, Respondent A described code-switching as an everyday communication practice. “Every day I use mixed language Mandarin, English, or sign language, body language every day.”

Rather than using one language exclusively, participants selected linguistic resources according to the situation. English frequently served as the primary medium of communication, while Mandarin expressions, Indonesian words, and body language were incorporated whenever they facilitated mutual understanding.

Translation Applications

All participants reported using translation applications, particularly Google Translate, as an essential communication aid in their workplaces.

Respondent A explained:

“I give them the phone so just speak the translator will tell me.”

Likewise, Respondent C described how translation technology became part of routine workplace interaction.

“I ask him to use Google Translate. I say ‘Google Translate’ and repeat or type it into Translate.”

Translation applications were used not only to translate unfamiliar vocabulary but also to confirm instructions, clarify misunderstandings, and verify intended meanings. Although participants acknowledged that machine translation occasionally produced inaccurate results, it

remained one of the most practical resources for maintaining communication with coworkers who shared no common language.

Gestures and Demonstrations

Non-verbal communication constituted another important strategy for overcoming language barriers. Participants frequently relied on gestures, pointing, facial expressions, and physical demonstrations when verbal communication alone was insufficient.

Respondent A stated:

“We can speak in sign language every day. Even though we cannot make a conversation, we communicate with body language.”

Respondent C similarly explained that pointing and demonstrating actions often helped clarify workplace instructions.

“I say ‘this one’ and point to it, or I use Mandarin while doing the action.”

These findings indicate that gestures functioned as practical communicative resources that complemented spoken language. In many situations, physical demonstrations enabled participants to complete workplace tasks even when mutual verbal understanding was limited.

Human Mediators

When communication barriers could not be resolved independently, participants sought assistance from bilingual individuals within the workplace. Supervisors, senior coworkers, and Indonesian colleagues who possessed stronger language proficiency frequently acted as communication mediators.

Respondent A explained:

“My supervisor can speak English and Mandarin. If I feel difficult at work, I can just call my supervisor.”

Similarly, Respondent C described relying on an Indonesian coworker who had lived in Taiwan for several years.

“I usually call an Indonesian worker who has studied in Taiwan for three years to explain.”

Respondent D also reported seeking assistance from bilingual managers whenever communication with Thai-speaking coworkers became problematic.

These responses demonstrate that human mediators played an important role in facilitating workplace communication. Beyond translating messages, they helped participants interpret workplace instructions, resolve misunderstandings, and complete professional tasks more effectively.

Overall, the findings suggest that participants did not depend on a single communication strategy. Instead, they continuously combined linguistic resources, translation technology, non-verbal communication, and interpersonal support according to the demands of each communicative situation. This flexible use of multiple strategies enabled them to maintain effective workplace interaction despite persistent multilingual communication challenges.

Communication Development and Adaptation

The findings revealed that participants experienced noticeable communication development throughout their international internship. Although they initially encountered considerable linguistic and cultural challenges, continuous workplace interaction gradually improved their confidence, communication skills, and ability to adapt to multilingual professional environments. Three sub-themes emerged from the data: increased communication confidence, language development through workplace interaction, and workplace adaptation.

Increased Communication Confidence

Most participants reported feeling anxious and hesitant during the early stages of their internship. Limited English proficiency, unfamiliar accents, and the inability to understand Mandarin often reduced their confidence when interacting with coworkers. However, regular communication gradually increased their self-confidence.

Respondent B explained:

“At first I was afraid to speak because I thought my English was not good enough. But after communicating every day, I became much more confident.”

Similarly, Respondent D described confidence as something that developed through repeated interaction rather than formal language instruction.

“Now I am not afraid anymore. Even if my English is not perfect, I just try to communicate.”

These findings indicate that communication confidence developed progressively through authentic workplace experiences. Daily interaction encouraged participants to become more willing to initiate conversations and participate actively despite occasional language mistakes.

