

**Migration in the time of change: Foreign English language
teachers in Shenzhen**

presented by
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Note: This is a doctoral dissertation accepted by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Cologne.

Acknowledgments

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have received a great deal of support and assistance from different people and organizations.

I would first like to thank my first supervisor, Prof. Michaela Pelican, for her consistent discussions, support and advice throughout my Ph.D. studies. My gratitude also goes to my other two supervisors, Prof. Björn Ahl. and Prof. Susanne Brandstädter, for their timely feedback and support.

Presentations by members of our joint-university research project *Immigration and the transformation of Chinese society* (2015-2020) were inspiring to my research, and I have benefited from the project members' comments on my presentations during our project meetings. Moreover, comments from and discussions with Prof. Xiyuan Li, Prof. Heidi Haugen, Prof. Gordon Mathews, Prof. Pei-Chia Lan, Dr. Scott Sommers, Dr. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Dr. Qiaoming Li, and Dr. Yujing Tan have been illuminating.

I am deeply grateful to all the people who have helped me during my fieldwork in Shenzhen. I would especially like to thank the teachers who shared with me their life stories and migration experiences. During my seemingly never-ending dissertation writing process, their openness, reflectiveness, and humor captured in my interview transcripts and fieldnotes kept me going.

It was a great pleasure to share my office in Cologne with Fabian Heerbaart, Manon Diederich and Dr. Jasper Habicht. While their hard-working attitude was inspiring, their warm presence made my Ph.D. journey less lonely. My thanks also go to the Global South Study Center (GSSC), the University of Cologne, for providing a pleasant office environment.

I gratefully acknowledge research funding from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) (AH 210/1-1). I also thank the Otto Wolff Foundation for providing a writing-up fellowship.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family for their understanding, tolerance and support. I am also indebted to my friends – Keerthy Kusumam, Yehua Chen, Ying-Chien Yang, Andrei Bystrov, Dora Wong, Jacqueline Fan, Karen Lee, Yan Tsui and Au Yuen Ting, who are there for me and pick me up during difficult times.

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Acronyms

ELT	English Language Teacher
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
EEAL	Exit-Entry Administration Law
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MPS	Ministry of Public Security
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCNPC	The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress

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Introduction

The phenomenon of Westerners moving to Asia to teach English first came to my attention when I was studying for my master's degree in the UK in 2011. I encountered young people who were doing short-term teacher-training courses¹ in preparation for their English teaching jobs abroad, and most of them had China, South Korea, and Japan in mind as their migration destinations. What intrigued me was why so many Britons were interested in moving to East Asia, while many East Asian students desired to study and live in the West? What were their migration experiences?

As I started my research on the migration of foreign English language teachers (hereinafter foreign ELTs) to Mainland China (China) in 2015, it became clear that the movement of East Asian students to the West and of Western ELTs to East Asia are two sides of the same coin. They both stem from East Asian students' desire for Western education in the context of global capitalism. While East Asian students' demand for Western degrees leads to the successful commercialization of higher education in the West (Raqib & Phan, 2014, p.8), such educational desire has also given rise to the booming international school and English language education markets in East Asian countries, especially China. It is not news that the acquisition of a Western education has been a popular strategy for the Chinese middle class to accumulate cultural capital for some time (Ong, 1999; Water, 2008). Nowadays, not only are Chinese students studying overseas at a younger age (Chong, 2016), but Western education is also brought to the doorstep of Chinese children and adults through satellite campuses of overseas universities, international schools, and English language teaching centers in China.

Geographically, foreign ELTs mainly concentrate in China's economically more developed regions, cities, and districts, where financial rewards are higher and lifestyle is more cosmopolitan. As one of the four first-tier Chinese cities – the others being Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou – Shenzhen is a popular migration destination for teachers. In Shenzhen,

¹ Targeting different language contexts and learners, short-term teacher training courses include TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults). These terms are often used interchangeably in China, and are recognized by Mainland Chinese employers on a similar level.

thousands of foreigners are working in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) industry. As one informant puts it, “every one in two foreigners in Shenzhen is working as an English teacher, or has worked as one at some point.” Also, more often than not, a significant number of foreign ELTs work without a work visa or have worked without one at some point.

David² was sitting next to me at a party. He is from the UK and had been working as an English education consultant in Shenzhen for 20 years. When I told him I was researching foreign ELTs, the first thing he said was, “99% of the teachers in Shenzhen are working illegally!” I knew that many foreign ELTs had no work visas, but I was not sure whether 99% was too much of an exaggeration. Seeing that I looked disbelieving, David turned to ask his friend, Luke, who was sitting next to him. Luke is also from the UK, and he had been teaching English in Shenzhen for almost a decade.

David: Hey, Luke! What would you say the percentage is for English teachers who are working illegally?

Luke (thinking for a while): Around 60%, I would say. (seeing I was the one who was interested in the question, Luke talked to me instead) It’s difficult to find a teaching job (that provides a work visa) in China now, especially in Shenzhen. Two years ago, it was easy. Now with the new visa law, it’s very difficult. Most teachers teaching in Shenzhen are illegal. They are either working on a tourist visa or business visa.

Me (sympathetically): I am sorry things are getting tough.

Luke (shrugging his shoulders): It’s just how things work in China, isn’t it? You can never go about things legally. You first have to go through the back door, do things underground, and then find a way to do it legally. So people start off working on a tourist visa or business visa, and then slowly find a way to get a job that provides them with a work visa.

(David, British, male, White³, 55-year-old;
Luke, British, male, White, 36-year-old)⁴

My chance encounter and brief conversation with David and Luke highlight two prominent phenomena: illegal employment and long-term settlement of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen. These phenomena immediately prompt at least two questions: What are the experiences of foreign

² The names of all interlocutors in the dissertation are anonymized for the purpose of protecting their privacy.

³ The terms “Black” and “White” are capitalized in this article to emphasize their social and historical construction as well as the political meanings they entail, rather than using them as descriptive adjectives.

⁴ The conversation with David and Luke took place at an expat party in the Baia restaurant in the Shekou area, Nanshan District of Shenzhen on September 23, 2017.

ELTs in the face of China's changing visa regulations? Are permanent residence and Chinese citizenship imaginable for foreign ELTs who have (accidentally) become long-term settlers in China?

Foreign ELTs can be viewed as middling migrants. Although middle-class migration is significant and diverse, it is often understudied, as migration studies often focus on the extremes of elite migrants and low-wage migrants (Scott, 2019). Conradson & Latham (2005, p. 229) define "middling" transnational migrants as below:

They are often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class. In terms of the societies they come from and those they are travelling to, they are very much of the middle.

While most foreign ELTs are usually in a lower-middle-class position in their country of origin before they migrate to China, their social status in global cities in Chinese society is also marginal. Not only are they perceived as "low-quality" foreigners among Chinese people, they are also placed at the bottom of the professional hierarchy in the expatriate community and are used as negative measures by more-highly-paid foreign professionals (Farrer, 2010a). By studying foreign ELTs in Shenzhen, my dissertation aims to contribute to the study of middling migrants who are perceived to be the "low-end" (*diduan*) foreigners in China.

Based on 12 months' fieldwork conducted in Shenzhen between 2016 and 2017, my dissertation seeks to contextualize the migration experiences of foreign ELTs in China by understanding their position in a global city context (see chapter 2) in relation to the growing Chinese middle class (see chapter 3) and the country's immigration policies (see chapters 4, 5, 6). Law plays a vital role in shaping migrants' experience in their host countries, and Kalir (2013, p.325) advocates studying migration by putting the perspective of migrants under the spotlight and "bringing in the state" as people experience it. Thus, the dissertation examines state policy from the migrants' perspective by offering an ethnography on how foreign ELTs experience and navigate China's immigration policies. Furthermore, focusing on how socio-economic positions influence migrants' displacement and emplacement process (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018), the dissertation compares intra-group differences regarding the employment experiences of foreign ELTs (see chapters 7 and 8). The thesis seeks to understand

how migrants live out cosmopolitanism and embrace their urban citizenship differently through their cosmopolitan emplacement practices (see chapter 9).

Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to the understanding of citizenship for international migrants in the Chinese context. Citizenship is a multifaceted concept that includes citizenship “from above” (legal status and rights granted by the state to individuals) as well as citizenship “from below” (migrants’ claims about rights on the ground) (Bauböck, 2010, p.298-299). Thus, the dissertation aims to examine state policy from the government’s as well as migrants’ perspectives. I argue that, while “labor citizenship” (Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014) describes the kind of citizenship that is designed for foreigners in China from above (see chapter 6); “urban citizenship” (Farrer, 2014b) is embraced and practiced by foreign residents from below (see chapter 9).

In this sense, the dissertation examines China as an immigration country. Although the number of resident foreigners in China is still relatively small compared to the entire Chinese population, Pieke (2012) argues that China has nevertheless become an immigration country, as foreigners are concentrated in certain Chinese regions and have become long-term residents who have transformed the urban landscape. However, as an immigration country, China is not to be understood in the same light as traditional immigration countries in which long-term stay, social integration, and acquisition of legal citizenship are some of the available options for immigrants. Thus, the dissertation contributes to understanding what kind of immigration country China is and will become, as well as what citizenship entails for international migrants in China both in the formal and the cultural sense.

This chapter starts with a brief overview of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen by illustrating the employment, settlement, and public discourse of this migrant group in Shenzhen. The chapter then moves on to introduce the institutional background of the migration of foreign ELTs by focusing on 1) the English language education policy in Shenzhen; 2) visa, employment and permanent residence policies for foreigners in China; and 3) the relationship between law and the production of migrant status. The third part of the chapter is a literature review of international migration studies in the Chinese context as well as a policy review of China’s latest immigration law. The chapter then introduces the analytical and theoretical framework of the dissertation before offering an overview of the dissertation structure.

1. A brief overview of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen

Foreign ELTs account for a significant number of foreign workers in Shenzhen. At the beginning of this millennium, there was a noticeable increase in foreign residents (6,690 in total) in Shenzhen; it was reported that the increase was due to foreigners hired to teach English at local schools (*People's Daily*, 2001). The number of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen has only been on the rise since then. For example, out of the 2,837 foreign experts introduced in Shenzhen in the first half-year of 2016, 70% worked in the cultural and educational sector, with the majority working as foreign English language teachers in kindergartens, schools, and training centers (Gu, 2016).

The foreign ELTs I encountered during my fieldwork in Shenzhen between 2016 and 2017 were a diverse mix of people. There were many White Westerners, but also other international migrants from different countries and continents. Some were fresh university graduates who were trying to pay off their student loans by teaching English in Shenzhen. Some were professionals who had worked in non-education fields for years and were looking for a career change. Some were middle-aged businesspeople who had gone bankrupt and were looking for a new start. Some were retirees who wanted to work part-time while travelling the world. Some were adventurers who only stayed in China for a short time, and many more had little desire to settle in China yet did not have any concrete plans for leaving.

1.1. Employment and settlement

In public perception in China, foreign ELTs in the country are often treated as one homogeneous group; however, there is an internal hierarchy in the foreign ELT community. While some teaching positions are considered the “top jobs” because of the attractive remuneration package that comes with them, some EFL jobs are regarded as the “McJobs” for expatriates in China as these often only offer local wages with little benefits. Different tiers of teachers can be distinguished by the kind of institution they work in. Below is a pyramid derived from my discussions with various foreign ELTs. As shown in the pyramid on the following page (illustration 1), teachers employed by overseas universities in China (satellite campuses) and foreign-owned international schools are in a more privileged position. Positioned in the middle of the hierarchy are self-initiated migrants who work at local Chinese universities. Self-initiated migrants who teach English at local education institutions are often seen as “loser foreigners” who cannot find better jobs elsewhere.

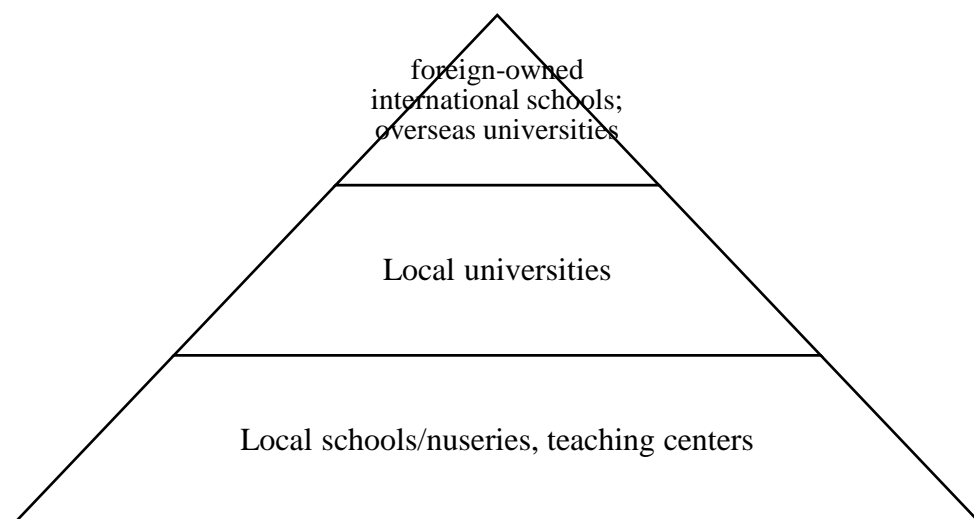


Illustration 1: A pyramid showing different tiers of teachers distinguished by employment institutions.
Source: The chart is derived based on my discussions with various teachers.

My empirical findings suggest that what distinguishes teachers in top teaching positions from those in lower-tier teaching positions is their education and professional qualifications. Taking university teaching positions for example, while an English language lecturer teaching at the Chinese branch of an overseas university has to hold at least a Ph.D. degree, an English lecturer at a local Chinese university only needs to hold a master's degree. Also, while teachers hired by foreign-owned international schools have to be licensed teachers in their countries of origin, those at local Chinese schools are not trained teachers, although some of them have completed short-term teacher-training courses and have English-teaching certificates.

The employment conditions of foreign ELTs vary considerably, and two main categories of foreign ELTs could be distinguished based on their remuneration package: corporate-transferred migrants, and self-initiated migrants. The more privileged corporate-transferred foreign ELTs had usually previously worked at foreign-owned universities and international schools and are sent to teach in China on an overseas assignment. The less privileged self-initiated foreign ELTs faced a more unstable work environment. Often, self-initiated international migrants accept the uncertainties and risks of migrating to China to teach English because it is a way out of their disadvantaged position in their home labor market and a step into the global labor market. Moreover, for those who aspire to become entrepreneurs, teaching English is seen as an initial step to accumulate capital for starting their businesses.

Although initially moving for work or adventure, some teachers accidentally become long-term settlers without consciously planning to do so. It is not uncommon for foreign ELTs to plan to

stay for only one year but end up staying for many years. Foreign ELTs who have become long-term settlers told me that they could not imagine life back in their home countries. Having little competence in their home job market, most foreign ELTs who had left their countries for more than five years found it difficult to settle back at home again. A Briton who worked as a part-time ESL teacher in Shenzhen for years described the EFL industry in China as a “swamp.” He elaborated,

Because it is an easy place to live and earn good money, it becomes too comfortable for people to get out once people get in. Sometimes, it is not because people do not want to get out, but because they cannot get out. The longer people work as English teachers, the more difficult it is for them to switch to other jobs and so they have few options but to stay in the “swamp.”

(Usher, White, British, male, late 30s)⁵

The tendency to stay was one of the first things that came up when a Chinese woman who was socially active in the expat community shared with me her observations about foreign ELTs.

One thing I have noticed about these teachers is that after teaching in China for some time, they could not do any other jobs. They lose their life skills (*tamen shiqule shengcun jineng*). They go back to their own countries and have difficulties finding jobs. With English teaching experience, they have limited choices in their career. The other thing is, their salary is not much higher in their home country, but they have to work much longer hours there. So eventually they stay on in China...There are people who manage to go back to their countries and stay, but they have to try really hard to adapt. I know two brothers. The older brother came to China to teach English and recommended his younger brother to come. A few years later, they decided to establish themselves back home, so they left Shenzhen. One brother found a job in a loan company. His job duties were to make cold calls to reach out to potential customers and also to collect debts. The other brother did not manage to find any jobs, so he's back to China to teach English again.

(A woman I met at a squash game, Chinese, female, early 30s)⁶

⁵ The quote is from my conversation with Usher at an expat party in Huaqiangbei. Usher had worked in Shenzhen as an English language teacher for seven years.

⁶ My conversation with the Chinese woman took place on September 11, 2017 in a sports stadium near the Window of the World theme park. Our conversation was in Chinese and was translated into English by the author.

Self-initiated migrant teachers are reluctant to leave China, especially when they know they would struggle with finding a decent job with a similar level of monetary reward and comfort in their home country. The tendency to stay on in China is common among self-initiated foreign ELTs, who are, in a sense, stuck in China because of a lack of other options. It is also not uncommon for international school teachers, who enjoy global mobility through the mechanism of corporate transfer, to become long-term residents in Shenzhen. An international school teacher, who had been in Shenzhen for seven years, once said to me that “China holds onto foreigners.” I thought it was a slip of the tongue and corrected her, “You mean foreigners hold onto China?” Now I think that maybe it works both ways. If China did not hold onto foreigners by providing them with opportunities, comfort, and in some cases, privileges, then perhaps it would not have made sense for foreigners to extend their stay.

In addition to a decent income and more leisure time, Shenzhen also offers a cosmopolitan style and exciting nightlife. Thus, all the perks of being a foreign EFL teacher in Shenzhen turned the EFL industry into a “swamp” that holds onto foreigners who initially did not intend to stay. One year turned into another year, and some of them ended up staying for up to 20 years. Such unintended prolonged migration is not unique to the Chinese context. Observing a similar migration pattern of US migrants in Europe, Von Koppenfels (2014, p.7) used the term “accidental migrants” to refer to such “individuals who left their home countries for a time-limited stay, but ended up staying.”

However, if not married to Chinese nationals, “accidental migrants” are left with very few choices other to leave China once they reach their retirement age⁷ and become ineligible to apply for work visas in China. As their residence permits are tied to their work visas, teachers lose their right of residence when they lose their work visas. Although teachers could continue to stay in China on tourist or business visas when they pass their retirement age, doing so would force them into illegal employment. Staying in China on one-year work visas, facing the age limit on their work visa applications and grim prospects regarding obtaining permanent residency, it is no wonder some teachers feel that “foreigners are living in China on borrowed time” (Charles, White, US American, male, late 40s)⁸.

⁷ The retirement age in China currently is 60 for men and 55 for women.

⁸ My interview with Charles was conducted in the Baia restaurant near the COCO Park in Shenzhen on October 5, 2017.

1.2.From “foreign experts” to “loser foreigners”: the changing image of foreign ELTs in China

The phenomenon of foreigners teaching English in China can be traced back to as early as the 19th Century with the end of the Qing dynasty and the establishment of Republican China (Henry, 2013a). At the time, as “the language of modernity,” English language education was advocated by Chinese intellectuals, and foreigners who would come to China to teach English often went to spread the gospel (Henry, 2013a, p.54). Although foreigners were not well-received by the Chinese government in the late 1960s during the Cultural Revolution, foreign ELTs were again welcomed as foreign experts when China’s Reform and Opening policy was put in place (Leonard, 2018). Since then, foreign ELTs have constituted the largest group of “foreign experts” in China (Farrer, 2014a, p.404). In earlier days, when it was more restrictive for foreigners to travel to China and most foreign ELTs went to China as “foreign experts” from Western countries, foreign ELTs enjoyed a higher social status in Chinese society. They were “stereotypically seen as White, English-speaking, mobile, wealthy, and brand-conscious”, and thus taken as the exemplar for Chinese urbanites’ pursuit of modern selfhood (Henry, 2013b, p.1). Moreover, the teaching profession is generally highly respected in Chinese society, which is permeated by Confucianism.

However, as the number of foreigners in China increases and expatriate communities become more stratified, the status of foreign ELTs, especially in cosmopolitan Chinese cities, is becoming socially more marginalized. Instead of upholding the respected teaching position in Confucian society, foreign English teachers have been reduced to be service providers to Chinese middle-class consumers who buy English teaching services. Also, the Chinese middle class, who are now more educated and well traveled, no longer look up to just any Westerners as role models for modern selfhood. More importantly, the image of foreign ELTs is in an unprecedented crisis as media reports on their qualifications and morality raise doubts among the Chinese public. Even when foreign ELTs have a brief mention in scholarly works, they are described as “fortune seekers” who teach the English language and culture to “gullible Chinese audiences” (Pieke, 2012, p.55-56), or as “‘refugees’ from global capitalism” (Farrer, 2010a, p.1225).

In Shenzhen, foreign ELTs are generally not well-received in the expat community and are despised as “losers back home” by other non-teacher expats (Schofield, 2015). Leo, a US American, who worked as an education consultant in Shenzhen, was eager to distance himself from foreign ELTs. Throughout our interview, he could not emphasize enough that he had

graduated from an Ivy League university in the US and that “there is no commonality between me and these people [foreign ELTs]” and “these are the people that I wouldn’t hang out with back home” (George, White, US American, male, 26-year-old)⁹. Max, who was a foreign ELT in a Chinese public school, told me:

If you are a teacher, and you meet someone in the expat community and introduce yourself as a teacher, then the other person would say, “Oh you’re a teacher! Nice to meet you!” and that would be the end of the conversation.

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)¹⁰

In everyday life, Chinese people’s perception of foreign English language teachers is also increasingly negative. During my interview with Ian, a Briton from the UK, he said he was aware that a lot of Chinese people were changing their attitude toward foreign ELTs and accusing them of “earning easy money in China for doing very little or nothing.” (Ian, White, British, male, 40-year-old)¹¹ Moreover, while Chinese parents are having doubts about the qualifications of the foreign ELTs who teach their children, teachers’ relatively low economic status is also compared with expats of higher economic status. A Chinese waitress who had worked in an Irish bar in Shenzhen said it was easy to tell self-initiated foreign ELTs apart from corporate-transferred expats, and shared with me her observations.

When they (foreign ELTs) drink, they only pay for their own drinks, while expats whose companies pay for their expenses would treat their friends. Also, they (foreign ELTs) are very careful with how much they drink. They usually only order one or two drinks, while other expats who are in the business sectors wouldn’t care... they order a dozen beers and they just don’t care. Another thing is, English teachers always come during happy hour when the drinks are cheapest... and when we have promotion events where you can drink a lot and pay very little, teachers come in crowds!

(Sofia, Chinese, female, 23-year-old)¹²

⁹ My interview with George was conducted in a café near his workplace in the Futian District on October 25, 2017.

¹⁰ My interview with Max was conducted in his friend’s burger restaurant in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on June 1, 2016.

¹¹ My interview with Ian was conducted in Emily’s Café in the Shekou area, Nanshan District of Shenzhen, on October 3, 2017.

¹² My interview with Sofia was conducted on August 7, 2016 in McCawley’s Irish Pub on the Sea World Plaza in the Shekou area, Nanshan District of Shenzhen.

In the Chinese public discourse, foreign ELTs are increasingly being criminalized. Current news reports on foreign ELTs are overwhelmingly those on police arrests and deportations of foreign ELTs. In these news reports, foreign ELTs are portrayed as “illegal workers” (Luo, 2015; Liu, 2015; Chen, 2019), “pedophiles” (Jing, 2013; Carlson, 2013; Xie, 2019), “fugitives” (Chen, 2017a), or “drug abusers” (*Xin Hua News Agency*, 2017; Liu, 2019). Moreover, some news reports on foreign ELTs might end with nationalist sentiments, especially in state-owned media. For example, after recounting multiple incidents of foreign sex criminals working as ELTs in China, a news article called for Chinese schools to be cautious with foreign ELTs. The article said: “These are just the foreign fugitives and pedophiles who have been caught or made the news – imagine how many others are out there right now teaching English to the sons and daughters of China (Keeling, 2018)!” As a result, further regulations on the EFL industry have been introduced (Pan, 2019), and the number of foreign ELTs being arrested has surged (Cadell, 2019).

Apart from changing social perceptions, I argue that foreign ELTs’ positionality in Shenzhen has to be understood in the broader geopolitical context of the “rise of China.” Economically, the skill set foreign ELTs possess is not considered to be highly desirable, and thus, foreign ELTs are not perceived as high-skilled foreigners. Legally, as will be illustrated in chapters 4, 5, and 6, China’s changing legislation on visa, employment, and permanent residence has put non-elite foreigners such as foreign ELTs in a disadvantaged position. Moreover, teachers’ positionality on a local level differs in China. For example, the figure of a foreign ELT might be perceived as the modern subject by residents in a rural area or second-tier cities (Henry, 2013b, p.216), but they are certainly not as well regarded in Shenzhen.

Thus, as I will elaborate in chapter 2, to understand the position of foreign ELTs in the current labor market in Shenzhen, one needs to understand the status of Shenzhen as China’s “international city,” “model city,” and “high-tech hub.” In the past decade, the term “international city” has been dominant in the Shenzhen government’s development rhetoric (Shenzhen government, 2011). The role of Shenzhen is to “continue to serve as a window (to the world) as a special economic zone, an experimental ground, and a role model” and the city will “strengthen technology research and development as well as high-end service” in order to reinforce its status as a national economic center and an innovative city, and to become a socialist model city with Chinese characteristics and an international city”¹³ (National

¹³ “深圳市要继续发挥经济特区的窗口、试验田和示范区作用，增强科技研发、高端服务功能，强化全国经济中心城市和国家创新型城市的地位，建设中国特色社会主义示范市和国际化城市。”

Development and Reform Commission, 2008). More than a decade has gone by, and Shenzhen has made its name in the world and was ranked fourth globally in terms of economic competitiveness (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences & UN-Habitat, 2019).

Within Shenzhen's economic structure, people working in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sector, especially in the emerging sector of Fintech (financial technology), are considered to be "talents" who have the desirable skills and thus high-skilled workers. Foreign ELTs, on the other hand, are not considered to have any "real" skills. What's more, as the Chinese city that hosts the highest number of Ph.D. degree holders in the entire country, Shenzhen's expanding middle class is increasingly constituted of highly educated Chinese professionals, who have high purchasing power (Altrock & Schoon, 2014). In this context, English language education services and foreign ELTs become educational commodities through which the Chinese middle class and their children accumulate cultural capital and realize their desire for class mobility (or maintenance) and "cosmopolitan strivings" (Park & Abelmann, 2004).

2. Institutional background

2.1. Education policy

Apart from employment and immigration policies, China's English education policy also contributes to shaping foreign ELTs' position in Chinese society. English language education in China is closely related to the level of China's political and economic participation in the world. As Ross (1993, p.42) observed, "support for foreign language training is high when sustained participation in the global community is deemed commensurate with China's political and economic interests and low when it is perceived as threatening to internal political stability and cultural integrity." As Sino-foreign economic cooperation has been encouraged since China's reform and opening in the 1980s, English has become an essential tool for China to communicate with the world. The promotion of English language education was thus advocated by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, and has since been continuously enhanced by the subsequent Chinese leadership. Today, as the second-biggest global economy in the world and actively interacting with other countries through political and trade cooperation, China more than ever needs to use English to maintain and further its political and economic interest.

In the past few decades, as China's economy has become more integrated into the world economy, the Chinese government has sought to produce a labor force that would be globally

more competitive through education reform (Guo & Guo, 2016). In 2010, the State Council released the *Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*¹⁴, which provided guidelines for the development of the education sector across the country (The State Council of the PRC, 2010). One of the aims of the guidelines is to open up education by encouraging international educational exchange and introducing overseas education resources. Internationalization of education is part of Shenzhen's internationalizing agenda. Shenzhen's Nanshan District, as the first "District of Distinctive Education" (Yu & Xiao, 2002) in the Guangdong Province, took the lead in internationalizing its education. Some of the efforts included establishing more international schools, internationalizing curricula at local schools, and hiring at least two foreign ELTs for every public school in the district.

While the Nanshan District Education Bureau spent 15 million RMB on hiring foreigners to teach English each year (Shenzhen Nanshan District Government, 2012), this was not necessarily because it was effective. From the government officials' view, a central reason foreign ELTs were recruited was because it was one of the easiest projects to implement, and the effect of foreign ELTs in internationalizing education in Shenzhen might be more symbolic than functional. As one government official revealed,

Because the international education department [within the Nanshan District Education Bureau in Shenzhen] does not cooperate with other departments, what can they do? They can just do whatever it is within their power to "internationalize" the education, and having *waijiao* (foreign ELTs) is one of the things that need the least cooperation from other departments.

(Nicolas, White, US American, male, early 30s)¹⁵

Although foreign ELTs are hired to build Shenzhen as an international city, the Chinese government is at the same time wary of Western influence. It is emphasized that the aim of the Chinese government's effort to incorporate English language classes in the school curriculum is not "the prestige of knowing a foreign language or appreciating the cultural heritage of Anglo-American societies," but "national modernization" (Johnson, 2009, p.148). For instance,

¹⁴ 《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要(2010-2020年)》

¹⁵ The quote is extracted from a conversation with an official from the Nanshan District Education Bureau during the closing ceremony of the Sustainable Development Goals Programme held in the HSBC Business School of the satellite campus of Peking University in Shenzhen on August 21, 2017.

in a government document¹⁶ on the internationalization of education in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen, it is emphasized that all curriculum reforms and program introductions must adhere to the principle of “using the West to serve China” (*yangweizhongyong*¹⁷) (Shenzhen Nanshan District Government, 2012). In actual practice, the Chinese government is cautious in restricting English language education to a technical level by teaching grammar and practical use of the language while minimizing the ideological influence of Western cultures by excluding the teaching of Western history and literature. Seen as an embodiment of foreign values, the incorporation of foreign ELTs in the local public-education sector is thus utilitarian and superficial.

2.2. Visa, employment, and permanent residence policies

While attracting and retaining global talent and capital are essential strategies for China’s continuous economic development (Wang, 2012), China has become a popular destination for economic migration because of various economic opportunities the country provides (Skeldon, 2011). According to Liu (2018), a Chinese legal scholar involved in the policy-making process of China’s immigration law, in 2016, 672,000 persons¹⁸ were hired in China as foreign experts in the public sector, and another 240,000 foreigners worked in the private sector. In Shenzhen, one of the top ten most popular Chinese cities for foreigners, the number of permanent foreign residents¹⁹ reached 26,579 by the end of 2015, comprised of foreigners from 127 countries (Han, 2016).

In the face of an increasing presence of foreigners in the country, the Chinese government has launched a series of reforms regarding exit-entry administration, employment, and permanent residence of foreigners. In 1985, the Chinese government launched the first exit and entry administration law²⁰ to address the presence of foreigners in the country. In 1996, regulations on the employment of foreigners²¹ showed that the Chinese state was willingly recruiting foreign experts for the country’s modernizing project. The 2004 measures on the permanent

¹⁶ 《南山区教育国际化五年行动计划（2012-2016）》（Five-year plan for internationalizing education in Nanshan District（2012-2016））

¹⁷ The original wording in the document is “洋为中用”.

¹⁸ One individual can be counted more than once when employed under different contracts within one year.

¹⁹ A foreigner is considered part of the permanent population of the city after residing in the city for more than six months.

²⁰ 《中华人民共和国外国人入境出境管理法》（*Law of the People's Republic of China on Control of the Entry and Exit of Aliens*）（1985）

²¹ 《外国人在中国就业管理规定》（*Provisions on the Employment of Foreigners in China*）（1996）

residence of foreigners²² recognizes that some foreigners will settle in China permanently. In 2012, a reformed *Exit-Entry Administration Law (EEAL)* in China was adopted, and in 2017, a new unified work permit system was introduced.

Scholars observe that, although China continues to open up its economy to the outside world, the notion of “foreign threat” (Brady, 2000, p.963) is essential for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to maintain its political power, and that foreigners are treated “on the basis of the old exclusionary discourse as carriers of subversive influences that may harm Chinese society and even the rule of the CCP” (Pieke, 2014, p.23). China’s cautious attitude toward foreigners stems from its national insecurities, which are defined by a discourse of China’s history of humiliation by foreign invasion in the 19th Century since the Opium War (Callahan, 2004). At the same time, China also perceived Western technology as necessary for national modernization. Since then, China has adopted a pragmatic approach toward the West, and the concept of “Chinese learning for fundamental principles, Western learning for practical applications (*zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*)” remains relevant in the contemporary Chinese-Western cultural relationship (Pohl, 2018).

China’s reform of its visa, employment, and permanent residence policies is thus intended to attract and accommodate foreign talent on a short-term basis instead of encouraging their long-term settlement (Ding & Koslowski, 2017). While various policy changes facilitate the entry, employment, and residence of international migrants in China, the Chinese government only makes a marginal opening for foreigners to pursue Chinese green cards. Also, my research shows that, although the Chinese government has relaxed its visa and green-card regulations in recent years, they are applied selectively, favoring “top-level” foreigners. Examining social welfare for foreigners and immigration-related policies²³ in China, Bork-Hüffer & Yuan-Ihle (2014) observe that, although there have been legal changes made for the benefits of foreigners, they are only targeted at the so-called foreign talents. Other groups of foreigners are subject to stricter control. My findings support this argument, as will be shown in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Moreover, China’s social welfare policies are still lacking in providing social rights for foreigners (Zhu & Price, 2013; Bork-Hüffer & Yuan-Ihle, 2014; Ding & Koslowski, 2017).

²² 《外国人在中国永久居留审批管理办法》 (*Measures for the Administration of Examination and Approval of Foreigners' Permanent Residence in China*) (2004)

²³ Policies reviewed include *Interim Measures for Social Insurance System Coverage of Foreigners Working within the Territory of China* (2011) and *EAEL* (2012).

For example, it remains difficult for foreigners' children to access local education resources, as will be shown in chapter 9.

2.3. Law and the production of migrant status

Ambivalently rejected as the ideological Other and admitted to China based on their potential economic contribution to China's modernization, foreigners' permissibility and rights in China depend primarily on their perceived economic value. China's visa, employment, and permanent residence policies play a vital role in shaping foreign ELTs' social position. By looking into how China's law creates differentiated migrant statuses for justification of differential visa treatments and levels of surveillance, the dissertation argues that the positionality of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen is legislatively constructed as that of "middling," "temporary" and "illegal" migrants.

First, foreign ELTs are "middling" migrants in terms of their socio-economic status. Foreign ELTs in China fall into the definition of "middling" migrants, as most of them hold at least a bachelor's degree and come from a middle-class background. Moreover, the latest Chinese work-permit system also specifically classifies them as B-class foreigners, signifying the status of middling professionals in comparison to A-class foreigners who are considered high-skilled professionals and C-class foreigners who are classified as low-skilled foreigners.

Second, foreign ELTs in China are essentially "temporary" labor, as their visas are issued on a temporary basis, and their prospects for obtaining permanent residence status are grim. Their work visa validity is only for one year. Moreover, China strictly forbids dual nationality, and it does not easily grant citizenship to foreigners. Although there are pathways to obtain permanent residence, the threshold is extremely high, and it is unlikely that ordinary foreigners such as foreign ELTs will be considered eligible applicants. As a result, the temporariness in foreign ELTs' status as foreign labor limits their social rights.

Thirdly, foreign ELTs in China are often labeled as "illegal" foreigners. In a government report, the EFL industry was identified as one of the fields in which illegal employment of foreigners was concentrated (The State Council of the PRC, 2012). De Genova (2002) points out that law has the power to construct migrant "illegality" and even different facets of "illegality." In China, as visa regulations for foreign ELTs become more restricted, more "illegal" foreign ELTs are produced. While most foreign ELTs enter and reside in China "legally," they only become "illegal" when they are at their workplace.

3. Literature review and research gap

China is traditionally seen as an emigration country, but scholarly interest in studying China as an immigration destination has been rising in recent years. For example, Frank Pieke (2012, 2014) was one of the first to look at China's immigration policy from a sociological perspective. *Immigration and the transformation of Chinese society* is a three-year collaborative research project (2015-2020) between Chinese and European researchers,²⁴ and its research paper gives the latest analysis of China as an immigration country (Pieke, et al., 2019). The edited book *Destination China: Immigration to China in the post-reform era* (2018) is a collection of articles on different aspects and groups of international migrants in China. Among anthropological research projects in recent years, international migrant groups studied include female marriage migrants at Chinese borders (Luo, 2018; Barabantseva & Grillot, 2019; Barabantseva, 2020), overseas Muslims in Yiwu (Pliez, 2012; Marsden, 2018), Indian traders in Keqiao (Cheuk, 2016), Africans in Guangzhou (Castillo, 2015; Mathews, Lin & Yang, 2017; Haugen, 2018a, 2018b), South Koreans in Beijing (Ma, 2018), and Western expatriates in Shanghai (Farrer, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2019) and Xiamen (Lehmann, 2015). Research specifically on foreign ELTs in China includes Stanley's (2013) book about Westerners teaching English at a university in Shanghai, Henry's (2013b) article on Western ELTs in Shenyang, and Leonard's (2018) article about Westerners teaching English in Xiamen. My research drew inspiration from and built upon scholarly works on expatriate studies in China. Although my fieldwork in Shenzhen shows that foreign ELTs there represent all walks of life from different parts of the world, the research mainly focuses on foreign ELTs from Western countries in order to situate my findings within the framework of existing academic discussion on expatriate studies and allow a more focused and nuanced scholarly discussion to take place. Recognizing the ambiguous nature of the term "expatriate" in scholarship and everyday life, scholars of critical expatriate studies (Kunz, 2016; Farrer, 2018) suggest applying an emic approach and investigating "expatriate" as a "category of practice," rather than a "category of analysis." By recognizing the ambiguities of the term as part of the social construction of migrant experience, such an emic approach emphasizes the "expatriate" as a category of migrants with economic, gendered, and racial privileges in practice.

Scholarly studies of privileged international migrants in the Chinese context are limited. James Farrer is the pioneer of expatriate studies in the Chinese context. His ethnographic research on

²⁴ Details of the research project can be found on the website: <https://immigrantchina.net/>.

Westerners took place in Shanghai and spanned from the 1990s to the 2010s. It covered various aspects of expatriate life in Shanghai, including changing patterns of intermarriages (2008), narratives and practices of emplacement (2010a, 2014), sexuality (2010b), nightlife (2011), employment (2014), and educational strategies of international families (2015). His book *International migrants in China's global city: the new Shanghailanders* (2019) provided a thick ethnography on the long-term Western community in Shanghai. Lehmann's (2014) book *Transnational lives in China: Expatriates in a globalizing city* is an ethnography of Westerners' migration experience to Xiamen. The author situates the migration experiences of privileged migrants within the tensions of rising individualism, which was a side product of neo liberal global capitalism, and focuses on their vulnerabilities and emotions.

A significant number of privileged international migrants work as foreign ELTs in China; however, they appear to be understudied. Stanley's (2013) book offers a detailed ethnography of Westerners teaching English in Shanghai, and its primary research focuses are on the effectiveness of short-term English teacher training courses and on teachers' identity construction. A substantial part of the book is about the pedagogical aspect of teaching English in China and the interaction between Western ELTs and Chinese students in a university classroom context. However, the book only captures the experiences of teachers who taught in a legitimate institution on a work visa, and thus excludes the majority of foreign ELTs in the Chinese context – those who taught in illegitimate institutions and whose employment often involved “illegality.”

Leonard's (2018) article discusses the contradictory experiences of young White foreign ELTs who found themselves in a privileged yet precarious situation. From a historical and social perspective, the article analyzes how a shifting and ambivalent attitude toward Whiteness in Chinese society contributes to foreign ELTs' simultaneously positive and negative positions in the Chinese context. However, the discussion remains too general and lacks contextualization, as the findings were based on only 17 interviews (seven face-to-face interviews and ten Skype interviews) without participant observation, and interviewees were randomly recruited from all over China (some residing in Xiamen, some in rural Chinese villages, and most unspecified).

Outside of China, two earlier research on foreign ELTs in Japan were conducted from the perspective of program implementation and gender perspective. McConnel's (2000) book focuses on the experiences of foreign ELTs teaching in Japan in the framework of Japan's Exchange and Teaching (JET) program, which is a program that introduces foreign ELTs into the local education system for the purpose of internationalizing Japan. Also set in the context

of Japan, Appleby's book (2014) studies how masculinities were constructed among heterosexual foreign male ELTs in Japan. In Taiwan, Lan's (2011) work analyzes how White foreigners converted their ethnic and linguistic capital into socio-economic capital and took up English language teaching as a privileged yet dead-end job. These studies offer unique perspectives on studying foreign ELTs; however, none of the works above addressed how state policy shaped migrants' experiences.

Farrer (2018, p.198), who conducted comprehensive fieldwork on expatriates in Shanghai, observed that more attention should be given to "how visa and employment policies affect the chances of middling expatriates such as chefs, teachers and others who are considered 'skilled' in many regulatory contexts." While a substantial body of work on China's immigration policies has provided comprehensive analysis and important implications (Zhu & Price, 2013; Liu, 2014; Bork-Hüffer & Yuan-Ihle, 2014; Zou, 2016; Ding & Koslowski, 2017; Liu & Ahl, 2018; Habicht, 2020; Ahl & Czoske, 2018, 2020), it is confined to textual analysis only without examining migrants' experiences on the ground. Zou (2016, p.10) pointed out the insufficiency of studying legal texts alone, and called for "qualitative studies such as interviews and ethnographic research of the *EEAL* and how different labor market actors interact with the legal framework in order to shed light on the 'law in action.'" My thesis follows this call and attempts to bridge the gap between policy studies and migration studies by paying special attention to how foreign ELTs experience and navigate China's state policy.

4. The analytical and theoretical framework

My dissertation looks at the interaction between law and migrants, and in this respect, the concept of the production of "illegality" is vital for my research. Moreover, using the approaches of multiscalar analysis (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018), the study looks at foreign ELTs as one of the social actors in Shenzhen's city-making process. It contextualizes the lived experiences of foreign ELTs against a social and institutional background in a global Chinese city context. Furthermore, by asking "whose cosmopolitanism" (Glick-Schiller & Irving, 2014), the dissertation critically examines how migrants of different positionalities practice cosmopolitanism in the process of migration. To achieve this aim, the thesis compares migration experiences of the more privileged corporate-transferred ELTs working at international schools and the less privileged self-initiated ELTs working at local schools. Ultimately, through exploring cosmopolitan emplacement practices and long-term settlement

of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen, the dissertation contributes to the citizenship discussion of middling skilled migrants in China.

4.1.Law and the production of “illegality”

Law plays an indispensable role as “a tool of regulation” that “constructs legality and illegality, the permissible and the impermissible” (Abraham, 2015, p.289). Various scholars have examined the relationship between law and its production of different migrant statuses and migrant “illegality” (Coutin, 1996, 2000; De Genova, 2002, 2005; Dauvergne, 2008; Anderson, 2010, 2013, 2015; Zou, 2016). In China, the law not only draws a line between Chinese citizens and foreign migrants, but also creates distinctions among foreign migrant workers, for example, the high-, middle- and low-skilled workers and legal/illegal foreigners. Through law, a foreigner’s “class,” which is mathematically calculated through a points system, and “illegality,” which can be changed at any time through legislation modification, are produced.

Foreign ELTs, defined as B-class foreigners and identified by the Chinese government as being more prone to illegal employment (The State Council of PRC, 2012), are positioned as “lower” class foreigners” who are seen as potential “illegal” workers. Not only does China’s new work-permit system classify foreign workers as A/B/C class on a national level, but increasingly restrictive visa regulations and local immigrant control measures on foreign ELTs also produce and highlight migrant “illegality.” As a result, foreign ELTs are put in a precarious position that is subject to exploitation by employers and job agencies. At the same time, the law also produces different facets of “illegality” (De Genova, 2002). For example, while most foreign ELTs enter and reside in China “legally,” their “illegality” is produced based on the absence of a work permit.

4.2.Multiscalar analysis

In their book *Migrants and city-making: Dispossession, displacement and urban regeneration*, Çağlar and Glick-Schiller (2018) approached migration studies with multiscalar analysis with examples of migrants in three cities: Manchester, USA; Halle/Saale, Germany; and Mardin, Turkey. Multiscalar analysis critiques existing popular migration study methods such as methodological nationalism, which equates society with the nation-state and assumes that people from the same nation-state are of the same culture and race (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002; Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018). The multiscalar approach goes

beyond the binary lens (foreign migrants vs. natives) constructed by methodological nationalism and its by-product, the ethnic lens, and proposes looking at migrants and non-migrants alike within the same analytical frame, as both these groups are social actors in the city-making process.

Çağlar and Glick-Schiller (2018, p.8) emphasize that they do not use “multiscalar” to refer to a notion of levels or scales of territory. Instead, the authors use the term to “trace social processes as they are constituted” and to talk about “sociospatial spheres of practice that are constituted in relationship to each other and within various hierarchies of networks of power.” In other words, multiscalar analysis sees the broader migration context as a multiscalar social field constituted of institutionalized and informal networks of networks that are interconnected with each other, each holding a different amount of economic, political and/or cultural power. Moreover, these social fields “enable, shape, constrain and are acted upon by individuals” (Çağlar and Glick-Schiller, 2018, p.9). Inferred from the multiscalar analysis approach are the concepts of displacement and emplacement, which are to be understood as “interrelated processes of the restructuring of space and social relations at given points in time,” which “take place as part of the accumulation of capital by multiple forms of dispossession” (Çağlar and Glick-Schiller, 2018, p.21). Another concept that is relevant to the multiscalar approach is Simmel’s understanding of “sociabilities,” which stresses areas of commonality rather than differences in social relations.

This dissertation situates and examines the migration of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen’s multiscalar restructuring processes, which involve the city’s urban and socio-economic restructuring in the changing global economy, Shenzhen’s growing middle class, the educational market, and China’s immigration law reform. Through looking into foreign ELTs’ interaction with individuals representing different actors, for example, and middle-class Chinese students as social actors, employers, and salespeople of English teaching centers as representing market forces, and police as a delegation of political power, the research sees the migration process of foreign ELTs as interconnected with the transformation of the Chinese societies in various aspects. While the migration of foreign ELTs to Shenzhen is driven by the city’s internationalizing agenda and the rise of the Chinese middle class, the movement and employment of foreign ELTs are at the same time increasingly restricted by China’s legal reform on visa policies for foreigners. While foreign ELTs are needed to contribute to the internationalization of the educational and demographic landscape of Shenzhen, they are

nevertheless heavily condemned as the unwanted “loser foreigners,” on whom stricter visa policies are imposed.

4.3.Critical cosmopolitanism

In the etic sense, “cosmopolitan” is used to describe a place full of people from different countries, or someone who has had multi-cultural experiences and is thus open to different ways of thinking and doing things. However, there are different conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism in the academic context. Delanty (2006, p.29) observes that “the revival of cosmopolitanism in recent times is due to the rise of an explicitly political conception of cosmopolitanism relating to citizenship and democracy.” Some scholars see cosmopolitanism as a way of seeing that has resulted from globalization and has gone beyond the national to the global (Beck & Sznaider, 2006). Some see it as a lifestyle that is characterized by a taste for the “other” and embraced by “elite travelers” (Hannerz, 1990); others define cosmopolitanism as an open attitude to the world and open practices in everyday life (Beck, 2002; Vertovec, 2009). Alternative conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism highlight the contexts in which different forms of cosmopolitan identity emerge, and include “ghetto cosmopolitanism” (Nashashibi, 2007), “subaltern cosmopolitanism” (Featherstone, 2012), “rooted cosmopolitanism” (Appiah, 2006), “working-class cosmopolitanism” (Werbner, 1999) and “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (Bhabha, 1996).