Language Development through Workplace Interaction

Participants consistently reported that working in multilingual environments accelerated the development of their practical communication skills. Rather than learning English solely through textbooks, they acquired workplace vocabulary, expressions, and communication routines directly from everyday professional activities.

Respondent C stated:

“Every day I learn new words because my coworkers often teach me while working.”

Likewise, Respondent A explained that repeated exposure to multilingual communication enabled him to understand both English and basic Mandarin expressions more effectively.

“Now I know many words that I never learned before because I hear them every day at work.”

Participants emphasized that learning occurred naturally through observation, repetition, and continuous interaction with supervisors and coworkers. This authentic communication environment provided immediate opportunities to apply newly acquired vocabulary within meaningful workplace situations.

Workplace Adaptation

Beyond linguistic improvement, participants demonstrated increasing ability to adapt to workplace culture and professional expectations. They reported becoming more familiar with communication styles, work routines, and intercultural interactions as their internship progressed.

Respondent E reflected:

“Now I understand how people communicate here, so I can respond more appropriately.”

Similarly, Respondent B explained that adaptation required patience and continuous observation of coworkers' communication patterns.

“I learned by watching how they talked to each other. Slowly I understood what was expected.”

These experiences indicate that workplace adaptation extended beyond language acquisition. Participants gradually developed intercultural awareness, learned appropriate professional behaviors, and adjusted their communication according to different workplace situations. Such adaptation enabled them to participate more effectively in multilingual professional environments.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that communication development was an ongoing process shaped by continuous interaction within authentic workplace settings. As participants gained experience, they became more confident communicators, expanded their linguistic resources, and adapted successfully to multicultural workplace environments. These developments illustrate that international internships provided not only opportunities for language practice but also meaningful professional and intercultural learning experiences.

Table 1. Summary of Themes Generated through Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidence from Participants
Motivation for Workplace Communication	Intrinsic Motivation; Extrinsic Motivation	A–E
Communication Barriers in a Multilingual Workplace	Language Barriers; Miscommunication Incidents	A–E
Communication Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers	Code-switching Practices; Technology-mediated Communication; Gesture-based Communication; Interpersonal Communication Mediation	A–E
Communication Development and Adaptation	Increased Communication Confidence; Language Development; Workplace Adaptation	A–E

DISCUSSIONS

The present study explored Indonesian student interns' motivation and communication strategies during English-mediated workplace interactions in Taiwan. The findings demonstrate that workplace communication was shaped not only by participants' linguistic competence but also by their motivation, the multilingual characteristics of the workplace, and their ability to employ flexible communication strategies. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communication develops in authentic international internship settings.

Motivation as the Driving Force of Workplace Communication

The findings indicate that participants' willingness to communicate was influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Internally, participants were motivated by personal goals such as improving English proficiency, gaining international experience, learning Taiwanese culture, and developing professional skills. Externally, supportive supervisors, friendly coworkers, and workplace responsibilities encouraged participants to continue communicating despite language limitations.

These findings support Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, particularly the interaction among the Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience. Participants' aspirations to become competent international professionals reflected their Ideal L2 Self, while workplace expectations represented the Ought-to L2 Self. At the same time, positive daily interactions with supervisors and coworkers strengthened the L2 Learning Experience, encouraging sustained engagement in communication.

The findings are also consistent with Lo and Lin (2020), who reported that positive learning experiences contribute to greater learner engagement and well-being. Likewise, Chuang et al. (2025) emphasized that meaningful workplace experiences strengthen learners' motivation by demonstrating the practical value of English in professional contexts. Rather than functioning independently, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation appeared to reinforce one another throughout participants' internship experiences.

Multilingual Workplace Communication Requires Flexible Communication Strategies

The findings reveal that communication barriers were inevitable within multilingual workplaces where English, Mandarin, Taiwanese, Thai, and Indonesian were used simultaneously. These barriers extended beyond limited vocabulary and included pronunciation differences, unfamiliar accents, and inaccurate machine translation.