Glick-Schiller and Irving (2014, p.6) criticize popular conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism, which equate mobility or subaltern positioning with cosmopolitanism, as being too simplistic, since migration does not always result in openness and cosmopolitanism could occur among non-migrants. By asking “whose cosmopolitanism,” critical cosmopolitanism challenges the existing hegemonic understanding of cosmopolitanism that is dominantly defined by “tolerance of the other” (Hannerz, 1990; Sandercock 2003; Werbner 2008), and attempts to understand the various social situations and positionings from which cosmopolitans speak and act. Critical cosmopolitanism points out that people belong to a community in a particular way based on their situated positioning that is not defined merely by one identity category. As a result, difference can coexist with shared understanding.

As a counter-hegemonic methodological approach, critical cosmopolitanism offers a means to locate and apprehend multiple forms of displacement and belonging by explicitly focusing on different social positionalities from which people experience and understand the world. Critical

cosmopolitanism is useful in understanding the encounters between migrants and locals of different positionalities. This dissertation argues and illustrates that, when the term cosmopolitanism is applied to a more privileged group of migrant teachers (those working at foreign-owned international schools), it has different connotations than when it is applied to a less privileged group of migrant teachers (those who work for job agencies or local training centers) or to different sections of the local population. Depending on social positionality, international migrants from the same country of origin do not always share the same migration experience. For example, self-initiated ELTs from the US might have more shared experiences with local working-class Chinese than with their compatriots who are “foreign hires” holding management positions in high-tech companies

4.4.Citizenship

Citizenship as societal and political membership is a modern and Western concept that is developed based on a set of particular cultural and structural preconditions, which were only partly developed when the idea of citizenship was first introduced into China in the late 19th Century and are still yet to be fully developed. Thus, internationally, the development of Chinese citizenship is measured against the concepts embedded in Western liberal or republican citizenship, and Chinese citizenship is perceived to be lacking in political rights (Lin, 2017, p.53-58). Unlike other countries that use liberal citizenship rights to retain high-skilled international migrants, China does not easily grant citizenship to foreigners.

Domestically, Chinese citizenship is deeply rooted in the political and cultural imagination of Han Chineseness, which is heavily defined by biological features (Dikötter, 1994, 1997a, 1997b) (for a detailed discussion, please see chapter 6). Similarly to present-day Israel, in which ethnic fellowship, apart from human capital, is well sought after through immigration law (Abraham, 2015), China has a strong preference for ethnic Chinese when trying to attract global talents from abroad. While overseas Chinese might not be willing to give up their foreign citizenship for the acquisition of Chinese citizenship, the Chinese state encourages overseas Chinese to “return” to China by giving them preference in the issuance of Chinese green cards (Liu & Ahl, 2018), which I argue, makes it more convenient for such returnees to practice “flexible citizenship” (Ong, 1999).

As for non-ethnic-Chinese foreign nationals, the Chinese government maintains a high threshold on its issuance of citizenship and green cards to foreigners, because foreigners are

not only seen as the ethnic Other but also as a potential foreign threat to China's national security (Brady, 2000; Callahan, 2004; Pieke, 2014). Chinese citizenship might be neither available nor desirable to the majority of foreign resident nationals, given that the number of Chinese citizenship acquisition cases is extremely low,²⁵ and the Chinese citizenship comes at the expense of giving up one's other citizenship(s). As for the more desirable Chinese green cards, they are only accessible to "top-level" foreigners. As for the majority of foreign resident nationals, who are categorized as "non-elite" foreigners, their status in China is mostly that of temporary labor because of the restrictive visa and green-card policies imposed on them.

The dissertation (see chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion) argues that the existing formal citizenship available to most foreigners in China is "labor citizenship" (Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014), as the freedom of mobility and amount of rights of international migrants in China are contingent upon one's value as a laborer. More than anything else, labor "skill" has become the basis of social rights and citizenship (or, based on the present situation in China, permanent residence is a more desirable and available substitute for citizenship). In this light, citizenship and immigration policy is used by the state as a way to respond to challenges of governing population in face of increasing human mobility in the late globalization era (Rygiel, 2010).

From an institutionalist perspective and seeing citizenship as political membership, a formal status of national citizenship is difficult to obtain in China's existing legal citizenship framework. However, the concept of "urban citizenship" proposed by Bauböck (2003) is a less radical way of granting legal status and social rights to foreigners on a local level. Bauböck (2010, p.298-299) argues that stable territorial boundaries of societies are the foundation of political entities and thus claims to membership status and rights. Bauböck (2007) proposes that political and societal membership is inseparable from long-term residence, and that the allocation of citizenship status and rights should be based on a stakeholder principle. In the European context, defining "urban citizenship" as a formal status of local citizenship is based on residence rather than nationality, Bauböck (2003, p.151) proposes that "all foreign nationals residing permanently in a municipality should become full local citizens without having to naturalize." He expects that such "urban citizenship" may lead to cosmopolitan democracy by emancipating "citizenship" from national sovereignty and homogeneity. The proposal has been realized in some European countries, and 14 European states, including Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Ireland, have granted local voting rights to their long-term residents (Shaw,

²⁵ According to the latest national census, the number of foreigners who acquired Chinese citizenship was only 1,448 as of the year of 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

2007). However, it is uncertain to what extent the Chinese state is open to giving such “urban citizenship” to non-Chinese foreign nationals.

Alternatively, Farrer’s (2014b, p.25) conceptualization of “urban citizenship” might be more applicable in the Chinese context. Defining “urban citizenship” not as a mere product of state policies, but also of “bottom-up” urban place-making practices that create affective bonds to a place and local people, Farrer (2014b, p.23-25) finds the concept of urban citizenship particularly relevant to transnational migrants in Chinese cities for two reasons. First, in China, international migrants still constitute a relatively small population and often concentrate in a few global cities, thus hardly having any influence on a national level. Second, it is challenging for international migrants to achieve full political, cultural, and social citizenship without being ethnically Chinese. However, since foreign residents in Chinese cities enjoy social and cultural involvement at a local and community level, Farrer (2014b) argues that international migrants practice “urban citizenship” by having a “right to the city” and engaging in “place-making activities.” Such an understanding of citizenship as practices is shared by Saskia Sassen (2003, p.13), who argues that, when undocumented immigrants carry out practices of daily life in their community of residence, such as raising a family, schooling children, or working and participating in local activities, the practices are “a form of citizenship practices and their identities as members of a community of residence assume some of the features of citizenship identities.”

Focusing on a stigmatized group of middling migrants in China and building on critical expatriate literature, my dissertation uses multiscale analysis and critical cosmopolitanism as analytical lenses to examine the migration of foreign ELTs to Shenzhen. Seeing migration contexts as multiscale social fields and migration experiences as interactions between structural forces and individual agency, the dissertation depicts different cosmopolitan experiences of foreign ELTs who are situated differently within the power structure. In the discussion of citizenship for foreign ELTs (and for non-elite foreigners in general) in the Chinese context, although settling on urban citizenship in a cultural sense might not be radical enough to bring social rights and justice for international migrants, it is, unfortunately, the most realistic and available option in a political climate simmering with nationalism at present.

5. Dissertation structure

The dissertation traces the migration process of foreign ELTs as inter-related with the transformation of Chinese society by contextualizing foreign teacher migration in relation to Shenzhen's urban and economic restructuring (chapter 2) and the growing Chinese middle class and the ESL market in Shenzhen (chapter 3). Through state policy analysis (chapter 4) and ethnographic illustrations of relevant law implementation on the ground (chapter 5), the dissertation argues that the latest Chinese immigration law reform produces a hierarchy of migrant statuses, with differentiated policies, rights, and social control applied to different classes of foreigners. The dissertation goes on to discuss the forms of formal citizenship that are available to international migrants in China (chapter 6). Moreover, while there is a link between occupations and social stratification, there are also intra-group stratifications within the profession of foreign ELTs. By comparing different employment situations of teachers working at foreign-owned international schools (chapter 7) and those working at local schools (chapter 8), the dissertation critically examines how teachers of different social positionalities interpret and live out cosmopolitanism differently. Finally, using the concept of urban citizenship, the thesis explores cosmopolitan emplacement practices of foreign ELTs (chapter 9).

Chapter 1 Methodology

Chapter 1 is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the field site and research participants. The second section discusses the methodology used in the research. The third section reflects on doing fieldwork under an authoritarian regime and how the researcher's positionality impacted on the conducting of the research and the findings.

Chapter 2 International city and foreign ELTs

Opening with the introduction of Shekou, the earliest foreigner settlement in Shenzhen, Chapter 2 discusses the urban context of Shenzhen by looking into the city's spatial and socioeconomic restructuring since it was designated as China's first Special Economic Zone in 1980. By focusing on post-1990s Shenzhen and using the analytical framework of multiscale analysis (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018), the chapter situates the development of Shenzhen in a multiscale network of power that involves the global economy and the diasporic Chinese network in the Greater China region. In the city-making process of Shenzhen, multiple actors

such as governments on different levels, early influential leaders of Shenzhen, various forms of resources from Hong Kong, existing village networks, and internal migrants are all indispensable, as each actor has contributed, either strategically or organically, to the socio-economic development of the city. Exploring the relationship between building an international city and the migration of foreign ELTs, the chapter also looks into the role foreign ELTs play in the internationalization of Shenzhen and at what attracts foreign ELTs to Shenzhen.

Chapter 3 The Chinese middle class and the EFL market in Shenzhen

Chapter 3 contextualizes the EFL market in Shenzhen as part of a stratified education market that includes other more expensive education products such as international school education and overseas education. Using the analytical concepts of *suzhi* (defined as “an overall ranking of human quality,” see Kipnis, 2006, p.303)” and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), the chapter argues that the Chinese middle class values English competency as a means of *suzhi* improvement and cultural-capital accumulation. Moreover, the chapter demonstrates how the imagined power of English is promoted through government effort as well as through commercialization. The chapter starts with two case studies with the aim to understand how English language competency is seen as an essential cultural capital for social mobility and a symbol of being “international” (*guojihua*) and cosmopolitan. The chapter further traces the development of the national and local English language education policy in post-Mao China and specifically in Shenzhen and shows that the national and local governments are in pursuit of international prestige through the popularization and promotion of English language education. The second part of the chapter looks into the commercialization of English language education in Shenzhen by unpacking the sales strategies of English language education corporates. The last part of the chapter takes a glimpse at the future of the EFL market in China, which is online English language education.

Chapter 4 Legal provision of the central government

Situated against the backdrop of China’s *Exit-Entry Administration Law* reform in 2012, Chapter 4 aims to trace the Chinese state’s changing legislation regarding the employment of foreign ELTs, whose “class” and “legality” are produced through state policy. Firstly, the chapter argues that the Chinese state’s new hierarchical categorization of and differential policies on international workers based on their socioeconomic status reflect the Chinese

government's preference for "elite" foreigners and restriction on "non-elite" foreigners. Secondly, the analytical concept of migration infrastructure (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014) will be applied to argue how different forms of migration infrastructure facilitate and clash with each other to affect migration processes. In China's latest migration regime, firstly, regulatory and technological infrastructure work together to both promote mobility and intensify control of international migrants. Secondly, regulatory infrastructure (work visa and business license policies) and commercial infrastructure (recruitment agencies) are increasingly competing with each other and thus contribute to the production of "illegality" in the EFL industry. By analyzing how foreign ELTs are positioned in China's legal framework, the chapter argues that foreign ELTs in China are put in a disadvantaged position in terms of their perceived class and legal illegitimacy. Positioned as B-class foreigners who are often associated with illegal employment, foreign ELTs not only face more bureaucratic barriers and restrictions in their visa applications, but are also subject to more state surveillance in their everyday life.

Chapter 5 Experiences with law changes and law implementation: Perspectives of foreign ELTs

Following up on the discussion of the legal production of "class" and "illegality" of foreign ELTs in the previous chapter, Chapter 5 is an ethnography of how teachers experience work permit applications and immigration control measures in China as a consequence of their designated "class" and perceived legal illegitimacy. The first part of the chapter provides an ethnographic account of foreign ELTs' experiences with applying for work permits in Shenzhen during the time of changing legal regulations. The second part of the chapter focuses on "illegality" and documents how foreign ELTs experience the Chinese state's immigration control measures such as residence registration, residence check, and police raids at the workplace. The chapter argues that China's immigration law and its implementation have put foreign ELTs in a marginalized social position in Chinese society through tactics of othering and stigmatization. Categorized as a lower class of foreigners (B-class foreigners) and perceived as potential "illegal" foreign workers, foreign ELTs face stricter work permit application requirements and everyday surveillance than the more desirable A-class foreigners. Thus, the Chinese legal framework and law enforcement not only position foreign ELTs as the Other of Chinese citizens, but also as the Other of high-skilled, law-abiding "good" migrants. However, despite facing stricter immigration control in general, there is still room for foreign

ELTs to navigate the law due to implementation deficiency of frontline police and the complicity of different interested parties on the ground.

Chapter 6 International migrants' labor citizenship and the (im)possibility of permanent residence

Chapter 6 explores the (im)possibility for foreign ELTs to develop a long-term perspective in China and to obtain green cards and formal citizenship. Informed by the theoretical framework of labor citizenship and racial nationalism, the chapter contextualizes the temporary migrant status of foreign ELTs in relation to China's latest immigration policies, in which an ambivalent attitude toward foreigners is observed. With ethnographic examples, the first part of the chapter illustrates how China's immigration policies legislatively construct a status of temporariness for foreign ELTs, and how this status of temporariness extends for years and constitutes a kind of "accidental migration" (Von Koppenfel, 2014). The last part of the chapter discusses the prospect for foreign ELTs to develop a long-term perspective to obtain permanent residence and legal citizenship in China with reference to China's immigration policies on a national and regional level. The chapter argues that China's immigration policies have turned foreign ELTs into temporary migrant workers whose permission to stay in China is time-limited and uncertain, and whose labor and social rights are highly restricted (see Ahl & Czoske, 2020). Although a significant number of foreigners work as ELTs in China and some of them have become long-term settlers, they are not seen as potential citizens nor permanent residents. While the one-year work visa regulation for foreign ELTs functions to limit the rights of teachers (and other foreign workers of less desirable skill sets), and extend the state's right to control and deport foreigners, limited social rights and a high threshold for the application of permanent residence make it difficult for most foreign ELTs to consider a family and retirement life in China.

Chapter 7 The privileged: International school teachers

Chapter 7 offers an ethnography on the employment experiences of teachers who teach English as a second language in an international school. Teaching English at international schools is considered the top job for foreigners in the EFL industry in China, as international school teachers are employed in the form of overseas assignments and enjoy financial stability and global mobility. Informed by expatriate literature in Asia (Cohen, 1977; Fechter,

2007; Lindley, 2012; Farrer, 2018) and using the analytical framework of critical cosmopolitanism (Glick-Schiller & Irving, 2014), this and the following chapter, look at the experiences of foreign ELTs and highlight the heterogeneity and different social positionalities within the group. This chapter will focus on the top of the teacher hierarchy – international school teachers (the more privileged teachers) before moving on to an analysis of teachers placed in the lower tiers of the hierarchy – self-initiated migrant teachers (the less privileged teachers) in the subsequent chapter. The two chapters compare migration motivations and employment experiences of teachers of different social positionings. Empirical findings from the two chapters suggest that, while migration motivations of teachers in more privileged or less privileged teaching positions are both characterized by economic reasons, escapism, and pursuit of lifestyle, the two groups of teachers prioritize their multiple migration motives differently. In terms of employment experience, not only do the remuneration packages of the more privileged and less privileged teachers starkly contrast each other, but the less privileged group are also more socially marginalized and often face precarious employment situations.

Chapter 8 The less privileged: Foreign ELTs working in Chinese schools

The number of ELTs working at international schools is relatively low, and the majority of foreign ELTs in China are self-initiated international migrants who have to make their living arrangements regarding employment, housing, and family life. It is a changing trend that self-initiated migrants have outnumbered corporate-transferred expatriates in Asia, and self-initiated expatriates are increasingly losing privileges and have to make various life arrangements on their own (Farrer, 2018). The ethnography of self-initiated teachers in Chapter 8 contributes to capturing this changing migration trend. Compared to international school teachers whose employment is in the form of overseas assignments, the migration process of self-initiated foreign ELTs is less assisted, their remuneration package less attractive, and their employment conditions more precarious. Firstly, the chapter will briefly introduce self-initiated foreign ELTs working in different educational institutions in Shenzhen, including local Chinese universities, teaching centers, and local schools. Secondly, by discussing the opportunities and challenges of self-initiated foreign ELTs in China via multiple case studies, the chapter illustrates the marginalized social position of self-initiated foreign ELTs despite their seemingly attractive economic opportunities. Lastly, using the analytical framework of

intersectionality, the chapter discusses different factors that affect the employability of self-initiated migrant teachers.

Chapter 9 Foreign ELTs' cosmopolitan emplacement in Shenzhen

Using “emplacement” (Çağlar, 2018; Çağlar and Glick-Schiller, 2018) as an inclusive term that describes not only migrants' place-making activities, but also their shared experiences with locals, Chapter 9 aims to offer an ethnography of the cosmopolitan emplacement practices of foreign ELTs' in Shenzhen. Through the analytical lens of critical cosmopolitanism (Glick-Schiller & Irving, 2014), the chapter looks at corporate-transferred international school teachers and self-initiated teachers as belonging to two different social groups and argues that they have very different cosmopolitan emplacement practices. The first part of the chapter is an ethnography on foreign ELTs' interaction with the urban space in and beyond Shekou. While international school teachers' everyday activities are mainly confined to the Shekou area, self-initiated teachers are often more mobile as they tend to take up multiple jobs in different locations, as well as change jobs and accommodations more often. The second part of the chapter links the discussion on cosmopolitan emplacement practices of foreign ELTs with the Chinese middle class (chapter 4) and the cosmopolitan space of Shenzhen (chapter 3) by illustrating shared experiences between international and Chinese residents of similar social positions. The final part of the chapter explores multiple emplacements and belongings among foreign ELTs in Shenzhen in the framework of “urban citizenship” (Farrer, 2014b).

Conclusion

By using a multiscalar approach, the dissertation studies foreign ELTs' changing social positionality in relation to the transformation of Shenzhen and Shenzhen's expanding Chinese middle class. While strong market demand for foreign ELTs in Shenzhen creates abundant economic opportunities for foreigners, China's visa regulations for foreign ELTs are restrictive. Thus, a clash between China's regulatory and commercial infrastructure in the EFL industry puts foreign ELTs in Shenzhen in a marginal position, creates different migrant statuses, and produces “illegalities.” However, some foreign ELTs are more privileged than others. Applying the analytical approach of cosmopolitanism, the dissertation compares intra-group differences between corporate-transferred teachers and self-initiated migrant teachers. Moreover, by practicing “urban citizenship” in a socio-cultural sense, their cosmopolitan

emplacement practices and senses of belonging to their local community are diverse. Contributing to shed light on citizenship theory with the case of foreign ELTs in China, the dissertation suggests that, while foreigners in China embrace an informal status of “urban citizenship,” the kind of citizenship that is available to international migrants in a formal sense in China is “labor citizenship.”

Chapter 1 Methodology

The findings of this dissertation are based on my fieldwork on foreign English teachers in Shenzhen, China, from 2016 to 2017 for one year in total. The methodologies used in the research include ethnography and document analysis. The methods adopted in my fieldwork include semi-structured interviews with 68 foreign English language teachers and participant observation in various work and social settings. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the field site and research participants. The second section discusses the methodology used in the research. The third section reflects upon doing fieldwork under an authoritarian regime and how the researcher's positionality impacted on the conduct of the research and the findings.

1. Introducing field site and research participants

Field site

The field site of my research is mainly in the Nanshan District (see illustration 2), in which I stayed during my one-year total fieldwork period. It was one of the first developed districts of Shenzhen and now home to 1 million permanent residents (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2019). During my first trip from May to October in 2016, I rented a place in Shekou, a sub-district located at the southern tip of the Nanshan District. I had decided to stay in Shekou out of the vast area of Shenzhen, after doing some online research, as Shekou was one of the most foreigner-concentrated areas in Shenzhen.



Illustration 2: A map showing different districts of Shenzhen
Source: Wikipedia

As my fieldwork continued, the Shekou area became where I frequented the most as it was where I did my internship, as well as where I met my interviewees. Shekou was the hub for international schools in Shenzhen, so not long after I settled in Shekou, I got in touch with a foreign-owned international school in the area and started an internship there. Moreover, since foreigners in Shenzhen enjoyed spending their leisure time in Shekou, if not also living and working there, many of my interviews and hang-outs with foreign English teachers took place in the area

As my network of informants expanded after my first fieldwork, I occasionally paid visits to Nanshan's neighboring districts, the Bao'an District and Futian District, where some of my informants worked and lived. However, my main field site remained in the Nanshan Districts, where internationalizing education and English language education were most resourceful among all the districts in Shenzhen: as not only were most international schools and universities in Shenzhen located in the district, English language education was also emphasized in the public sector and turned into a profitable business in the private sector.

Demography of research participants

Employment institutions

The 68 foreign English language teachers can be categorized into two groups: international school teachers and non-international school teachers. Among them, 26 school teachers were mostly recruited from my internship in a foreign-owned international school in the Shekou sub-district of the Nanshan District in Shenzhen. The other 42 teachers working in various non-international school settings were recruited through walk-ins, WeChat²⁶ groups for foreign teachers, personal contacts, and snowball sampling. The non-international school institutions covered self-employed persons, teaching centers, job agencies, local schools, and universities. Below (illustration 3) is a breakdown of the numbers of teachers working in different educational institutions.

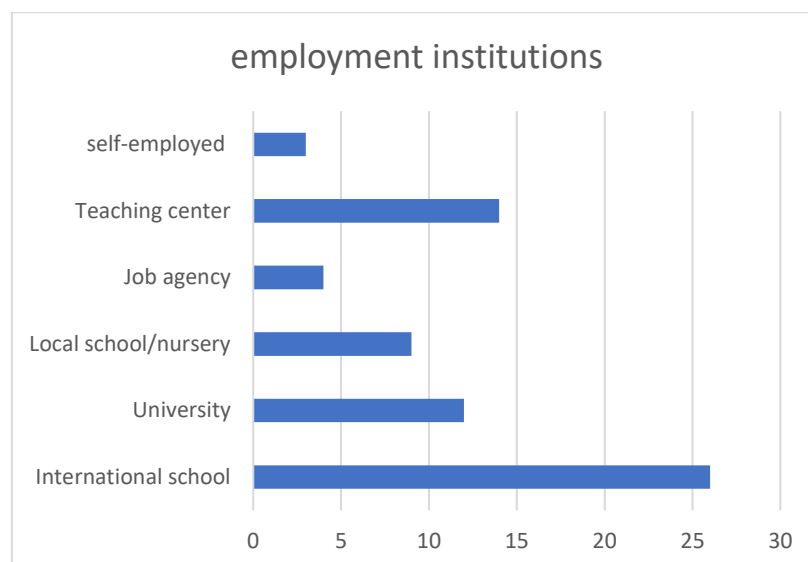


Illustration 3: a chart showing demography of interviewees by employment institutions.

Nationality, gender, education level and age

Among the 68 teachers, the majority of interviewees were from the US; others were from the UK, Ireland, Australia, Canada, Hungary, Ukraine, Iran, the Philippines, Kenya, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago. Out of the 68 teachers, 35 of them were male and 33 were female, while

²⁶ WeChat is the most popular multi-purpose app that integrates messaging, social media and mobile payment in China. It is a must for communication in China for Chinese people as well as foreigners. During my fieldwork, every single one of foreigners I came across used WeChat on a daily basis, for work as well as social purposes.

67 of them held a university degree. Most of the teachers interviewed were between the age of 26 to 55. The chart below (illustration 4) shows the distribution of teachers in each age group.

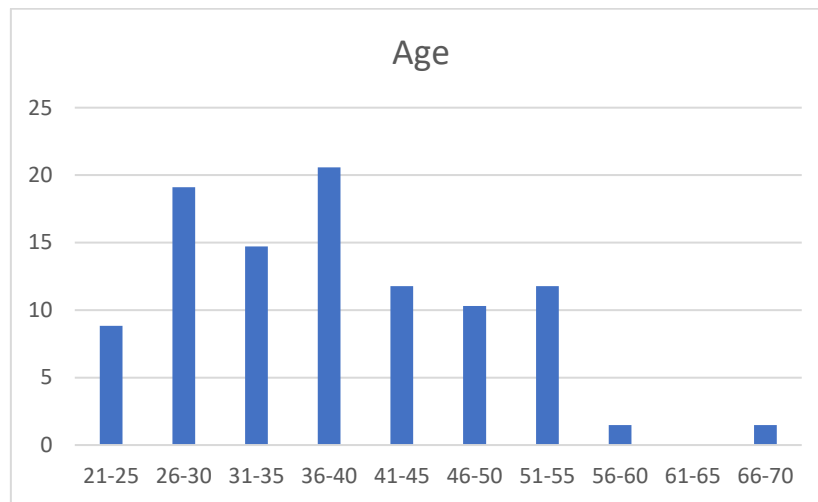


Illustration 4: a chart showing demography of interviewees by age.

Length of stay in China

Among the 68 teachers interviewed, 28 of them had been in China for less than three years, 19 of them fell into the group of staying in China for three to five years, 12 of them had been in China for between five to ten years, and 9 of them had been in China for more than ten years. The chart below (illustration 5) shows the percentage of each group of teachers.

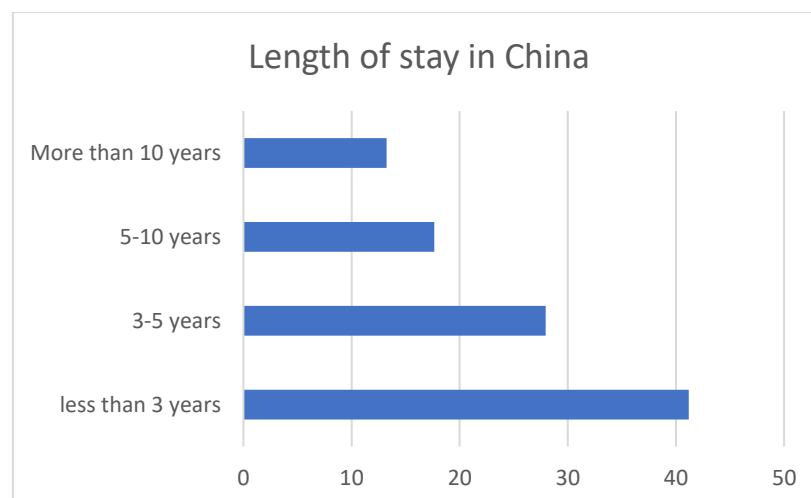


Illustration 5: a chart showing demography of interviewees by length of stay in China.

Non-teacher informants

Apart from foreign teachers, I also interviewed six directors/administrators of schools/nurseries/teaching centers, two education consultants in the English education field, one foreign expert working in the Shenzhen Education Bureau, and two professionals working in the social service sector for foreigners. Numerous informal conversations also took place with Chinese and non-Chinese residents working in various service sectors in Shenzhen.

2. Methodology

Research materials generated from my fieldwork included field notes, interview transcripts, visual images such as photos of advertisements and activities taken in the field site, and mental maps drawn by interviewees. Document analysis covered legal documents regarding the exit-entry administration, visas, employment, and (permanent) residence of international migrants in China. Apart from national government documents, provincial and municipal government documents, such as policies on international migrants and Shenzhen's development plan as well as education policies, are also included for contextualization. Other materials include media reports on English education and foreign English teachers in China. The software MAXQDA was used throughout the research process for data analysis and data management.

2.1. Interviews

2.1.1. Semi-structured interviews

While semi-structured interviews are scheduled, follow a general script, and cover a list of topics, unstructured interviews go on all the time and at anywhere (Bernard, 2006, p.210). During my first semi-structured interviews with interviewees, I usually started with by asking them to tell me their life stories in order to elicit basic personal information, thereby also gaining understanding of individual interviewees and building initial rapport (see biographical research in section 2.1.1. below). Depending on the openness, reflectiveness, and time allowed, I also used various interviewing techniques such as free listing and pile exercises (see section 2.1.2) and drawing mental maps to get interviewees to open up and express themselves on a deeper level (see section 2.1.3).

General topics covered in semi-structured interviews included 1) employment (including work arrangements, legal issues, opportunities, and challenges), 2) experiences with visas and

immigration control, and 3) social network, social integration and sense of belonging. If the topics were not covered during the initial life storytelling, I would ask respondents to focus on issues of interest to my research and let the interviewees provide information that they thought was most relevant and important to them. With interviewees whom I was able to build great rapport with, I would initiate further meetings and conduct informal interviews as well as participant observation.

Informal interviews were used throughout my fieldwork to gain more in-depth understandings of topics of research interest by taking advantage of spontaneous situation-stimulated discussions. For example, during a hang-out activity with a teacher on a Saturday evening, when a teacher sighed and said she had not gone out for some time, I asked her why. She told me it was because the friends she had made during her first few years in Shenzhen had all left, and she was tired of making new friends over and over again. She also said that because the police had started to check passports on the street in the Shekou area, foreigners in Shekou preferred to stay home and hold house parties instead. For such situation-based informal interviews, I was able to gain some insights into the transient side of the expat community in Shenzhen. I was also able to understand foreigners' response to immigration control in certain areas in Shenzhen. Informal interviews were also useful for studying sensitive issues such as illegal employment, which most interviewees would avoid talking about during initial meetings. Informal interviews took place daily throughout my fieldwork in the form of conversation in different scenarios, and the conversations were memorized and written down as soon as circumstances allowed, on the same day on which the conversations occurred.

2.1.2. Biographical research

Biographical research is a research approach that elicits and analyses an individual's biography or life history. The method is particularly useful in understanding migrants' experiences from their perspectives, given the advantages of biographical research in "recording the subjective perspectives of members of various milieus" (Rosenthal, 2004, p. 48).

In my research, interviewees' self-narrated biographies are used instrumentally as a source of information and as an indication of their socio-economic position. I usually started with general questions such as "could you please briefly introduce yourself and tell me about your life," which generally led to answers that contained the personal data and an impression of life trajectories of interviewees. Based on the initial responses, probing techniques (Bernard, 2016,

p.219) were used to stimulate a respondent to produce more information. For example, questions such as “what was your life situation like when you decided to move to China,” “How are your experiences in Shenzhen different, compared to when you worked in Wuhan (a northern Chinese city) ?” and “Could you tell me more about your experiences when you were working for the job agency?” were some of the questions asked to understand migration motives, Shenzhen’s uniqueness as a migration destination, and specific forms of employment arrangement, respectively.

By asking interviewees to tell their life stories chronologically in their own words, they are prompted to include in their narratives not only information such as their social position, migration motivations, and migration trajectories, but also their interpretation of their experiences in a specific society and culture. By exploring individuals’ micro-historical experiences within a macro-historical framework, it helps to understand interviewees’ social positionality and how interviewees view their own lives. Also, the fact that the majorities of life-histories were open-ended, in the sense that no one was able to, or found the need to, give a definite narrative on how long they would be in China or where would they be afterwards, revealed the transient and uncertain nature of being an ordinary migrant in China.

2.1.3. Free listing and piling exercises

Free listing is a data-gathering technique that helps people to talk about a specific topic by asking them to list all the items they can think of regarding the topic (Bernard, 2006). During my one-on-one interviews with interviewees, I asked them to list all the feelings they could come up with after reflecting on their experiences of living in China. Colored pencils were provided for them to write down their emotions in the colors they chose. After about ten minutes of reflecting and writing, I asked them to categorize the items they had written down before talking about them.

Below is a picture (illustration 6) of the items written down by one of my interviewees. The interviewee had spent 13 years in China in total, including seven years in Shenzhen, at the time of our interview. She was feeling frustrated in many ways and was considering leaving China. After writing down her emotions using different colored pencils, she sorted them into five different groups and named each group. The first row are the names of the five categories: they are, from left to right: 1) current emotional state, 2) reasons to make a change, 3) decision to leave, 4) future, and 5) means of finding a new relationship (to China). As the interview started,

I encouraged her to talk about the “why” of each of the feelings, which led to a broad range of topics, such as her employment, life situation, and plans.



Illustration 6: A photo from an interview using the free listing method. I asked the interviewee to write down her feelings associated with living and working in China before grouping them under different categories.

2.1.4. Mental map

The method of mental map was employed to supplement verbal interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of interviewees’ local social networks and interactions with the urban space. Interviewees were asked to draw a map, with as many details as possible, of the places where their daily activities took place in Shenzhen. When drawing mental maps, international migrants who lived in Shekou, the most foreigner-concentrated area in Shenzhen, tended to draw maps that were mainly confined to the Shekou area, and furthest to other regions of the Nanshan District. What was common among these interviewees was, they lived, worked and spent most of their leisure time in Shekou, which was self-sufficient in offering a middle-class cosmopolitan lifestyle to its inhabitants. These interviewees were often corporate-transferred migrants of who described themselves as “living in an expat bubble.” On the contrary, those who lived outside of Shekou tended to draw maps that geographically covered more areas and districts in Shenzhen. A commonality among these interviewees was that they were often self-

initiated migrants who had multiple jobs and worked in different locations in Shenzhen. They also tended to have a more diverse social network that included more local contacts.

2.2.Participant observation

During my fieldwork, my participant observation included visiting different English teaching institutions, participating in orientation events for new teachers, observing classes, and socializing with teachers. I engaged in various social activities with different teachers throughout my fieldwork. With teachers who were single, or in couples without small children, everyday social activities included going for drinks/coffee, having hot-pot dinners, having birthday parties, or doing sports. As for teachers who had small children, I was invited to have dinner with the family a few times. Apart from participating in social activities, I tried to offer help to the people I studied whenever I could. Focusing on ethical issues in fieldwork, Seymour-Smith (1986 cited in Sluka & Robben, 2006, p.9) suggests that anthropologists might offer “to perform some useful or valued service in return for the collaboration he or she requires.” Helping my research subjects not only answer to Seymour-Smith’s call for reciprocity by contributing something to the community studied, but also allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of different aspects of teachers’ lives. For example, when accompanying a teacher to a local transportation bureau to convert his driving license into a Chinese one, I was able to understand the difficulties a foreigner faced in navigating the local bureaucratic system. Also, when I volunteered to teach weekly Chinese classes to a group of newly arrived teachers, it allowed me to share their daily experiences in communicating with local people and the cultural shocks they encountered.

One of the most important things I learned during my fieldwork is that the most useful information might come from the people that you initially consider irrelevant. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I was very goal-oriented and was only interested in talking to foreigners who were working as English teachers. As soon as I met a foreigner, I always tried to find out what his/her occupation was. If the person happened to be an English teacher, I would make sure I got his/her contact details, and tried my best to attempt an interview with the person. If the foreigner was working in some other non-English teaching professions, I would usually quickly move on to talk to other foreigners who might be English teachers. However, I still became acquainted with a few non-teacher foreigners and a few young Chinese women during my fieldwork stay. Surprisingly, these non-teachers, whom I initially thought to be irrelevant to my research, ended up providing me with useful information and insightful perspectives.

A British man who told me that he was working in the English textbook publishing industry in our initial meeting happened to have also been working as a consultant for numerous nurseries, schools, and training centers in Shenzhen for more than a decade. His primary duties were to advise on how to establish educational institutions specializing in international and English education, and he also helped schools recruit foreign English teachers. Since he had been in Shenzhen for a long time, and he had been involved in different stages of setting up a school, especially in how teachers and what kind of teachers were recruited, he was able to share with me a lot of insider knowledge. He only told me about his other job as a consultant when we met for the second time. If I had exclusively focused on talking to teachers, I would have missed a critical informant who shared with me some of the stories of how foreign English teachers were exploited and how things had changed in the ESL industry over the years. Also, some of the Chinese women I met had interesting stories to share regarding their experiences with foreign ELTs. One woman, who was then dating a Ukrainian man who worked as an English teacher, told me about her experiences of hanging out with the Ukrainian man and his Russian friends who had started an English training center in Shenzhen.

I soon came to realize that I should widen and diversify my social circle in order to gain a more all-rounded understanding of the EFL industry and foreign ELTs from the perceptions of people from different backgrounds. It was not only necessary to hear what foreign English teachers experienced, but it was also essential to listen to the thoughts of those who had close contact with foreign ELTs. For example, the education consultant who had worked in the EFL industry for more than ten years would surely see the bigger picture and know the complexity of different levels better than a foreign ELT who had just arrived in Shenzhen.

2.3. Government documents, media sources, and online social platforms

Doing fieldwork in China since the establishment of the PRC has gone through a few different stages, but the watershed can be drawn in the 1990s, when China started to become open to the outside world. While Western anthropologists were not allowed to do fieldwork in the PRC from 1949 to the 1970s, researchers from foreign institutions could conduct fieldwork in China for the first time since the establishment of the PRC after China's Reform and Opening policy came into being in 1979. Although the research environment for foreign researchers faced a temporary setback in the late 1980s, China opened up again to foreign researchers in 1992 when Deng Xiaoping's "Southern Tour" set out a political agenda for China to be more open to foreign investments and Western technology. Even then, foreign fieldworkers faced many

practical issues and uncertainties conducting fieldwork in China in the 1990s, including restriction in choosing one's field site and the impossibility of talking to interviewees without the presence of an official. However, fieldworkers these days can, to a large extent, choose their field sites according to their research interests, as well as talking to whoever that they could approach on their field sites (Heimer & Thøgersen, 2006).

2.3.1. Government documents

In recent years, the Chinese government has made government documents, such as regulations, budget plans, and reports, more transparent to the public through government websites. The availability of government documents also provides an important source of research material. However, one trap researchers can easily fall into while reading these government documents is that one could be easily conditioned to understand Chinese society according to the discourse framework constructed by the party-state. As Heimer and Thøgersen (2006, p.13) observed, the risk of relying on official publications and media to understand Chinese society is “getting stuck in official interpretations of Chinese social reality as formulated in the general political discourse.” Thus, I approach government documents and media reports from the perspective of understanding the current political climate and government agenda, which complements my understanding of migrants' experience.

While public government data are often framed in political discourses, data that are considered politically “sensitive,” such as statistics relating to foreign affairs and immigration, are still very much kept in the dark. For example, the exact foreign population in China are not easy to find, considering they might lead to xenophobic reactions among Chinese nationals when the country is letting more foreigners in, while exercising population control on its people.²⁷ As Bodomo (2015, p.127-128), who is a renowned scholar in the studies of Africans in China, described, “getting statistics about foreign residents in China and statistics about entry-exit numbers at border checkpoints” was an “intractable” research problem.

²⁷ After enforcing the One-child Policy since 1979, the Chinese government officially abolished the policy by the end of 2015, and starting from 2016, all Chinese families have been allowed to have two children.

2.3.2. Media resources

Although official data might not be available, there are still other ways to work around it. Alternative sources of information can be found in scholarly journals and news reports, in which the authors were close enough to the government to get insider information. For example, when I was looking for the statistics of the number of foreigners residing in Shenzhen, I could not find it in any government database, but later stumbled upon the figure in an online newspaper archive. The news report was on a government official's visit to Shenzhen regarding the implementation of *Exit -Entry Administration Law* in the city. The news report said that the official had held a conference in which different local government departments reported their work progress and voiced their opinions on the management of foreigners working in Shenzhen. The number of foreigners in Shenzhen²⁸ was part of the information released at the conference.

2.3.3. Online social platforms

Virtual space was also part of my field site. Informal sources such as online forums and WeChat groups could sometimes be useful in contextualizing one's research. For my research, I visited online ESL forums from time to time. Foreign ELTs ask questions, discuss rule changes and complain about their employers. Also, WeChat groups are a great source to learn about the most talked-about issues and what concerns foreign residents. In China, for Chinese and foreigners alike, WeChat is used as an indispensable social media application for everyday communication, especially after WhatsApp was banned in China starting from late September 2017. I find it useful to be part of various expat/teacher groups in Shenzhen, and see these virtual communities as part of my field site.

3. Doing fieldwork in Mainland China

3.1. Doing fieldwork under an authoritarian regime

While doing fieldwork in an authoritarian regime means certain statistics are inaccessible, it also means people might be wary of the government control and thus might not be so open to talk about some issues. As Heimer and Thøgersen (2006, p.13) pointed out, the party-state's presence is also reflected in people's self-censorship on what they can and cannot talk about.

²⁸ According to the news report, there were 1,152,000 temporary residents and 26,000 regular residents in Shenzhen. Available at: <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2016-04-12/doc-ifxrcuyk2706073.shtml>

Although my research topic is not highly politically sensitive, it inevitably involved opinions on the Chinese bureaucratic system. Thus, during a taped interview, most interviewees were careful in choosing their wording when critiques of Chinese society might arise. I was surprised at how sometimes the most friendly and relaxed people could become very nervous during a taped interview. Sometimes, interviewees, especially those who were working without a work visa, refuse to be recorded, and I had to rely on notes and , and to reconstruct conversations and write them down after interviews.

3.1.1. Surveillance and control

Anthony worked as a foreign ELT on a work visa in an international school. We had met in the school before and talked over school lunch a few times. We got along well, and he seemed to be very friendly and open, so I asked if I could interview him. He gladly accepted. We met in a classroom where he was also the homeroom teacher and sat down face to face across a desk. I asked if I could record our interview. He said, “go ahead,” so I took my phone out and placed it on the desk. When we started talking, however, his eyes kept looking at my phone nervously. Since he seemed quite uneasy, I asked if I should stop recording. He said it was okay, so I let the recording continue. When I stopped the recorder when our interview came to an end, Anthony seemed to be relieved. I asked him if the recorder bothered him. He looked around the classroom, even though there were just the two of us, and said,

There is this element about China, that makes you feel you are watched all the time. I know we are watched in the US too, but you don’t feel it this much. In China, you feel like someone is going to knock on your door anytime and check you. Actually, some police came into my classroom the other day in the middle of my lesson without any advance notice, took a photo of me in order to make sure I was the person the school said I was.

(James, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)²⁹

I could relate to my interviewees about the feeling of “being watched” during my fieldwork. I remember feeling very uncomfortable with the cameras that were installed everywhere in the public space in Shenzhen when I was first there. I felt watched everywhere I went. Also, in China, surveillance seems to be more intensive around the time when mega-events take place.

²⁹ My interview with James was conducted on September 21, 2016 in his school in the Shekou area of the Nanshan District in Shenzhen.

For example, the 19th National Congress took place in October when I was doing my fieldwork in Shenzhen, and the atmosphere was more tense than usual. Security guards of schools and residential compounds took registration seriously before the National Congress, and I had to present my ID for them to put me on record as a visitor. The feeling of being watched not only occurred in the presence of surveillance cameras in public, but also when I was using the internet. Starting from 1st October 2017, China promulgated a new internet law³⁰ and stated that administrators of WeChat groups had to be responsible for all the “sensitive” things posted by anyone in the WeChat groups. As soon as the law came into effect, all administrators of WeChat groups started to regularly send messages to remind group members not to post anything “sensitive,” and kept an eye on what group members were posting. It took me some time to get used to different forms of surveillance, and gradually accepted that this was what I had to live with as an urban Chinese resident.

3.1.2. The self-anonymized interviewee

One teacher (Mary) I talked to did not reveal her true nationality to me throughout our meet-ups. I was told by her employer, who introduced me to Mary, that Mary was from Kenya. However, when I met Mary, she told me she was from the US. Although her English accent did not sound to me like a US American, I did not confront her about this. During our subsequent meet-ups, when she talked about her home country, she never mentioned “the US” and always used the phrase “back home” instead. Also, what she described about things “back home” did not seem to be culturally US American. For example, she would tell me yams and chapatis were her staple food back home and asked where I could buy them in China. Sometimes her boyfriend called her on her phone when we hung out, and she would talk in a language I did not understand. I never asked her where she was really from because I understood she might be worried about being exposed as an “illegal” worker. Since 2016, only native English speakers from certain countries can attain legal documents to teach English in China, and Kenya was not one of these countries. I was also aware that many non-native English speakers were told by their recruitment agents to lie to their employers and students that they were from the US.

I consider incidents of people being dishonest like this as a valuable part of my data from the fieldwork. It shows how migrants try to protect themselves by putting on the façade of legal

³⁰ Cybersecurity Law of the People’s Republic of China (2017).

workers whose qualifications are defined by the Chinese authority. While packaging non-native English speakers as “native” English speakers is a marketing strategy for job agencies to make more profit, adopting a fake nationality is essential for non-native English speakers to “legalize” their working status as English language teachers in China.

3.2. The ethnographic self

3.2.1. Doing fieldwork “at home”

In British and American anthropology, it is commonly understood that anthropologists should be as far away from home as possible to immerse themselves in the culture of the “Other” in order to be able to look at the Other’s culture with fresh eyes and enough objectivity. However, starting from the 1950s, anthropologists began to do research on people who were closer to home. Deriving from the works and experiences of other anthropologists³¹, Gallinat (2010, p.27) concluded that “working in a culture that one is familiar with does not necessarily grant insider status nor does it preclude analytical distance since cultural knowledge is not all-encompassing.”

Shenzhen is a special field site for me as it geographically borders my home city, Hong Kong, but yet is very different from Hong Kong. Despite its handover of sovereignty from the British government to the Chinese government in 1997, there are still a lot of socio-political differences between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. On a more structural level, the legal and political systems in Shenzhen are different from those in Hong Kong. On an everyday level, linguistic and socio-cultural differences also exist.

When I was in Shenzhen, I simultaneously felt like an insider and an outsider. My Chinese ethnicity and my fluency in Mandarin culture allowed me to blend into the Chinese crowd easily. However, acculturated and educated in Hong Kong, I did not seem to be able to relate to some ideologies prevalent in Mainland Chinese society. On the other hand, my English language fluency and familiarity with the Euro-American cultures allowed me to build rapport with my informants quickly. I could relate to some experiences of living in Shenzhen, and I also shared some values with my informants. However, I saw myself as neither belonging to the Mainland Chinese people community nor the expat group in Shenzhen. The in-betweenness of my identity provided me with cultural access to my field site and my informants, but also

³¹ Aguilar’s “*Insider research: an ethnography of a Shenzhenite*” (1981), Messerschmidt’s “*On Anthropology ‘at home’*” (1981), Abu-Lughod’s “*Writing against culture*” (1991), Narayan’s “*How native is the native anthropologist?*” (1993)

allowed me to observe people I encountered, and things happened in my field site with fresh and critical eyes.

3.2.2. Doing Fieldwork in Mainland China as a Hongkongese

The complex Mainland China-Hong Kong relationship created interesting dynamics in my encounters with some Mainland Chinese. Despite the ease with which Hongkongese may enter Shenzhen with a “Home Permit” (*huixiang*) card, Hongkongese are still considered a different breed of Chinese in official contexts. Much of this perception is due to the colonial history of Hong Kong and the resulting differences in political ideologies prevalent in these two different places. The underlying tension between the interaction of a Hongkongese and a Mainland Chinese could be felt in many subtle ways. For example, I was sometimes addressed as “our Hongkongese comrade” (*xianggang tongbao*) by Chinese people working in Chinese government institutions. The term, which simultaneously recognizes Hongkongese as “Chinese” and yet distinguishes them from Mainland Chinese, was widely used by Mainland Chinese to refer to the politically loaded identity of Hongkongese when Hong Kong was still under the British rule. However, outside of government institutions and schools, my Hong Kong identity seldom made me feel like “the Other” in everyday situations.

All foreigners I talked to in Shenzhen had been to Hong Kong and had a very positive feeling about the city and its people. In general, they felt the city was more Westernized and the people more “civilized.” Many interviewees told me that they felt Hong Kong was an entirely different place from Mainland China. Such conclusions usually followed after their complaints on some common daily behaviors among Mainland Chinese that they had observed in Shenzhen, such as spitting, squatting, jumping the queue, and not holding the doors for people coming behind them. Also, seeing Hong Kong as a more democratic society and Hong Kong people as sharing similar values, informants were, in general, able to stop self-censoring after some time. My Hong Kong identity somehow steered what my informants talked to me about. I would imagine my interviewees would not have rebuked Mainland Chinese people’s manners if I had been one of them. Also, foreigners would most likely be more cautious about topics concerning Chinese politics if they were talking to a researcher with a Mainland Chinese background.