To address these challenges, participants employed multiple communication strategies rather than relying on a single approach. Code-switching, translation applications, gestures, and assistance from bilingual coworkers were used interchangeably depending on the communication context.

These findings support Phisutthangkoon (2024), who argues that communication strategies enable second language users to maintain interaction despite linguistic limitations. Similarly, Lin and Tseng (2020) found that authentic workplace environments encourage learners to develop adaptive communication practices through repeated interaction with multilingual interlocutors.

An important finding of this study is that participants rarely depended on English alone. Instead, they strategically combined available linguistic and non-linguistic resources to achieve mutual understanding. This suggests that successful workplace communication is better understood as communicative adaptability rather than grammatical perfection.

International Internships Promote Communication Development Through Authentic Interaction

The study further demonstrates that authentic workplace communication contributes substantially to participants' communication development. As participants became increasingly involved in daily workplace interaction, they reported greater confidence, broader workplace vocabulary, and improved ability to adapt to multicultural professional environments.

These findings align with Zhu et al. (2023), who argue that international internships facilitate both linguistic and intercultural development through authentic participation in workplace activities. Likewise, Chen et al. (2023) emphasize that internships provide experiential learning opportunities that strengthen communication competence alongside professional identity formation.

Unlike classroom learning, workplace communication required participants to use English for immediate professional purposes. Consequently, communication mistakes became opportunities for learning rather than barriers to participation. Through continuous interaction with supervisors and coworkers, participants gradually developed practical communication skills that extended beyond formal language instruction.

Implications for International Internship Programs

The findings have several practical implications for higher education institutions implementing international internship programs. First, pre-departure training should not focus exclusively on grammatical competence but also prepare students to communicate flexibly within multilingual workplace environments. Communication strategy training, intercultural awareness, and the effective use of translation technology should become integral components of internship preparation.

Second, host institutions and workplace supervisors should recognize that communication development is an ongoing process. Providing supportive communication environments, opportunities for interaction, and constructive feedback can facilitate interns' linguistic and professional growth.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on English-mediated workplace communication by illustrating how motivation and communication strategies interact in authentic multilingual internship contexts. Rather than viewing communication barriers as obstacles, the findings suggest that they may function as valuable learning opportunities that foster language development, intercultural competence, and professional confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study explored Indonesian student interns' motivation and communication strategies during English-mediated workplace interactions in Taiwan. The findings revealed that participants' willingness to communicate was shaped by both intrinsic motivations, including personal aspirations for language learning and professional development, and extrinsic motivation, such as workplace support and professional responsibilities. Although participants encountered various communication barriers, including language differences, misunderstandings, and limited shared linguistic resources, they actively employed diverse communication strategies such as code-switching, translation applications, gestures, and assistance from bilingual coworkers to maintain effective workplace interaction. Continuous engagement in authentic workplace communication also contributed to increased confidence, language development, and successful adaptation to multilingual professional environments.

The study contributes to the growing literature on English-mediated workplace communication by demonstrating that communication success in international internship settings depends not solely on language proficiency but also on learners' motivation, adaptability, and strategic use of available communicative resources. These findings highlight the importance of

authentic workplace interaction as a meaningful context for developing linguistic competence, intercultural communication skills, and professional confidence among student interns.

Practically, the findings suggest that universities should strengthen pre-departure preparation for international internships by incorporating communication strategy training, intercultural awareness, and authentic workplace communication practice. Host institutions and workplace supervisors are also encouraged to provide supportive communication environments that enable interns to develop confidence while adapting to multilingual professional contexts.

This study is limited by the relatively small number of participants and its focus on Indonesian student interns in Taiwan. Future research may involve participants from different countries, industries, or internship programs to examine whether similar motivational patterns and communication strategies emerge across broader international workplace contexts. Comparative or longitudinal studies may also provide deeper insights into how workplace communication develops over time.

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