Conclusion

Apart from introducing the field site and methodology of the research, this chapter also reflects on doing fieldwork in China and the positionality of the researcher. The methodology section introduces how different methods were applied for data collection during my fieldwork. The methods used include interviews (in which biographical research, free listing and piling exercises, and mental maps were adopted), participant observation, and document analysis. The chapter reflects upon doing fieldwork under an authoritarian regime, and the relationship between a researcher's social position and data collection. I reflect upon how the personal qualities and experiences of an anthropologist could be a resource for her/his fieldwork, and how an anthropologist's identity could create different dynamics with different groups of people in the field.

Chapter 2 International city and foreign English language teachers

Introduction

A glimpse of Shenzhen through Shekou

As soon as I told local Chinese people I encountered about my research, they would instinctually and enthusiastically advise me, “you should go to the Bar Street (Wanghai Road) near the Nanshan Rose Garden! And the Sea World! So many foreigners hang out there!” Indeed, one cannot talk about foreigners’ lives in Shenzhen without talking about Shekou. Facing Hong Kong across the Shenzhen Bay, and with the Nanshan Mountains and plenty of green open space in the area, Shekou appeals to foreigners who enjoy visiting Hong Kong and who prefer a slower pace of life. Foreign residents in the area enjoy taking walks in the parks or go hiking in the Nanshan Mountains. Also, the many Western bars, restaurants, and clubs in Shekou promise expats with eventful evenings that will make them feel at home. Also, Shekou is especially popular for expats with school-age children as most international schools in Shenzhen are located in Shekou.

As the area I frequented the most during my fieldwork, Shekou was part of my last memories of my field site. I still remember my last Sunday in Shenzhen toward the end of my fieldwork. It was a sunny afternoon, and I was sitting in the open area outside Emily’s café on Wanghai Road (also called “the Bar Street”), interviewing a teacher from the US for the first time over a cup of coffee. She had proposed to meet at Emily’s café when I asked her to choose a meet-up place. During our one-hour interview, two US teachers I talked to before and had become acquainted with happened to walk past and stopped to say hi when they saw me. One of them was pushing a trolley with her baby girl inside, her takeaway food boxes hanging on the trolley handles. The other one had just visited an English second-hand book sale event at a shop nearby and bought a Chinese learning textbook. After the interview, I jumped on an OFO bike³² and

³² OFO was one of the shared bike brands in Shenzhen. Shared bikes were very popular in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen between 2016 and 2017, during which time I was doing my fieldwork. The popularity of shared bikes seemed to have died down when I visited Nanshan in 2018.

cycled to an Italian restaurant at the end of the Wanghai road to attend a farewell dinner for a teacher who was about to leave Shenzhen.

Today, Shekou is known for its concentrated population of resident foreigners. According to the Management and Service Center for Expats in Shekou, 6,275 of 43,919 registered resident foreigners lived in Shekou in 2017. While newly arrived foreigners favor Shekou, Shekou is home to many old China hands in Shenzhen. The settlement of international migrants in Shekou began in the 1980s when Shenzhen was designated as China's first special economic zone under the Reform and Opening policy. At the time, Shekou was served as a base for a small group of foreign oil platform workers when a few major international oil companies³³ were granted permission for oil exploration in the South China Sea. Long-term expats in Shekou were familiar with the settlement story of the first foreigners in Shekou, and when they told me the story, it felt as if they were telling the story of their ancestors.

Shekou houses many high-end residential clusters that are popular with middle-class international migrants and Chinese. Moreover, Shekou and non-Shekou residents alike enjoy spending their leisure time in Shekou. The most famous landmark of Shekou is the Sea World Plaza (Sea World, see illustration 7), which is a huge Western-style entertainment complex featuring Western cafes, restaurants, bars, and clubs. The Sea World not only caters to the needs of foreign residents and Chinese urban middle class, but also attracts domestic and international tourists.



Illustration 7: A photo of the Sea World Plaza from a bird's-eye view.
(Source: <https://www.callisonrtkl.com/projects/shekou-sea-world-plaza/>)

³³ The main foreign oil companies include Agip, Chevron, Texaco, Statoil and Shell.

The making and remaking of Shekou and its leading position in the development of Shenzhen

Shekou is a historically significant site for China's reform and opening, as it is China's very first experimental site, which guides Shenzhen's development and, eventually, national development. The restructuring of Shekou is a miniature of the urban restructuring of Shenzhen. Its transformation from a fishing village before 1979, to an industrial zone from the 1980s to early 1990s, and to the model international community of Shenzhen it is today (Sun, 2015), echoes the development narrative of Shenzhen. The development of Shekou is inextricably linked with the progression of Shenzhen from China's experimental site to China's model city, as Shekou's successful experiment was extended to the other parts of the SEZ and later to the entire Shenzhen municipality.

Before 1979, Shekou was a small fishing village with only a few hundred villagers, whose economic activities were mainly fishing and farming. In 1979, Shekou was designated as the first industrial zone to be opened to foreign investment and business, before Shenzhen was officially appointed to be the first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in China the year after. Led by Yuan Geng from the China Merchants Group, a Chinese state-owned Hong Kong-based corporation, Shekou underwent a tremendous transformation. In the decades that followed, Shekou and other areas within the Shenzhen SEZ were industrialized and developed an export-oriented economy. While Shenzhen's economy mainly depended on labor-intensive manufacturing and trading at the earlier stage of Shenzhen's industrialization, from 1995, the Shenzhen Government decided to upgrade the city's production in the value chain by encouraging technological innovations and the development of high-tech industries (World Bank, 2010).

In 2010, the China Merchants Group announced plans to investment of 60 billion RMB into regenerating Shekou, including the Sea World Entertainment Complex and the Shekou International Port (China Merchants Group, 2014). The renewal project also included the establishment of the Shekou Net Valley, which was co-founded by the China Merchants Group and the Nanshan District government, to serve as an internet and e-commerce industrial base integrated with high technology and cultural industry (*China Daily*, 2017). Today, Shekou is designated by the Shenzhen government as a "model international community" (Shenzhen Nanshan District government, 2014) to promote the internationalization of other areas in Shenzhen. While Shekou's "international community" branding is part of the Nanshan

District's “international district” branding, they both fit into the Shenzhen municipal government's city branding as an “international city.”

An overview of Shenzhen

Bordering Hong Kong and located on the east bank of the Pearl River estuary on the central coast of southern Guangdong province, Shenzhen is one of the four first-tier Mainland Chinese cities³⁴. With over 13 million residents residing in a city of about 2,000 Km², Shenzhen has the highest population density among the four first-tier Chinese cities (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2019). Designated as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 1980, Shenzhen enjoys a sub-provincial status: although the Guangdong Province governs it, it enjoys a high level of autonomy administratively. In the early 1990s, the SEZ only included four administrative districts, namely Nanshan District, Futian District, Luohu District, and Yantian District. It was not until 2010 that SEZ expanded to include the entire city of Shenzhen by incorporating the other two administrative districts – Bao'an District and Longgang District as part of the SEZ (see illustration 8). From 2016 to 2018, the six administrative districts of Shenzhen were further divided into nine (see illustration 9).



Illustration 8: a map showing the administrative division of Shenzhen in the year 2010
Source: Ng & Tang (2004)

³⁴ The other three first-tier Chinese cities are Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

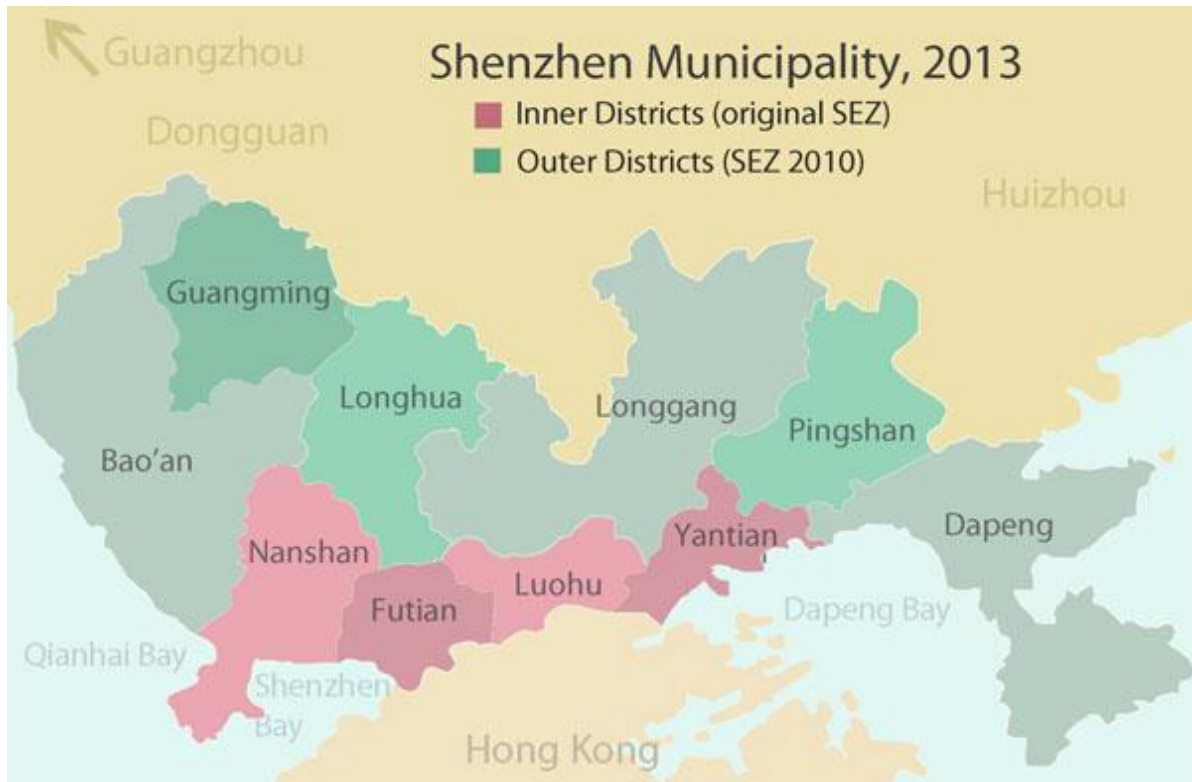


Illustration 9: a map showing the administrative division of Shenzhen divided by inner and outer districts. Since 2010, the districts in Shenzhen are categorized as the inner districts (guan nei) and outer districts, reflecting when they were incorporated into the Shenzhen SEZ. (Source: <https://shenzhennoted.com/tag/erxian/>)

Similarly to the timeline of Shekou's development, the development of Shenzhen can be divided into three phases. The first phase began with the establishment of Shenzhen Municipality in 1979 and came to an end in 1992 when villages within the Special Economic Zone were re-designated administratively. The second phase began in 1992, when economic reform and development took place within exceptional zones in Shenzhen, while the third phase started in 2004 when the entire Shenzhen was officially urbanized. By 2010, the national discourse of Shenzhen as China's development "model" and a "world city" had become prevalent. Below is a timeline of the establishment of Shenzhen Municipality and its subsequent development from 1979 to 2010 (see illustration 10).

**Timeline: The establishment of Shenzhen Municipality
and its subsequent development into the Special Economic Zone, 1979-2010**

March 1979	Bao'an County is elevated to Shenzhen Municipality.
July 1979	Shekou Industrial Park is established under the direction of the China Merchants Group, a state-owned enterprise of the national Ministry of Transportation.
August 1980	Shenzhen SEZ is established (327.5 km ²), consisting of two markets and four communes (including Shekou).
March 1981	Shenzhen is elevated to a sub-provincial city.
October 1981	Bao'an County is restored as an administrative division of Shenzhen Municipality and administers the Shenzhen Municipality outside of the SEZ (1625 km ²).
December 1992	Bao'an County is administratively removed and divided into Bao'an District and Longgang District. The Shenzhen Municipality includes five districts, of which Bao'an and Longganag are non-SEZ districts, and Luohu, Futian and Nanshan are SEZ districts.
July 2004	Administrative urbanization of the entire Shenzhen Municipality.
July 2010	The SEZ was expanded to the entire Shenzhen Municipality, which was divided into nine administrative districts, including Bao'an, Longhua, Guangming, Nanshan, Futian, Luohu, Yantian, Pingshan and Longgang (with the Dapeng New District subordinated to it).

(People's Daily Online, 2004; Shenzhen government, 2017)

Illustration 10: Timeline of the establishment of Shenzhen Municipality and its subsequent development into the Special Economic Zone (1979-2010)

Analytical framework

It is a classic feature of socialist governance to produce policy through the production of “models,” be it model people, model factories, or model communities (O'Donnell et al., 2017). While Shekou is the model sub-district for the Nanshan District, which is the model district for the internationalizing of Shenzhen, Shenzhen is the model city for all of China in China's national building process. Thus, by studying the making and remaking process of Shekou in the post-Mao era, the chapter expands the understanding of the making of Shekou into the making of Shenzhen.

The chapter discusses the urban transformation of Shenzhen in the analytical framework of multiscalar analysis (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018). Building on research on critical policy studies, Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2018) pointed out that many cities adopted creative-cities policies to restructure cities and generate urban growth, as the creative-cities policies have proven to be effective in attracting global capital and global talent. Using the examples of three cities – Halle/Saale, Germany; Manchester, USA, and Mardin, Turkey, Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2018) analyse how these cities are repositioned within multiscalar networks of power during their urban regeneration process.

What created Shenzhen's success was a complex network of political, social, and economic relations. In other words, Shenzhen was born and regenerated in what Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2018, p.9) describe as a multiscalar social field, which is a hierarchy of networks that are constituted of different actors (individuals, institutions, corporate entities) with access to varying amounts of power. Apart from the global economic system, the diasporic Chinese network formed by refugees that fled to Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau after 1949, as well as overseas Chinese in Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere, provided the Shenzhen SEZ with a big pool of money, knowledge, and talents (Bach, 2017, p.33). As Clark (1998, p.105) observed, apart from the global economic network, "we cannot understand Shenzhen without conceptualizing it as part of a broader network connecting Guangdong Province, Hong Kong, and parts of Southeast Asia, linked through flows of capital, kinship, information, and labor."

The chapter also discusses the relationship between urban restructuring and migrant incorporation. Glick Schiller & Çağlar (2013, p.10) criticizes that the traditional migration studies approach, which is characterized by a methodological nationalist perspective, treats internal and international migrants as two separate groups and thus overlooks similarities between the processes of domestic and international migration. She further advocates abandoning using nation-states as units of analysis, and instead, studying the movement of people in relation to different forces that shape the political economy.

Shenzhen's transformation from a small town of 300,000 people to a megacity of more than 13 million people within four decades is unprecedented in the world (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2019). Using the multiscalar approach (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018), the chapter argues that the transformation of Shenzhen from a fishing village to an industrial city for manufacturing, to a center for innovation and technology, has been the result of the interaction of multiple networks of power and different actors. While the global economy and national

development strategy laid the ground for the development of Shenzhen, local government, foreign businesses, and migrant workers in Shenzhen have also been involved in the city-making process. Moreover, as Shenzhen's economy moved up the global value chain, the type of migrants it attracts, domestically and internationally, also changes accordingly.

1. The making of Shenzhen

The success story of Shenzhen is often accredited entirely to the national and municipal government in the official discourse – a small fishing village is transformed into a world city with a few decades under government planning and policies. However, the city-making process of Shenzhen, especially in the early stage, is inextricably shaped by various forces and actors. While Shenzhen came into existence coincidentally when the globalization process was taking off, the making of Shenzhen was a process involving government policies on different levels, early Shenzhen leaders, resources from Hong Kong, the pre-existing Bao'an village network, and the contribution of migrants.

1.1. Shenzhen's emergence and restructuring in the context of the global economy

Emergence

The emergence and development of Shenzhen are very much a top-down process as its rapid urbanization started from when the national government designated it as China's first Special Economic Zone in 1980. Shenzhen is a pioneer in China's economic reform, the first to open up to the world on the orders of former Premier, Deng Xiaoping. It was designated as China's first Special Economic Zone in 1980. The establishment of Shenzhen as a Special Economic Zone is seen as China's "first step toward opening its door in an era of rapid globalization" (Ng & Tang, 2004, p.190).

China's reform and opening coincided with globalization, during which advancement in technology has driven socio-political changes on a global scale. When Shenzhen came into being in 1979 and its SEZ was established in 1980, it entered a global system of economic zones that was already rapidly expanding. The Shenzhen SEZ was also established as the global economy was changing to internationalized production, where corporations distributed different production processes across the globe. Moreover, by the time the Shenzhen SEZ was

founded, exports as a growth model for developing countries had been proven successful by China's neighboring economies such as Taiwan and South Korea (Bach, 2017).

The emergence of Shenzhen originated in China's search for a model Chinese city to drive China's national development. As Olds and Yeung (2004) suggest, the concept of the world city is highly policy-relevant, and they describe the state's efforts in developing particular cities into global cities as "the reterritorialization of the state power from the national scale toward the urban scale." Olds and Yeung (2004) also observe that, for a diverse country like China, the government tends to pay more attention to the development of particular city-regions, which are then used to connect the nation to the international arena.

The Chinese leadership faced a dilemma after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) – China badly needed foreign capital and technology from capitalist economies to revive its paralyzed economy; however, doing so would betray socialist principles. The Special Economic Zone, as a form of economic enclave, offered an economic solution without presenting an ideological problem. The economic zone, which was conceptualized as "a spatial designation where one country altered its laws to give preferential treatment to foreign investors and manufacturers," had become an integral part of the global economy by the 21st century (Bach, 2017, p.25), as mobile capital sought cheap immobile labor and developing countries were eager to attract foreign investment to transform their economies (Bach, 2017).

Clark (2018, p.105) argues that Shenzhen is best situated within the context of supranational connection of kin and capital in the "Greater China" region, which includes "overseas Chinese capitalist zones" such as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore. In fact, these regions and countries are the major sources of foreign investment for Shenzhen from its establishment until the present (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2019). Shenzhen's economic interconnectedness with its surrounding Chinese-based economies, which are connected to the global economic network, is also intensified by the recent establishment of the Greater Bay Area. The nine cities within the Greater Bay Area, which include Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Macau, and six other Mainland Chinese cities in the Pearl Delta Region, are expected to form a more connected economic network (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, 2020).

Political and economic restructuring

As one of the earliest testing sites for attracting overseas investment and reforming the urban economy, Shenzhen has always been at the forefront of China's efforts to integrate with the

global economy. In the mid-1980s, Shenzhen's export-oriented economy started to take off. Starting from the 1990s, as Shenzhen's economy entered a post-industrial phase, Shenzhen's urban and economic development has been driven by the government's vision for Shenzhen to become an international city strong in the technology and innovation sectors. Today, Shenzhen is one of the most crucial high-tech research and development (R&D) and manufacturing bases domestically and globally.

Shenzhen's success is inseparable from the Chinese government's political and economic restructuring (Altrock and Schoon, 2014, p.5). During China's transition from a planned economy to a market economy, forces of decentralization, marketization, and political legitimization have empowered local governments to carry out development that drives economic growth (Zhu, 2004). Given Shenzhen's special status as an experimental site for China's socio-economic reform, the Shenzhen Municipal government enjoys relatively more political autonomy than other Chinese cities.

China looks up to Shenzhen because it is not only an experimental city for China's economy, it is also an experimental city for China's governance. Facing less bureaucratic restrictions and entitled to be more innovative, the Shenzhen government remained the pioneer in China's reform and opening-up in various areas. For example, in 2003, the Shenzhen Municipal government started to reform government structure and exercise separation of powers to reduce the officials' monopoly on power and corruption. The Preface of the February 2003 issue of *China Today* magazine, for instance, addressed Shenzhen's unprecedented political reform, as follows:

Shenzhen is in the spotlight once more. Having exceeded all expectations in the 20-odd years since its designation as China's first Special Economic Zone, it is about to break new ground. The central government has made the SEZ an experimental city for organizational restructuring – a natural progression in China's reform and opening. (*China Today*, 2003)

Since Shenzhen's industrialization began in 1980, not only has the scale of its industry expanded from small to large, its products also have upgraded from relatively lower-value goods to high-tech products. Already by 1985, the emerging high-tech sector began to replace low-skill manufacturing. Since the new millennium, Shenzhen has entered a post-industrial economy. As Altrock and Schoon (2014, p.5-6) analyzed, because of the global financial crisis

and increasing labor costs, the economy of Shenzhen was forced to shift “from cheap-labor production toward higher-value-added manufacturing and service industries, as well as to a more knowledge-based economy in general.”

The high-tech industry is the backbone of Shenzhen’s economy, and Shenzhen is recognized as “China’s Silicon Valley” (He, 2015; Zhen, 2016) (see illustration 11). Today, a significant number of domestic and international companies in the information and technology sector are attracted to Shenzhen, especially to the Nanshan district (Song, 2019). Since Shenzhen has a “complete ecosystem that contains everything needed for all stages of electronics production all in one place,” Shenzhen is now the home to global tech giants as well as a hub for rising start-ups and independent innovators from all over the world (Shepard, 2016). By 2016, there were 11,319 international institutions in Shenzhen, and more than 260 international corporations among the Fortune Global 500³⁵ set up their branch offices in the city (Wu, 2016).



Illustration 11: a screenshot of the homepage of the Shenzhen Nanshan District Government Website (dated June 2018)

Background: Bird’s-eye view of the Nanshan District

Caption: Nanshan, Shenzhen: striving to become the heart of “China’s Silicon Valley” and the “world-class innovative coastal city”

Shenzhen’s economic boom originated in manufacturing and exporting. Today, although the production of low-end products has moved to other areas and countries where wage labor is cheaper, the manufacturing of high-end IT products and export has remained one of the most

³⁵ The Fortune Global 500, also known as Global 500, is a list of top global 500 corporations ranked, compiled and published by Fortune magazine according to each corporation’s annual revenue.

important economic industries in Shenzhen. The table (illustration 12) below shows statistics on Shenzhen's export and foreign-capital-related economic activities.

Total value of exports and imports in Shenzhen
(selected years from 2000 to 2017)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017
Total value of imports and exports (USD 100 million)	0.175	13.06	157.01	387.70	639.40	3,467.49	4,424.59	3,984.39	4,141.46
Total exports	1.12	56.34	815.17	205.27	345.63	2,041.84	2,640.39	2,375.47	2,443.58
Total imports	0.63	7.4	754.97	182.42	293.76	1,145.66	1,784.20	1,608.92	1,697.88

Illustration 12: a table showing the total value of exports and imports in Shenzhen (selected years from 2000 to 2017)

Source: Shenzhen Statistics Bureau

Various industries are booming in Shenzhen. The pillar industries in Shenzhen today are financial services, creative industry, logistics, and high-tech. Moreover, new industries of the twenty-first century, such as e-commerce, non-carbon-based energy sources, and biomedical, are also emerging in the city (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2019).

Urban restructuring

While political autonomy has allowed Shenzhen more flexibility in its urban planning and economic policies, Shenzhen's economic restructuring has also played an important role in the making and remaking of the city landscape. In the course of the city's development, Shenzhen has gone through significant urban landscape transformation, which consists of new construction projects as well as redeveloping and upgrading built-up areas (Schoon, 2014). On the one hand, most regions of Shenzhen have transformed towards how a global city is imagined, with skyscrapers, high-end shopping malls, and hotels as some of the markers that define Asian global cities. On the other hand, urban renewal and urban development projects

in Shenzhen are not unlike the ones in Guangzhou, in the sense that the projects take place in the context of the cities' efforts to become competitive "international" cities.

From the Shenzhen government's perspective, not only do working-class internal migrants, who usually live in cheap housing in "urban villages" (*chengzhongcun*), affect the city image of Shenzhen, but the image of old Chinese villages also makes Shenzhen less than an international city. Thus, in 2004, Shenzhen was the first Chinese municipality to eliminate villages and peasants on an administrative level by implementing an urban administrative mode throughout the city and granting all Shenzhen *hukou* holders an urban *hukou*.

The historical legacy of "urban villages" has severely affected the building pace of Shenzhen as an internationalized city. In 1993, Shenzhen expanded the area of SEZ and started the first urbanizing project. However, the administrative models of city and village still co-exist in Bao'an District and Longgang District. It is estimated that there are more than 2000-something villages in Shenzhen, including 200-something villages with 300-thousand private buildings within the SEZ. These houses in the villages have caused a severe and adverse impact on the urban landscape and quality of Shenzhen (*People's Daily Online*, 2004).

The official urbanization of Shenzhen has transformed existing village administration into an urban mode by reforming all village-based towns into Street Offices and all villages into Resident Committees. Moreover, the distinction between rural-*hukou* and urban-*hukou* among Shenzhen-*hukou* holders was removed, and all rural-Shenzhen-*hukou* holders were transformed from villagers to urban citizens. While it was not possible to demolish all urban villages in a short time and the physicality and power structure of villages still existed, the authority nevertheless declared Shenzhen as the first Chinese city without villages and peasants through administrative reform.

The official discourse of villages and peasants as dragging the development of Shenzhen as an internationalizing city is rooted in the discrepancy between how villages and peasants were perceived in the Chinese modernity discourse, and the imagination of a modern world city and world citizen. For instance, research on the Xiaobei area in Guangzhou (Siu, 2007; Wilczak, 2018) and Zhejiangcun in Beijing (Zhang, 2014) documented how urban villages were portrayed as dirty, chaotic, and uncivilized spaces that needed to be regulated or even removed. Wilczak (2018) also argued that Guangzhou's urban renewal project in the Xiaobei area was not only motivated by anti-Black racism and targeted at Africans, but the project was also

fueled by negative discourses about internal migrants, who were also considered to harm the city image of Guangzhou.

Although the number of villages has drastically decreased in the past decade, villages continue to exist as a part of Shenzhen's urban landscape and play an important role in the economic growth of Shenzhen today, as not only are extensive informal economy such as small shops, cheap food, and labor-intensive services conducted in urban villages, but urban villages also provide low-cost housing for more than half of the city's population. However, urban villages continue to be perceived as a "problem" of urban planning by the authority (O' Donnell, 2017, p.8-10).

1.2. Different actors in the development of Shenzhen

Governments on different levels are not the sole contributors to the development of Shenzhen. While Shenzhen's success is often attributed to the Beijing government's Reform and Opening policy in public discourse, other actors are also indispensable for the transformation processes of the city: for example, the local government's implementation of the policy, and Hong Kong's critical role as a major source of foreign direct investment and an existing link to the global capitalist network, as well as migrants' contribution to the making of the city.

1.2.1. Government

While the Guangdong provincial government initiated and facilitated the establishment of the Shenzhen SEZ, and the Beijing government authorized the establishment of a special economic zone in Shenzhen, both the national and provincial government decentralized its power for policy reforms on a local level. The Shenzhen Municipal government plays an active role in attracting foreign investment by building better infrastructure and creating a conducive business environment with preferential policies in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone.

National government

The Shenzhen SEZ was established based on exceptional policies and delegation of power. The national government not only encouraged policy innovation in various areas such as urban planning, pricing, labor wages, business management, and foreign economic activities, but also extended power to the Guangdong provincial government, the Shenzhen Municipal

government, and individual leaders (World Bank, 2010, p.73). Specifically, the national government's administration in Shenzhen was a top-down model of delineating circles for independent planning and development, which was characterized by national government leaders delineating circles and allocating the corresponding territories of land to ministries, national enterprises, and real estate developers to administer and develop with the purpose of attracting capital and producing quick results (Huang, 2017).

The development model started with Shekou and continues until today. In 1979, Shekou was the first enclave to be delineated by national government officials and allocated to Yuan Geng, the director of China Merchants, to industrialize. What followed Shekou was circles of various sizes drawn by Deng Xiaoping's subordinates as "an ad hoc planning strategy" before local leaders and urban planners worked on filling in the circles. For example, the Shenzhen University (1983), the Shenzhen Hi-Tech Park (1985), the Overseas Chinese Town and Baishizhou (1985) and the Tian'an Industrial Park were some of the circles being developed (Huang, 2017, p.71-73). Today, the national government continues to support exceptional policies and zones in Shenzhen, and the Qianhai Cooperative Zone, as the latest designated experimental site in Shenzhen, is an example.

The national government also planned for Shenzhen's general economic direction. While it was planned for Shenzhen to develop an export-oriented economy when the Shenzhen SEZ first established, Chinese leaders signaled innovation as a competitive edge to boost China's economic growth. As reiterated in president Xi Jinping's policy address at the Chinese Communist Party's 19th Congress in 2017, innovation in the high-tech industry should be encouraged in particular (Alun, 2017). Building on Shenzhen's strength as China's most innovative city, the Beijing government has released a new plan for the reform of Shenzhen, with the aim of making Shenzhen a model city for other Chinese cities areas of innovation, public service, and environmental protection by 2025 (Zhang, 2019). As China's model city, Shenzhen is strategically important in propelling economic development in the Pearl River Delta region, and eventually the Chinese national economy.

Local government

Within four decades, Shenzhen has transformed from "the factory of the world" to a "world city" (Vlassenrood, 2016). At the earlier stage of Shenzhen's development, the Shenzhen Municipal government played a vital role in attracting foreign investment, which led to the

consequent spatial transformation of Shenzhen (Ng & Tang, 2004). A great deal of previous research on the development of Shenzhen have documented the utilization of foreign direct investment, distribution of foreign investment in various economic sectors, and as a result, the spatial transformation of Shenzhen (Wong & Chu, 1985; Wong et al., 1992; Han & Yan, 1999; Wu, 1999; Wang and Chiu, 2000).

Shenzhen's planning rhetoric has evolved since it was first designated as a Special Economic Zone. From 1980 to 1985, the planning rhetoric of Shenzhen was to "build an industrial Special Economic Zone." From 1986 to the early 1990s, the rhetoric changed to "building an export-oriented economy," and from the 1990s onwards, the planning rhetoric became "building Shenzhen into a world-class city" (Ng and Tang, 2004). Today, the local government continues to attract foreign investment by launching preferential policies targeting foreign enterprises and high-tech industries (World Bank, 2010, p.72-77). It also improves its infrastructure in order to enforce the promotion of Shenzhen as a "global city" to attract global talents.

The "world city" rhetoric remains the core of Shenzhen's recent and future planning. Apart from introducing preferential policies to attract global high-tech companies, the Shenzhen government officials also emphasized that high-quality international communities such as Shekou were critical in retaining global talents (Institute of Urban Governance, Shenzhen University, 2017). As specified in various government documents,³⁶ Shenzhen was to become an "international city" and "a technology and innovation center." Clearly, the Shenzhen government has adopted the strategy of global-city branding, as it has been proved effective by cities worldwide to attract global investors and skilled workers (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2018). The government poster (illustration 13), featuring the internationally renowned Chinese pianist Lang Lang, who is the Goodwill Ambassador of Shenzhen, mobilizes people to turn Shenzhen into a "world city."

³⁶ 《珠江三角洲地区改革发展规划纲要（2008-2020）》（*the reform and development plan of the Pearl Delta Region (2008-2020)*）；《深圳市人民政府关于印发深圳市推进国际化城市建设行动纲要的通知》（*The Implementation Plan on Accelerating the Building of Shenzhen as an International City*）；《深圳市国际化城市建设重点工作计划》（*Key Points on the International City Building of Shenzhen*）.



Illustration 13: A Shenzhen government poster mobilizing people to build Shenzhen as a “world city”.
Source: the photo was taken by the author in Shenzhen in 2017.

The Shenzhen government has also planned for the internationalization of Shenzhen in different stages. From 2010 to 2020, which was planned as the first stage of the internationalization of Shenzhen, the Shenzhen government set Hong Kong, Singapore, and Seoul as targets and focus on developing finance, hi-tech, logistics and cultural industries. From 2021 to 2050, expecting that Shenzhen will by then transform into a metropolitan as globally recognized as Hong Kong, Hong Kong is positioned as “a city to collaborate with” instead of “a city to catch up to.” Setting New York, London and Tokyo as higher targets, Shenzhen plans to collaborate with Hong Kong under the “one country, two systems” framework, and aspires to become one of the world’s economic centers and international centers for information exchange (Shenzhen government, 2011). New York, London and Tokyo, as the top three first-rank global cities in the world (Sassen, 1991), thus serve as the ultimate development role models for Shenzhen.

1.2.2. Important leaders in the early development of Shenzhen

In the mainstream success story of Shenzhen, the three most important early leaders of the city were often neglected. O'Donnell (2017) termed the three leaders “the three special zone heroes”: (1) Shenzhen's first party secretary and mayor, Liang Xiang (1981-86); (2) the first standing vice-chairman of China Merchants Hong Kong and the director of China Merchants in Shekou, Yuan Geng (1979-93); and (3) the first president of Shenzhen University, Luo Zhengqi. Shenzhen was founded in the immediate aftermath of the Cultural Revolution when using “capitalist” economic measures to revive the Chinese economy was still controversial among Beijing leaders. However, the three reform-oriented leaders governed the newly founded city with a determination never seen before and laid a solid foundation for the future building of the city.

Despite the tense political atmosphere, the first party secretary and mayor for Shenzhen, Liang Xiang, was bold in appropriating capitalist methods and assumed political responsibility for his subordinates in order to stimulate economic development in the SEZ (Zhu & Chen, 2011). Due to Liang's guidance between 1980 and 1985, with or without official approval, Shenzhen gathered six billion RMB of investment capital for the construction of basic urban infrastructures such as roads, water lines, and electrical networks, which subsequently led to the building of more than twenty residential, commercial, and industrial parks and zones in the city (Shenzhen government, 1986).

Yuan Geng, the director for the Shekou Industrial Zone, brought explicit political and economic reform in the zone with institutions he learned from Hong Kong. He not only implemented contract-labor practices and allowed for an independent press, but also employed and promoted people based on their skill sets rather than their political inclinations, which were what were valued most during Cultural Revolution – a mindset that still lingered in the immediate post-Mao era. Also, upon the formation of the Management Committee of the Shekou Industrial Zone, which was in charge of urban planning, education, social welfare, and other societal issues, Yuan Geng initiated a system such that the committee members to be determined through election rather than appointment (Tu, 2008).

Luo Zhengqi was the first president of the first university in Shenzhen – Shenzhen University. Luo Zhengqiang was literally responsible for setting up the university, as he organized students and faculty to build the Shenzhen University when there was no campus due to a lack of funding. The construction of Shenzhen University was uplifting as it not only materialized the

possibility of higher education in Shenzhen through the provision of physical space, but the collective effort among students, faculty and the president in making plans and constructing the campus was also seen as symbolic of the desired way of rebuilding the Chinese nation – through the leadership of liberal technocratic governance, and the democratic participation of intellectual citizens (United Nations Human Settlements Program, 2019).

Although later leadership of the Shenzhen Municipal government became more conservative and less reform-oriented after 1989 when the Beijing government exercised more power and control over Shenzhen, the three early leaders of Shenzhen had successfully facilitated the national economic integration into the global capitalist economies.

1.2.3. Foreign investment and the role of Hong Kong

Michael Enright (2016)'s book, *Developing China: The Remarkable Impact of Foreign Direct Investment* quantifies the full impact of FDI on China's economic rise with case studies of several Chinese cities, including Shenzhen. Among the funds used for the physical development of Shenzhen, funds from the Beijing government and the Shenzhen government only accounted for 1.4% and 13.1% respectively from 1980 to 1990. Data from the book also show that, in 2013, Shenzhen's foreign-invested enterprises accounted for about 41% of Shenzhen's GDP, 42% of its employment and 48% of exports. By the end of 2014, Shenzhen had attracted more than 58,000 foreign invested projects with a utilized value of 65 billion US dollars. The table (see illustration 14) on the following page shows some of the main indicators of foreign investments from selected years from 2000 to 2017 in Shenzhen.

Main indicators of foreign investment in Shenzhen
(selected years from 2000 to 2017)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2010	2015	2016	2017
No. of projects with contracted foreign capital (unit)	33	282	757	1,633	1,130	1,929	3,359	4,132	6,757
Amount of foreign capital actually utilized (USD 100 million)	0.28	1.80	3.90	13.1	19.61	42.97	64.97	67.32	74.01
No. of registered enterprises with foreign investment at the year-end (unit)						2,585	4,343	6,024	11,162
Total investment (USD 100 million)						17.49	222.5	772.1	538.1

Illustration 14: a table showing the main indicators of foreign investment in Shenzhen (selected years from 2000 to 2017). Source: Shenzhen Statistics Bureau

Shenzhen was strategically chosen as the location for China's first special economic zone due to its proximity to Hong Kong, a well-developed island city with the world's freest market and an international financial center. As the only Mainland Chinese city that borders Hong Kong, Shenzhen can conveniently transfer capital, technology, and management knowledge from Hong Kong for its development. In fact, Hong Kong has been an important source of foreign direct investment for Shenzhen. Since the beginning of Shenzhen's designation as an SEZ, many investors from Hong Kong set up their factories in Shenzhen because of the abundant cheap labor force and low labor costs in Shenzhen. Until today, Hong Kong has remained a leading source of investment for Shenzhen, as up to 76% of foreign direct investment in Shenzhen still comes from or through Hong Kong (Yang, 2019).

Shenzhen is now one of the four first-tier cities in China and the model city for the rest of China. However, when Shenzhen was first founded, it was modeled after Hong Kong. At the beginning of the reform and opening period, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping advocated, "We shall build a few more Hong Kongs in Mainland China" (Deng, 1988). In fact, Hong Kong has been the

archetype of Shenzhen's development since it was appointed as the first Special Economic Zone in China in 1980. Not only was the capital from Hong Kong accounted for a large amount of funding for the building of Shenzhen, but manufacturing factories were also relocated from the New Territories of Hong Kong to Shenzhen. In addition, the Shenzhen SEZ also adopted capitalist practices such as purchase ordering, technical and management experiences, and government policies from Hong Kong (Huang, 2017)

Bordering Hong Kong and looking up to Hong Kong in its urban and economic development, Shenzhen has also followed Hong Kong's footsteps to transform its main economy from a low-value manufacturing-based industry to a high-value knowledge-based economy. The narratives of Hong Kong and Shenzhen's success stories also follow the same modernity-as-progress logic and emphasize their transformation from a remote fishing village to a world-class city (Cheung, 2001; Lawrence, 2007). The table below (illustration 15) shows the amount of foreign capital utilized in Shenzhen from 1986 to 2017.

Amount of foreign capital utilized in Shenzhen (selected years from 1986 to 2017)

Unit: 10,000 USD

Year	Grouped by country (territory)							
	Hong Kong, Macau	Taiwan	Singapore	Korea Republic	Japan	Thailand	Australia	Malaysia
1986	38,587		11		7,009	13	16	
1990	26,291	371	897		17,257		723	
1995	105,172	6,954	845		32,067		520	
2000	184,531	3,940	6,023	8,136	5,113		219	1,724
2005	157,487	5,328	5,368	1,507	6,590	148	848	888
2010	310,221	1,737	9,393	472	2,774	136	148	398
2015	561,412	797	8,304	496	4,330	10	167	88
2016	599 055	761	4 004	427	7 070	30	12	168
2017	657 404	494	4 714	29 317	1 483	6		

Illustration 15: A table showing the amount of foreign capital utilized in Shenzhen (selected years from 1986 to 2016) Source: Shenzhen Statistics Bureau

1.2.4. Urban villages and internal migrant workers

An often-overlooked factor in the success story of Shenzhen is the economic contribution of urban villages and those who live there. Urban villages are indigenous settlements scattered throughout Shenzhen between its designated development circles. As these spaces are outside of Shenzhen's master development plan, they are gradually developed in a self-organized fashion by local villagers according to market demands. Urban villages are in high demand among low-income migrant workers, who are counted in millions among Shenzhen's labor force and make an important contribution to different economic sectors in Shenzhen. Located in or near commercial areas and industrial parks, urban villages in Shenzhen provide cheap accommodation and easy commutes for more than half of Shenzhen's 13 million-strong population in 2007 (Huang, 2017).

Huang (2017, p.82) argues that urban villages have an irreplaceable social function in Shenzhen as it is an organic response to the need for inexpensive housing by an ever-increasing population of migrant workers. In the 1980s and early 1990s, booming job opportunities in the manufacturing industry in Shenzhen had attracted many domestic migrants from the rural Chinese areas to work in the factories. For example, Pun Ngai's ethnography "Made in China: Women factory workers in a global workplace" captured the lives of rural female migrants working in factories in the Shenzhen SEZ during this period of time. Today, although Shenzhen's economy has shifted to a more knowledge-based economy and there are fewer factory workers, urban villages remain economical residential areas for migrant workers. With cheap eateries, shops, and housing, urban villages provide affordable daily necessities for migrants ranging from construction workers and cleaners to newly graduated office workers.

Although migrants have contributed to the building of Shenzhen, they have not always been represented positively in public discourse. Throughout the 1980s to early 1990s, rural migrants in Shenzhen were not only treated as second-class citizens, but they were also represented as a threatening mass of people to the urban social order in the Chinese media. It was not until young migrant laborers became indispensable for the local economy as foreign capital drastically increased in the 1990s that the official media started to portray internal migrant workers as hardworking and self-reliant labor force (Qian & Guo, 2018). Tracing the changing official discourse on migrant workers in Shenzhen, Florence (2017) shows how the Chinese party-state eventually constructed rural migrant workers in Shenzhen as "subjects for and of a modern international city and successful model for economic development" (O'Donnell et al., 2017, p.12).

Various studies have shown that skilled migration contributes to the making of a global city, because cities with a bigger skilled labor pool attract international corporations to expand their businesses due to the convenience for corporations to hire skilled workers on the site (Findlay et al., 1995; Koser & Salt, 1997). Today, as Shenzhen's economy has diversified and ascended the global value chain, internal migrant workers in Shenzhen have increasingly shifted from manual laborers to educated professionals, as the construction of an international city not only requires an urban transformation in terms of the city landscape, transportation network, and other various infrastructures, but also needs skilled talents to facilitate socio-economic changes geared toward an international outlook (Gao, Ma & Li, 2002).

In order to attract highly skilled labor, the Shenzhen government has devised policies to attract local university graduates from all over the country through monetary rewards and the granting of a Shenzhen *hukou*. The Shenzhen government promises university graduates that if they stay and work in Shenzhen for at least one year they will be granted a Shenzhen *hukou*. Having a Shenzhen *hukou* gives many privileges that a person who holds a second-tier city *hukou* cannot enjoy. For example, the eligibility to buy housing properties in Shenzhen, the priority for one's children to be enrolled in a school in the city, the convenience of applying for various travel visas, and a better social insurance scheme (Tannet Group Limited, 2018).

Shenzhen's population consists mainly of migrants or the second generation of migrants. As the city's permanent population rose from 300 thousand in 1979 to 13 million persons in 2016, Shenzhen became the biggest Chinese city for internal migrants (Shenzhen Statistics Bureau, 2017). In order to cultivate a sense of belonging among people who live and work in Shenzhen, the Shenzhen government's propaganda slogan "once you are here, you are a Shenzheners" (*Laile, jiushi Shenzhenren*) (see illustration 16) appeals to migrants, with a non-hierarchical citizen identity that does not exclude *waidiren* (non-locals). The distinction between *bendiren* (locals) and *waidiren* (non-locals) is not as prominent in Shenzhen as it is in other developed Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. While localism is more prominent in the above-mentioned cities, in which migrants are considered less inferior and face discrimination, Shenzhen is a more friendly place for newcomers as China's biggest migrant city.



Illustration 16: a government poster on a street in Shenzhen: “once you are here, you are a Shenzhener” (*Laile, jiushi Shenzhenren*).

Source: the photo was taken by the author in Shenzhen in 2018.

2. Shenzhen as a new destination for foreign ELTs

The number of international migrants has continued to increase in Shenzhen as the city takes its urbanization and modernization further. Urbanization accelerates rural-urban migration as human capital is more rewarded in urban centers than in rural economies nowadays (Zhang & Duncan, 2014, p.2). The relationship between urbanization and immigration not only helps us to understand the phenomenon of massive rural-urban migration within China, but also explains why international migrants concentrate in first-tier Chinese cities. Most international migrants would choose the most developed Chinese cities to migrate to because of the economic opportunities these cities present.

In 2015, 1152,000 temporary foreign residents were recorded in Shenzhen and 26,000 foreigners resided permanently³⁷ in the city. These resident foreigners came from 127 different

³⁷ A foreigner is considered part of the permanent population of the city after residing in the city for more than six months.

countries and regions³⁸ and mainly concentrated in the Nanshan district and Futian district. While 11,934 international migrants resided in the Nanshan district, 5,565 international migrants lived in the Futian district. Among these foreign residents, 70.5% of them were foreigners who worked in Shenzhen or the families of foreign workers in Shenzhen (Wu, 2016).

Among international migrants who work and live in Shenzhen, many of them work as foreign ELTs. Shenzhen has become an increasingly popular destination for foreign ELTs. While increasing migration of ELTs to China is a general trend due to China's increasing modernization, Shenzhen, as China's model world city, is especially attractive for foreign ELTs because the city has a lot to offer in terms of job opportunities as well as lifestyle. In return, foreign EFLs not only contribute to the internationalization of education in Shenzhen, but also contribute to the urban transformation of Shenzhen through their consumption and place-making activities.

Shenzhen's popularity as a migration destination for foreign ELTs needs to be understood in relation to Shenzhen's rising global status and its demand for English language and international education. Acquiring the English language skill is seen by city leaders as well as individuals as critical in becoming globally competitive. Thus, English language education is not only promoted in Shenzhen as a symbol of the city's internationalizing education, but commercial English teaching centers are also very popular in Shenzhen. Given the importance of English learning in public and private education sectors in Shenzhen and the perception that foreign ELTs make better teachers in teaching English, Shenzhen attracts many foreigners who work as English teachers.

As Glick Schiller (2009) argues, migration needs to be looked at from a global perspective by considering the role of global fields of power in shaping economic development and migrant movement. As more foreign and domestic capital is invested in the highly profitable English language and international education markets in China, especially affluent coastal cities, it will also lead to demand for English language education professionals. Coupled with a widespread belief that foreigners make better English language teachers than ethnic Chinese, the demand for foreign ELTs inevitably will continue to rise.

³⁸ Regions here refer to Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. While Hong Kong (former British colony until 1997) and Macau (former Portuguese colony until 1999) are special administrative regions of People's Republic of China, Taiwan's political status remains controversial.

From the US to China: China Dream found in Shenzhen

For foreign English teachers, especially those from Western countries, moving to China frees them from unemployment at home and enable them to pursue a better quality lifestyle by utilizing their ethnic capital. In the story of Max below, his foreseeable accumulating student debt,³⁹ a weak domestic employment market, and limited social mobility were some of the reasons that pushed him to leave the US to pursue the better economic opportunities and career possibilities China promised.

In 2009, Max decided to drop out of college during his second year. He said that he did not see the point of taking out an annual student loan of 40,000 USD for three more years in order to get his bachelor's degree and then having to work hard to pay the student loan back by staying on the same job for years on end doing the same thing every day. Inspired by Westerners who worked as English language teachers in China during a student exchange program in China when he was in high school, Max thought he could do the same. Thus, Max quit his college studies in the US and became an English teacher in the Chinese city of Xi'an, where foreigners were scarce and few Chinese spoke English at the time. Max chose this city consciously, thinking that the lack of an English-speaking environment would push him to learn the Chinese language. After two years of intensive Chinese language learning in Xi'an, Max became a fluent Mandarin speaker with a standard Northern Chinese accent. Max then moved to southern China to enjoy the fruits of his hard work. As a White American with a few years of English teaching experience, eloquent both in English and Chinese languages, Max was a catch in the EFL market despite his lack of a university degree. Also, with his Chinese language fluency and familiarity with the Chinese culture, he was able to make friends with the local people and build a diverse social and business network for himself.

While looking for a quiet place for our interview, Max had suggested we meet at a burger restaurant opened by his "buddy," on an early Wednesday afternoon. As soon as we walked in, Max introduced me to Chris, who was working at the bar. Max told me that Chris was the owner of the restaurant and that he used to work as an English language teacher before he started his own business. During my interview with Max, he told me that he was also in the process of starting his own business. Max had successfully reached agreements with a manufacturer in Shenzhen and was looking to export e-cigarettes from China to Europe. He

³⁹ As of June 2018, Forbes reported that total US student debt was \$1.52 trillion, and that 44.2 million people owed debt. The average student debt is \$38,390 per person. The median student debt is between \$10,000 and \$25,000, while 2% of borrowers owe \$100,000 or more.

was very excited about his fledgling business. Max explained that teaching English in the past few years in Shenzhen had helped him save enough capital to start his own business in China. Comparing China with the US, he felt that he had more opportunities to move up the social ladder and more freedom in pursuing what he wanted to do in China than in the US.

A lot of times in the States, at least from the personal growth perspective, and the career growth of getting ahead, the quote unquote, the “American dream,” I don’t think it’s accessible anymore. Because you cannot develop, it’s really hard to do so. Say you earn 10 dollars now or 15 dollars now. It’s really not enough. It’s not a lot. Yeah you might earn 30, 40 thousand a year in the States, but your expense might come up to 20 thousand dollars a year. And then you have to have a social life, and you have to do this and do that, you have to buy gifts, you have to buy things, buy buy buy, consume consume consume. You have no money to invest in yourself or anything else. Here, you do. I personally now earn more money than teachers back home do. Teachers with master’s degrees. I earn more money than teachers with master’s degrees with 20 years’ experience. They are earning 34, 35 thousand dollars a year. I earn 45,000, working 12/15 hours a week. I mean, really? To say that, the opportunities, are there in the States? Yeah, you can, you can do a lot. America’s very free, very great, if you have a lot of money. But then again, where isn’t?

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)⁴⁰

Disillusioned by the American dream, Max and his friend left the US to pursue their China dream. Like some other foreign English teachers in China, although they started out as “lowly” English teachers, they slowly accumulated their economic and socio-cultural capital through teaching before they pursue other goals in life. Since teaching English is somewhat seen as a dead-end career, foreigners who are more ambitious would choose to “branch out” (fieldnote, June 1, 2016) and start their own business when opportunities arise. The dream of moving to another country, starting one’s own business and becoming successful echoes with the dream of many immigrants around the world. While the US used to be a popular immigration destination, and the “American dream” was the dream for many immigrants, China has become the up-and-coming immigration destination because of its rising economic power. For international migrants who are not the most resourceful, in terms of economic and socio-cultural capital, China presents more possibilities to succeed than their home countries.

⁴⁰ My interview with Max was conducted in his friend’s burger restaurant in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on June 1, 2016.

Max taught English in the northern Chinese city of Xi'an when he first moved to China from the US. However, because salary in Xi'an, in general, was not high, Max decided to leave Xi'an and move to a first-tier city.

I only had four choices. Beijing, I loved the music scene the nightlife, Beijing is all great, the culture there is fantastic. But good God, I would never live in Beijing. Way too dirty. The pollution! I don't want to die ten years earlier. Shanghai's too many foreigners. Too much English and doesn't give me a chance to learn Chinese. And Shanghai people are very arrogant. Look at Shanghai, the same way I look at Los Angeles in California. They think everything outside of Shanghai is the third world. Backward. And people outside of LA and San Francisco think everything outside there is backward. And then there is Guangzhou, which is very *luanqi bazao* (chaotic and unorderedly). It's not well-planned. It's just dirty and congested. Too hard to get around. It's not much I enjoy about Guangzhou. And in Guangzhou, they speak a lot of Cantonese. I cannot do that. Which then leaves Shenzhen, which is awesome. Good money, very well-planned, easy to get around, plus Hong Kong is right there.

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)⁴¹

Although China's neighboring Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, are also popular migration destinations for foreign ELTs, China ranks top as the destination for English teaching jobs for most foreign ELTs I interviewed. Before working in the US as a programmer, Justin had spent two years in Japan and one year in South Korea teaching English. Justin concluded that neither Japan nor South Korea were ideal for teaching English due to cuts in government funding for English language education in the public education sector. Also, according to Justin, while the golden era for ESL teachers in Japan was over, teaching English in South Korea was too demanding.

Japan, during the golden bubble in the 1990s, right? there was a large demand for ESL teachers, but that's kind of waned ever since. I mean, you can still find jobs very easily in Japan, but the demand is a lot less. And it's a lot less emphasis put on having a serious curriculum. That's a very general statement, but I mean more for private schools. A lot of private schools in Japan will not invest money on curriculums. Um... they are more just happy having foreigners talking to students, and they don't really learn English. Whereas in [South] Korea, they are seriously driven to really make sure the kids understand the language. They will put the

⁴¹ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on June 1, 2016.

money into the curriculum generously to do that, but they will expect you to work longer hours. You know, and again these are generalizations. Every school's different, and so is their philosophy. But I found similar traits. I found that there are patterns within private language schools in Asia. You know the EPIK program? That's the English program in [South] Korea. It's a government-funded program to allow foreigners to work in public schools. And the equivalence for Japan is probably the JET program. And so JET cut their funding like, oh boy, back in maybe 2012, they have their foreign teachers. They reduced it by 50%. Because it sort of shows the priority of the government in terms of the importance of hiring foreign teachers to come and teach. And for [South] Korea, their funding also drops, but that's partly due to the former president. She was pushed for a more nationalistic kind of thing. And they cut a lot of funding for educational programs. But also the requirement for being an ESL teacher in [South] Korea has gone up considerably. Now you need a TEFL certificate. And generally, you need some experience. I can still easily get a job there, but it's a lot harder. You have to jump through more hoops to get those jobs.

(Justin, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)

Justin did not consider living in China until a friend who had come back from teaching English in China told him about all the perks of being an ESL teacher in China.

What he said is, right now China, because its economy is doing really well, there's really a large demand for ESL teachers. The pay is better, the benefits are better, and then you'll probably get a career... In China, there isn't really a lot of requirements in terms of teaching certificates and teaching experience. And so that kind of makes me think, oh, maybe I should try China out. To be honest, I have absolutely very little interest in China. But it made me wonder, "oh maybe I should look at this." And then I started looking at job opportunities.

(Justin, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)

Justin considered various factors before he decided to move to Shenzhen. Apart from the city's clean air, good food, and its proximity to the beach, what drew Justin to Shenzhen was its reputation as "China's Silicon Valley" and "China's immigrant city." With a Computer Science degree and having worked as a programmer for a few years, Justin was especially excited to move to the technology hub of China. As a foreigner, openness to foreigners and migrants was also an important consideration for him.

So I narrowed it down to three [job offers] that have really good benefits, good hours, and it came down to, less to do with the job, more to do with the location. So I compared Beijing and Shanghai, and researched Shenzhen. And I thought, you know, I think Shenzhen is the best place for me because, for one, the air is cleaner, and two, it's closer to the beach, like Dameisha or something... I factored in a lot of stuff, even the food... I knew that the Cantonese food, the Dim Sum, is from this area. And I thought ok, that'll be a good reason to live here too. And I watch this video series by the WIRE. You know the WIRE? They are British; I think they are based in London. Um... it's a magazine about technology. I saw that Shenzhen is sort of the Silicon Valley of China. It's a really great documentary actually. They use some local people, and they talk about the history of Shenzhen. You know, Deng Xiaoping, and the development of Shenzhen over the last 30 years, and how it might change in the future too, as the cost of living goes up and becomes more gentrified... So I was reading this on magazines and online forums, and one of the things people said was, because most of the people in Shenzhen are from other places. There is a sense of more international and welcoming toward foreigners. And I read that in Beijing, there is a little more localized kind of feelings... So you know those are the things that factor in my decision. And yeah, I am so happy that I chose to live in Shenzhen. It's an incredible city. I never feel unwelcome here. To be honest, that was my biggest surprise, about moving to Shenzhen, to China even. I really like Shenzhen.

(Justin, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)⁴²

Compared to other more traditional international cities, such as Hong Kong, Shenzhen is friendlier and more accommodating to newly-arrived middling migrants. Comparing his experiences living in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, Adam said he preferred living in Shenzhen than Hong Kong because he felt more special, and it was easier to make friends.

In Hong Kong, most expats arrived before 1997, so they have their own circle, and they are not interested in new people. There were a lot of foreigners in Hong Kong, but I felt lonely. I used to go to the Hong Kong Club for British people twice a month, but it took six months before the chairman talked to me... Nobody talks to you on the bus or ferry. Nobody cares, you are just another foreigner. In Shenzhen, it is easier to talk to people [foreigners], you see them on the street and say hi and they would tell you about their stories.

(Adam, White, British, male, 46-year-old)⁴³

⁴² My interview with Justin was conducted in a café in the Haiya Binfen Cheng Shopping Mall in the Bao'an District in Shenzhen on September 15, 2017.

⁴³ My interview with Adam took place on May 22, 2016 in a Cantonese Dim Sum restaurant in Shekou, Shenzhen.

As one of the most developed Chinese cities, Shenzhen offers its residents a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Apart from its well-equipped infrastructure and modern city landscape, Shenzhen offers a more exciting nightlife than other mid-ranged Chinese cities. A foreign ELT from New York City said he missed going to clubs and parties in New York. He said the atmosphere and people in New York's club scene were the best for him, something he found lacking in China. In this regard, he found Shenzhen much better than Wuhan, where he used to live. He said there were fewer international migrants in Wuhan, and choices of bars and clubs were more limited. He described nightlife in Wuhan as "uneventful," and a night out was a "hit-or-miss." Comparing to second- and third-tier Chinese cities, foreigners prefer Shenzhen for the cosmopolitan lifestyle the city offers

Conclusion

The making and remaking of Shenzhen can be traced since the establishment of Shekou Industrial Park in 1979 and the Shenzhen SEZ in 1980. The economic and urban restructuring processes of Shenzhen in the past four decades need to be situated in a multiscalar network of power that involves the global economy and the diasporic Chinese network in the Greater China region. In the city-making process of Shenzhen, multiple actors such as governments, early leaders, Hong Kong, existing village networks, and internal migrants are all indispensable, as each actor either strategically or organically contributes to the socio-economic development of the city.

While government planning and policies facilitated in institution- and infrastructure- building of Shenzhen SEZ, a few early leaders of Shenzhen initiated bold political reform that was critical in Shenzhen's economic take-off and subsequent success. Hong Kong provided both a blueprint and foreign investment fund for the development of Shenzhen as a Special Economic Zone. Although villages have disappeared in official discourse, they are physically present and have played a vital role in providing cheap housing and cheap food for low-income workers and newly arrived migrants, who are essential contributors to Shenzhen's urban and economic development.

Foreign ELTs are part of the social actors in branding and building Shenzhen as an international city. On the one hand, abundant job opportunities and a cosmopolitan milieu in Shenzhen attract foreign ELTs to migrate to the city. On the other hand, foreign ELTs not only add to the

international prestige of Shenzhen by internationalizing its public education sector, they also contribute to cultivating a labor force that is under pressure to become globally competitive. On an everyday level, the presence and place-making activities of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen transform the urban landscape to be more ethnically and culturally diverse.

Chapter 3 The Chinese middle class and the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) market in Shenzhen

Introduction

This chapter explores the highly commercialized EFL industry in Shenzhen in relation to Shenzhen's growing middle class. Anagnost (2004, p.203) observes that, discursively, the term "class" has evolved from the Marxian sense of class (*jieji*) to the sociological analysis of social strata (*jieceng*) and is "characterized as much by new modes of social distinction, education, and consumer taste as by economic status." Zhang Li (2010, p.8) pointed out that consumer practice is one of the identifiers of China's emerging social stratum – the middle class (*zhongchan jieceng*). Luigi Tomba also observed that this group "shape their status around a new set of collective interests, especially in their modes of consumption and access to resources" (2004, p.3). In this light, accessing education resources and accumulating cultural capital through consumption in the private education market has become a strategy for the Chinese middle class to maintain their social mobility.

Education is an important cultural capital that has a transforming effect on one's social mobility. However, education resources in contemporary China are scarce and unevenly distributed, and education in China is also elite- and market-oriented (Li, 2013). As a result, the Chinese middle class spends fortunes on the education of themselves and their children in order to raise and maintain their social status. English language education is seen as an essential part of education in Chinese society today. Not only because English competency is increasingly expected in the global labor market, but it is also seen as symbolic of one's cosmopolitan status in the Chinese context. Many Chinese urbanites invest time and money to learn English as a strategy to accumulate cultural capital, which can be converted to economic capital (in the form of a better-paid job) and social capital (a network of acquaintances who have higher social status and more power). Moreover, the eagerness to improve one's *suzhi* (human quality⁴⁴) through learning the lingua franca is shared by many Chinese who try to keep up with the transforming Chinese society.

⁴⁴ For a detailed discussion of the term *suzhi*, see Kipnis 2006 and below (p.90-91).

The chapter examines the social context of the EFL market in Shenzhen. Using the analytical concepts of *suzhi* and capital, the chapter argues that English competency is valued by the Chinese middle class as a way to improve one's *suzhi* and accumulate more cultural capital. The Chinese enthusiasm for learning the English language is embedded in China's foreign language education policy in the post-Mao era, as well as the Shenzhen government's plan to internationalize Shenzhen. Moreover, the chapter demonstrates how the imagined power of English is promoted through the industrialization and commercialization of English language education.

Sofia's story

Sofia was an attractive 23-year-old waitress working at a coffee stand in an international school, which I frequently visited for interviews, class observations, and school events during my fieldwork in 2016. Sofia's coffee stand was on the ground floor of the school building, right next to the staircase, which was designed in a big circle climbing up to the upper floors. Whenever I looked down at the coffee stand from up on the stairs, at times when teachers and students were in class and no one was around, I would find Sofia reading at one of the coffee tables. Sometimes she would also wear earphones, and her lips would be moving as she read. One day, when I bought coffee from her, I asked her what she was reading. She said she had been studying English by herself, so she could get a better job in the future.

Sofia was from a working-class family in the Guangxi Province and started working as a waitress in an expat bar in Guangzhou after dropping out of a dance school when she was 20. The bar was mostly catered to foreigners mostly and was owned by a British company. After working in Guangzhou for two years, Sofia moved to Shenzhen and continued to work in two bar branches owned by the same company. The two bars were located in the Sea World Plaza (a huge entertainment complex in Shekou area of Nanshan District) and the Coco Park bar street (in the Futian District), the most popular places for foreigners in Shenzhen. A year later, Sofia encountered a setback in her job and was sent to man a coffee stand alone in the international school where I met her. Since the coffee stand was quiet when teachers and students were in class, and Sofia was working alone, she figured she could use the time to improve her English. Sofia did not speak a word of English when she started her first job in Guangzhou, but she picked up some conversational English after serving English-speaking customers for a few years. Since Sofia's career goal was to hold a management position in the

high-end sector in the hospitality industry, she saw the English language skill as vital for her to build relationships with foreign customers and advance in her career.

Three years went by, and despite her effort in learning the English language through self-study, Sofia's English skill remained on a basic conversational level. However, that did not stop her from making contact with foreign customers she encountered through working in bars as a waitress or visiting bars as a customer, and that was how she had got her current job. A senior hotel manager invited her to work as a manager trainee in a hotel near the Shenzhen airport. Although the salary was only 3,000 RMB with food and accommodation included, Sofia saw it as an excellent training opportunity and a stepping stone for her future career. Sofia worked in the hotel for one year before the hotel changed hands. Sofia was then laid off and found a new waitressing job in a café in the city center of Shenzhen. After that, she continued to work on her English language skills, while frequenting expat bars and making friends with expats she encountered. Sofia remained hopeful that she would become successful one day as her English improved and her expat contacts increased.

Fang's story

Fang was a 44-year-old woman, married, with a 5-year-old daughter. Fang and her husband had both graduated from distinguished Chinese universities two decades previously and were professionals in their fields. While Fang ran a small advertising company herself, her husband worked as a manager in an engineering company. Fang and her husband owned a big flat in a high-end residential compound in the outskirts of Shenzhen. The couple's lifestyle was very much Chinese-oriented and had very little exposure to Western cuisines, films, and cultures. The couples did not have to use any English for their work nor social life. All their customers and friends were exclusively Chinese, and when they traveled, they only did so domestically.

On a sunny afternoon, Fang and I were walking past a shopping mall in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen when we were approached by a *Wall Street English* (one of the biggest chain English training centers in China) salesman. The salesman walked up to us and asked, "Hello, are you interested in learning English?" Before we responded, he threw another question, "do you need to use English at work?" and at the same time handed out a leaflet to us. Again, before we could say anything, the salesman said we could try their 7-day trial online class if only we would fill out a form for him in their teaching center nearby. Thinking it would be a good

opportunity to learn more about the EFL industry, I said “okay,” and the salesman gladly took us into a training center located on the ground floor of a shopping mall nearby.

Once Fang and I had walked into the center, the salesman introduced us to a “course consultant” before he went back onto the street. Our course consultant was a young Chinese woman named Emily. She greeted us warmly, gave us a tour of the center, and showed us the learning facilities and classrooms in the center. Toward the end of the tour, she stopped in the hallway, in which various qualification certificates of the center and teachers were hung on the wall to show the center’s credibility. One of the certificates on the wall was a sample certificate the *Wall Street English* would issue to students upon students’ completion of a certain level of courses. Emily said the certificate was recognized by the *Fortune Global 500* companies in China, so students could use the certificate to enhance their chances of applying for jobs.

I was about to leave after the tour, when Fang started asking questions about the course. Seeing Fang that was interested, Emily instantly invited Fang to her office, which was one of the many soundproof glass rooms in the center, where course consultants persuade potential customers to sign up for courses. Emily offered us seats on the chairs across her desk and offered each of us a glass of water before chitchatting warmly with Fang. Emily said she had only just graduated from her master’s studies in the UK, and this was her first job after graduation. Emily asked Fang if she had an English name, and Fang said no. Emily said it was important to have an English name if one was determined to study English, and so she gave Fang the name “Naly” on the spot. Fang gladly accepted.

Emily then asked Fang the reasons she wanted to learn English, and Fang gave a list of reasons. She said she would like to learn English because she would like to be able to speak English when she traveled abroad in the future. Fang said she envied Emily and me, and she wanted to be able to speak fluent English as we did. She also wanted to be able to help her daughter with schoolwork when her only child started to go to school. When Emily asked Fang about her English level and how well she did in the English language subject when she was in school, Fang became emotional. Fang said the English language subject was her nightmare, and that was the only subject she had failed in school, despite her outstanding academic record in other school subjects. Fang said she still sometimes had dreams about failing her English exams and was hoping to rebuild her confidence through improving her English language skills.

Emily listened attentively while Fang recalled in detailed her unpleasant experiences with learning the English language and being humiliated by her English language teacher when she

was in high school. Emily said she was confident that the *Wall Street English* could help Fang, and started to introduce the center's learning philosophy and models. Emily said that in *Wall Street English*, students first studied online by themselves, before attending the "Encounter Class" and talking with a foreign ELT. The learning cycle of the *Wall Street English* model is shown in the booklet below (illustration 17). Emily then explained in writing different components of a *Wall Street English* course: 1) Online interactive listening and speaking exercises followed by reading and writing exercises, 2) "Encounter classes" with foreign ELTs in a class of four. Classes that are free and optional are 3) tutoring classes by Chinese teacher assistants, 4) Optional "English Corner" activities held regularly by foreign ELTs (see illustration 18).

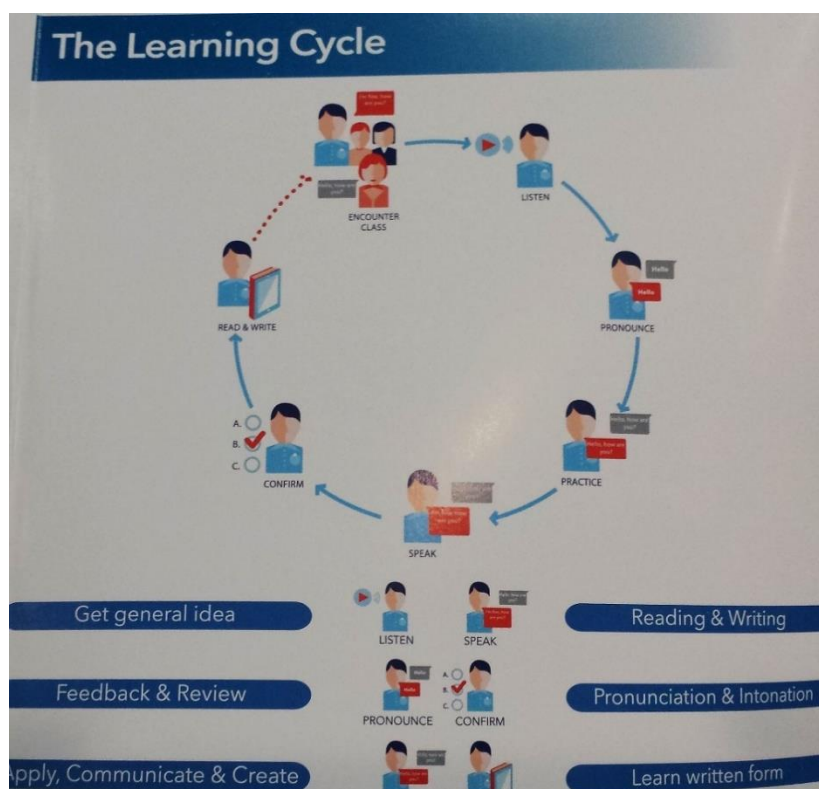


Illustration 17: a leaflet showing the learning cycle of the *Wall Street English* modal.

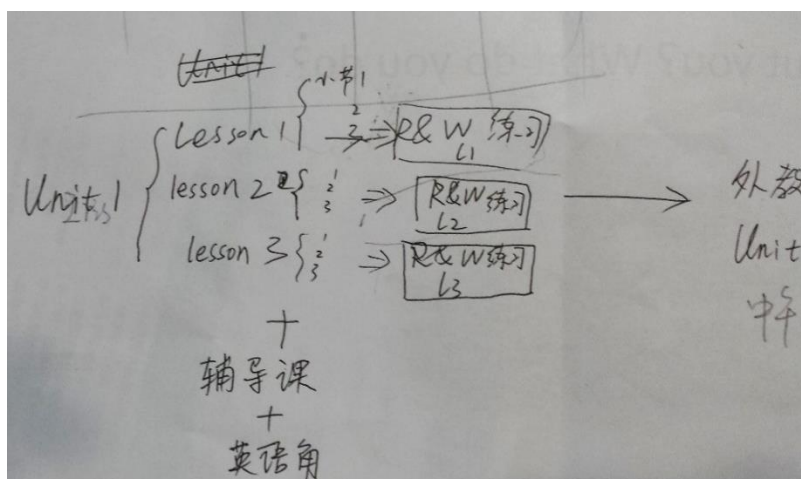


Illustration 18: an illustration of different components of a *Wall Street English* course.

Since the teaching center was not close to Fang's place and she was not sure if she could commit to attending the classes weekly, she had many follow-up questions such as rescheduling of classes, cancellation of classes, and the duration of validity of the course. Emily answered each question patiently and showed a great understanding of Fang's busy schedule. Fang said she needed more time to think and had different concerns coming up, and Emily tried to ease her worries and discussed the possibility of a more flexible class arrangement with Fang. In that way, their conversation lasted for hours before Fang finally decided to enroll herself for a course. The final deal was Fang would buy a course starting from level one and ending at level ten with a course validity of three years. The total payment for the course was RMB 50,000 (USD 7,000 / EUR 6,300).

As soon as Emily reached a deal with Fang, Emily took Fang to the office of the "principal", who was a young woman named Ivy. Ivy printed out a contract for Fang to sign and started to discuss with Fang her payment preferences. I was shocked that Fang was going to spend so much money on an English course, so I advised her to take a few days to think about it before signing the contract and making any payment. However, Fang was so motivated to learn English that nothing seemed to be able to stop her. Since Fang did not have a credit card nor enough cash with her, the "principal" recommended that she use the *Baidu* online education loan service. With a simple registration with her personal information online, Fang successfully opened an account and quickly got a loan of RMB 50,000 (USD 7,000 / EUR 6,300), which Fang would pay back in monthly installment. The photo (see illustration 19) on the following page shows Fang's contract with the *Wall Street English* and her course details under her new English name "Naly."

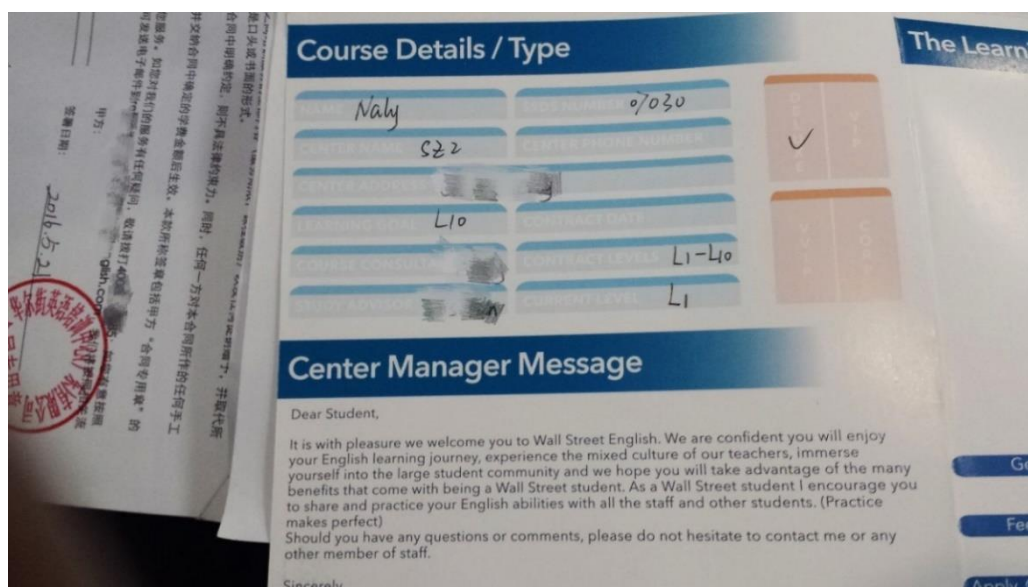


Illustration 19: Fang's signed contract with the *Wall Street English*. The attached document says Fang's course consists of lessons from level one to level ten (written as "L1-L10" in the course details above), while the highest course level available is 20.

After we left the center, I asked Fang if she thought it was too much money to spend on an English course and if she was worried that her husband would be angry, but Fang did not show the slightest sign of concern. She said that since she earned her own money, she had every right to spend it the way she wanted. However, although Fang was highly motivated at the time she was enrolled in the English language course, she was too busy to keep up a consistent learning pace in the following years. Within the three years during which the contract was valid, Fang only managed to complete two levels out of ten included in the course package she bought.

Contextualizing EFL market in Shenzhen

Sofia was an ambitious young woman who was striving for upward mobility. However, she was aware that she could not achieve her goal through standard institutional pathways such as studying abroad. Sofia admitted that she had never been an academic-minded person, and she described herself as being lazy in school. Her intention of learning the English language was utilitarian-oriented, as she saw a good level of English (along with her youthful, attractive appearance) to be an entry ticket to a high-end social circle and better job opportunities. In other words, Sofia saw her yet-to-be-acquired English linguistic capital (along with her sexual capital) to be convertible to social and economic capital. Thus, she forced herself to study English with the purpose of improving her career prospect. Sofia's mentality regarding learning

the English language resonates with that of many young Chinese who desire for upward social mobility through the improvement of English. English language education is seen as a worthwhile investment for pragmatic reasons such as increasing one's chance for better education, job opportunities, and even marriage partners.

In Fang's case, her motives for learning the English language were multiple: 1) To be able to travel internationally, 2) to make up for her past failures in the English language subject, 3) to be able to help her daughter with English homework. Although neither Fang's work nor social life involved the use of English language skills, she was driven to learn English in order to pursue a cosmopolitan lifestyle, and become a better person, and a more capable parent. Fang expressed her desire to become more cosmopolitan when she aspired to travel abroad, and wanted to be like Emily and me, who had both studied in England and spoke fluent English. For Fang, being able to speak English meant the possibility to embrace a cosmopolitan lifestyle that was partly marked by traveling to Western countries. Secondly, as a university graduate from a top Chinese university, Fang saw her poor academic performance in the English language subject as a "stain" on her academic record and was eager to prove herself through improving her English. Lastly, Fang wanted to be able to help her daughter achieve academic success.

The booming EFL market in China, along with rising demand for international school education and overseas education, reflects the Chinese desire for the West. As Raqib and Phan (2014, p.8) observe, "the West is better" is a popular belief that permeates in East Asian countries and leads to the unquestionable belief that products and services from the West must be superior. Such belief contributes to the success of the commercialization of higher education in English-speaking countries and the popularity of foreign ELTs in the domestic EFL market. In Shenzhen, the EFL market, as part of the educational products that emerged from the Chinese middle class's increasing desire and consumption power for Western education, grows along with the international school market in China and the overseas education market.

The EFL market in Shenzhen is part of a stratified educational market catering to the urban Chinese middle class who aspire to accumulate more cultural capital and improve their *suzhi*. In a highly stratified Chinese society and education market, the more affluent Chinese middle class send their children to international schools in preparation for their overseas studies. As a place to prepare Chinese students for their studies in Western countries, international schools can be seen as an extension of overseas higher education profit chain. In comparison, Western-branded higher education institutions (Raqib & Phan, 2014) and commercial brokerages (Lan,

2018) benefit directly from overseas higher education. As for the less wealthy Chinese middle class, they send their children to after-school English classes, or go to English schools themselves, to improve their English. The EFL market in China is linked less directly to overseas education and mostly targets people who compete in the domestic education and labor markets, in which English proficiency is increasingly becoming a required skill.

Theoretical framework

Suzhi

Suzhi is essentially a Chinese concept that has no equivalent in the English language but can be roughly translated into English as “quality.” The *suzhi* discourse has gained popularity since the post-Mao era. While the government uses *suzhi* to justify all kinds of hierarchy under authoritarian rule, an increasingly competitive social environment and rising socio-economic inequality also drive the public’s concern with *suzhi* (Kipnis, 2006). The earlier discourse of *suzhi* was not only associated with the discourses of eugenics and self-cultivation, but it was also linked to social Darwinism and nationalism (Kipnis, 2006). In the Chinese government’s formulation of the *suzhi* discourse, the *suzhi* of Chinese citizens is inextricably linked to the prosperity of the Chinese nation; thus, Chinese people need to raise their *suzhi* in order to contribute to the modernization of Chinese society (Lin, 2017, p.2). Moreover, the *suzhi* discourse is used in Chinese governance as a policy justification, as people of higher *suzhi* are granted more rights and benefits, and people of lower or no *suzhi* are granted fewer or no rights and benefits (Kipnis, 2006; Lin, 2017).

The *suzhi* discourse is an effective citizenship transforming strategy as the set of qualities it refers to can be filled with skills, traits, and values that are considered important to advance China’s national development and international status (Lin, 2017). In the context of building an international city, it is part of the Shenzhen government’s citizenship transformation project to raise the *suzhi* of its citizens by introducing overseas talents, cultivating young entrepreneurs with international visions, raising citizens’ international competency,” and popularizing the English language education⁴⁵ (Shenzhen Government, 2011). In internationalizing Shenzhen, Shenzhen citizens are all the more expected to embody the *suzhi* of a cosmopolitan citizen, of

⁴⁵ The original wording in the policy document is “引进高层次海外人才”，“培养一批由国际实业的青年创业家”，“广泛开展涉外文明礼仪普及教育活动”，“提高市民的国际化素养”，深入开展“深圳市民讲外语”活动。

which one of the qualities is to be able to speak English. After all, although Shenzhen's economic achievement is unprecedented in the world, the ultimate value of Shenzhen's success is to be measured "in the perception of Shenzhen within China as a world-class city with a mixture of spectacular architecture, 'civilized' citizens, clean streets, and an entrepreneurial spirit... (Bach, 2017, p.33)." Thus, as social actors that contribute to the internationalizing of Shenzhen, "civilized" citizens are not only expected to have manners,⁴⁶ but are also expected to be able to converse in English and conduct themselves according to international (Western) standards.

In contemporary China, *suzhi* is essential in the discursive production of the urban middle class, who are labeled as high-*suzhi* citizens by their consumption practices and desire for social mobility (Anagnost, 2004). As an exemplar of self-improvement for a Chinese population who assumedly aspire to become part of the Chinese middle class (Tomba, 2014), the Chinese middle class is more anxious about maintaining and raising their *suzhi*. This chapter demonstrates that Chinese middle class's concern with *suzhi* is reflected in their pursuit of English language education. While the English language is deemed by the Chinese government as a necessary tool for China to participate in the global economy and international affairs (Pan, 2015), English language competency has also increasingly become a defining quality of a high-*suzhi* citizen, who is measured not only by his/her "civilization" (*wenming*), but also his/her competency in a globalizing world.

Capital

Bourdieu (1986) conceptualizes capital in three different forms – economic, cultural, and social – which are intrinsically inter-convertible and rooted in economic capital, and thus people accumulate capital in all forms to maximize their capital, which is essentially power. For example, economic capital, as the rooting capital, is often transmitted in the form of cultural capital through educational investment and the acquisition of educational qualification, which is an institutionalized state of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) further conceptualized cultural capital into three different states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. While education, in general, is an embodied state of cultural capital, which is marked by subtle signs such as

⁴⁶ Mainland Chinese, especially those from rural areas, are commonly criticized as lacking in manners for their habits such as spitting, squatting, jumping queues and talking loudly in public.

what and how one speaks, academic qualification is an institutionalized state of cultural capital that is officially recognized.

Major social institutions such as education, help to reproduce and maintain the privileges of the most powerful within a society. For example, in the Chinese public education system, the mechanism of admitting students based on their place of residence (specific street/compound) gives rise to the product of “school-place housing” (*xuequfang*). As apartments that are located within the vicinity of the “good” schools, *xuequfang* become expensive because they are well-sought-after by parents who want to send their children to good schools. While the distinction between “good” and “bad” schools is rooted in the state’s unequal distribution of education resources, the existing school-place distribution mechanism leads to an increase in demand and price of housing in the neighborhoods of good schools. As a result, those who could afford to buy expensive real-estate properties can send their children to better schools to enhance children’s academic success. The same capital conversion mechanism applies to the private education market in China. While more affluent Chinese parents send their children to international schools in China as part of their future path to education in Western countries, less wealthy Chinese parents also try to obtain more education resources for their children. For example, sending their children to after-school English schools or hiring native English speakers to teach their children are some of the “basics” that parents would do to improve their children’s English competency.

Booming international school and English language education markets in China, and the resulting migration of foreign ELTs, provide a perspective on a complex transnational educational network and a more diverse global flow of capital. In the overseas education business, while Chinese students move to Western countries for their higher education and thus bring revenue (economic capital) to their host countries, students accumulate cultural capital through their overseas studies. In international/English language education within China, when foreign ELTs move to Shenzhen, both foreign teachers and Chinese students gain linguistic/cultural capital through interacting with each other, and foreign teachers and schools (including local-owned, joint-ventured and foreign-owned) gain economic capital.

This chapter argues that English language education is not only seen as essential by the government as a way to raise Chinese citizens’ *suzhi*, it is also seen by the Chinese middle class as an essential cultural capital to maintain their social status. The chapter continues to examine English language education in public and private sectors in Shenzhen. By tracing the development of national and local English language education policy in post-Mao China, the

chapter shows that the national government and Shenzhen government are in pursuit of international prestige through the popularization and promotion of English language education. In the private sector, English language skill is advertised to as being life-changing and English language courses as empowering in the EFL market. The chapter looks into the commercialization of English language education in Shenzhen by unpacking the sales strategies of English language education corporates. The last part of the chapter takes a glimpse into the future of the EFL market in China – online English language education.

1. China's global status and the political economy behind the EFL business in China

The Chinese government assumes that the prosperity of China correlates with the English language, and such assumption leads to linguistic instrumentalism, which emphasizes learning the English language for economic development as a society and for social mobility as individuals (Guo, 2016, p.119). At present, the status of the English language has never been higher before in Chinese society. As it does not enable China to participate in international affairs, including joining the World Trade Organization and hosting the Olympic Games, it is also a key subject in the school curriculum. English is one of the three key subjects (Chinese, English, Mathematics) taken by millions of students every year in the national university entrance exam (*gaokao*). Although Chinese students start to learn English at grade three in Chinese public schools as a compulsory school subject since 2001, most parents, especially those in first-tier Chinese cities, send their children to after-school English classes to enhance their English (Bolton, & Graddol, 2012).

On an individual level, English proficiency not only contributes to academic success, enhanced overseas education and job opportunities, better job prospects, and economic prosperity (Johnson, 2009), it is also symbolic of one's socio-cultural status (Pan, 2015). As English language education has become a commodity that one can buy (Wang, 2004), it has become part of an urban, cosmopolitan lifestyle aspired by the Chinese urban middle class. Being fluent in English is not only an identity marker for the educated Chinese middle class, it also signifies cosmopolitanism and modernity. Since the English language is recognized as the *lingua franca*, learning it is an act of “cosmopolitan striving” (Park & Abelman, 2004). Thus, underlying the act of learning English is the desire to be seen as cosmopolitan and part of the middle class. Foreign ELTs thus, play an important role in such aspiration to modernity by imparting not only the language but also the cultures that come with it.

The migration of foreign ELTs to China is a side product of the country's modernization. English language education policy in China correlates with the country's economic and political status in the world (Ross, 1993). With the opening up of China in 1979, "English for modernization" became the goal of China's foreign language education policy, and English language education was promoted in the public sector (Lam, 2002). In the 1990s, off-campus English language teaching centers gained commercial success partly because of "Chinese students' dissatisfaction with on-campus learning experiences caused by the shortage of competent teaching staff" (Wang, 2004, p.155). At the same time, since an increasingly maturing market economy in the 1990s and 2000s created the conditions for the employment and settlement of foreigners in China, (Pieke, 2012), foreign ELTs have since been introduced in the English as a Foreign Language education market.

1.1.English language education in China: The past and the present

English learning was first promoted in China in the mid-19th century when foreign knowledge first drew the Chinese authority's attention after China lost to Great Britain in the Opium Wars. At that time, Western knowledge was associated with a more advanced military-political system that defeated China and threatened Chinese sovereignty. English learning aimed to strengthen China as a nation, in the hope that English would provide access to Western technology and scientific expertise. However, when the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion took place toward the end of the 19th century, the notion of English learning was not fully supported by all policymakers (Pan, 2015; Adamson, 2004; Johnson, 2009).

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China's foreign language education policy has gone through a few drastic changes (Bolton, K., & Graddol, D., 2012). In the early 1950s, Russian was the preferred foreign language to be promoted in China because China saw Russia as a communist ally. However, as Sino-Soviet relations became tense and China started to seek economic ties with the West, English began to replace Russian as the main foreign language in China in late 1950. Starting from the mid-1960s, during the Cultural Revolution period under Mao's rule, foreign values were condemned, and thus English ceased to be taught. It was not until after Mao Zedong's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 that China could realize its strategic economic revival through opening its doors to the West, which also revived learning English as a foreign language (Adamson, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Lam, 2002).

China's reform and opening in the 1980s marked the beginning of contemporary English language education in China as the Chinese government considered the promotion of English language education important to China's economic reform. It is emphasized that the aim of incorporating English courses in the school curriculum was not "for the prestige of knowing a foreign language or appreciating the cultural heritage of Anglo-American societies," but for "national modernization" (Johnson, 2009, p.148). On the national level, the motive for supporting English language acquisition is patriotic and utilitarian because it is equated with the modernizing of the country, integrating with the world system, and strengthening China's position in the world.

As China's trade relations with other countries intensify on both the regional and international levels, English becomes an invaluable lingua franca both within and outside of Asia. English is an essential linguistic tool for China to communicate with the outside world, not only with English-speaking countries like the UK and the US, but also with its Asian neighbors. For example, English is the only official language in the extended group of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), known as ASEAN+3, which includes the ten states of ASEAN plus China, Japan, and South Korea (Wang, 2013, p.65). To popularize English language education, the English language subject was incorporated as one of the compulsory subjects in Chinese schools from grade three, and one of the three core subjects for the national university entrance exams (Bolton, K., & Graddol, D., 2012).

Pro-English learning education policy in the contemporary Chinese society is in line with the Reform and Opening Policy, first advocated by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, and continuously enhanced by the subsequent Chinese leadership. Lam (2002) summarized changes in China's English language education policy from China's establishment in 1949 till present in the table (illustration 20) on the following page.

Six phases of Foreign-language education in China

Historical period	Phase in foreign-language education	Time
Before the Cultural Revolution	1. The interlude with Russian	Early 1950s
	2. The back-to-English Movement	1957-65
During the Cultural Revolution	3. Repudiation of foreign learning	1966-70
	4. English for renewing ties with the West	1971-6
After the Cultural Revolution	5. English for modernization	1977-90
	6. English for international stature	From 1991

Illustration 20: a table showing foreign-language education policy changes in China (1949-present)
Source: Lam (2002), *English in education in China: policy changes and learners' experience*

From English for modernization to English for international stature

What is most relevant and interesting to the research is that, as shown in the table, the purpose that learning the English language has served for the nation has shifted from “for modernization” (phase 5) in the late 1970s to the current stage of “for international stature” (phase 6) (Lam, 2002, p.247), or in Adamson’s (2004) words, “to integrate with globalization.” The implications a shift from “English for modernization” to “English for international stature” have on China’s English language policy are that, instead of teaching English for examination purposes, the new syllabus focuses more on communicative skills. For instance, in China’s English language curriculum reform, intercultural awareness and communicative competence were highlighted as learning goals (Adamson, 2001). Another consequence the change of purpose and emphasis for English learning has is that, it is believed that native English language speakers are more effective teachers in terms of raising cultural awareness and teaching communicative English skills such as speaking.

1.2. English language education in internationalizing Shenzhen

While the Chinese national government’s language education policy emphasizes the importance of English language education, the Shenzhen Municipal government internationalizes its education and promotes the English language in order to raise the city’s

international stature. In the context of Shenzhen, which has been developed based on the blueprint of a world city, the Shenzhen Municipal Government is eager to make “citizens” out of “peasants” through *hukou* reform (Hu & Fan, 2004) and the popularization of English language education. As an international language, English is assigned more importance in internationalizing Shenzhen, both on a municipal level and a personal level. On a municipal level, since Shenzhen’s development plan has been geared toward building an international city, building an English language environment and improving citizens’ English literacy are considered part of the international city building process by the authority. On a personal level, since Shenzhen is one of the wealthiest Chinese cities with a large population of Chinese middle class and the highest number of highly educated professionals, English competency is considered critical for social and professional reasons.

The Shenzhen government’s promotion of English language education

In Shenzhen, the government deems an English language environment and citizens’ English language level as part of the “software” for an international city. Thus the promotion of the English language has been part of Shenzhen’s internationalization plan. In public space, considering inaccurate English public signs as harming the city image of Shenzhen, the Shenzhen municipal government launched a citywide project to regulate and standardize bilingual (English and Chinese) signs in public space (Shenzhen Foreign Affairs Office, 2011). Among the Shenzhen public, the government actively encouraged citizens to speak more English. For example, in the opening ceremony of the “Millions of citizens speak English” campaign, the vice-mayor of Shenzhen said, “We need an international language environment to make Shenzhen an international city, and that requires us all to open our mouths and speak English” (Sun, 2004).

The internationalization of education is part of the Shenzhen government’s action plan to transform Shenzhen into an international city (Shenzhen government, 2011). Thus, as part of the Shenzhen government’s funded programs to internationalize education in public schools, foreign ELTs are hired to teach the English language in Shenzhen’s public schools. Programs for hiring foreign ELTs to teach at local schools have been implemented in China’s neighboring countries such as Japan and South Korea for a similar initiative of internationalization. Japan’s JET (Japan Teaching and Exchange) program, a program that has started inviting foreigners to teach English at local schools in Japan since 1987 for the purpose of internationalizing Japan,

claims to aim to “promote grass-roots internationalization at the local level” (JET, 2020). While the JET program in Japan has recruited foreigners to teach English in Japanese public schools since the 1990s, the EPIK⁴⁷ program in South Korea also promotes English language education by having foreigners teach English in public schools.

Shenzhen’s Nanshan District, as the heart of China’s “Silicon Valley,” the home base of Shekou – Shenzhen’s model international community, and the first “prominent education district” in the Guangdong Province, has the richest education resources among all the districts in Shenzhen (Yu & Xiao, 2002). Thus, it has the advantage and resources to set internationalizing education as a high priority in the district government’s development agenda. Nanshan District is not only the home to the majority of Shenzhen’s international schools, but it is also the experimental field for the internationalization of local education. For example, the Nanshan District government invested 50 million RMB in internationalizing education in 2015. Among the 50 million RMB, 15 million RMB was allocated to introducing foreign ELTs into local schools (Nanshan District Government, 2012).

2. Commercialization of English language education

China is the world’s biggest job market for teaching English as a foreign language. According to the then-premier Wen Jiabao, in 2009, there were 300 million English learners in China, and in 2012, Chinese people spent \$4.8 billion on English classes. Around 100,000 foreign teachers and experts are recruited every year to work in China. Foreign ELTs can easily find work in a wide range of institutions, from international schools and public schools to countless training or tutoring centers (Swanson, 2013; ChinaFile, 2014; International TEFL Academy). In Shenzhen, English language education is a profitable business, and English teaching centers of different sizes are everywhere. Despite fierce competition, the EFL market in Shenzhen seems to be ever-expanding as more people are made to believe that learning the English language will help them become a better self and pursue a better life.

Tracing the commercialization of English language education in China, Wang (2004, p.155) observed that off-campus English language teaching centers in the 1990s gained commercial success partly because of “a general dissatisfaction with on-campus learning experiences

⁴⁷ EPIK stands for English Program In Korea. Since its establishment in 1995, the program has invited native English speakers to teach English in public schools in order to improve the English-speaking abilities of South Korean students and teachers, develop cultural exchange between South Korea and other parts of the world and introduce new teaching methods into the South Korean education system.

caused by the shortage of competent teaching staff.” Later, when it is believed that learning English from a native English speaker was the most effective way to improve listening and speaking skills in English, foreign ELTs became popular. Thus, demand for English teachers, especially native English-speaking teachers, continues to rise. Not only have international English education institutions such as *EF (Education First)*, *Wall Street English*, and *Disney English*⁴⁸ successfully penetrated their business in major Chinese cities, various local English training centers, schools, nurseries also started to hire foreign ELTs to teach English.

Chinese people’s desire to learn the English language is said to be utilitarian, either for academic and career success on the personal level, or modernization on the national level (Pan, 2011). Thus, while English is taught as a compulsory subject in school, people also invest heavily in improving their English at their own cost. Chinese parents who could not afford high tuition fees of international schools would send their children to after-school English schools. Adults of various ages and professions also invest time and money to improve their English. An individual’s knowledge of the English language is promoted by commercial English training centers as being determinant of one’s career prospects and financial success, and thus the learning of English is instrumental and pragmatic (Bolton & Graddol, 2012). Although consumers of the domestic EFL market, who are demographically more diverse, might or might not be studying English for the purpose of overseas studies, increasing one’s English competency is nevertheless seen as a capital accumulation strategy, as good English is seen to be a ticket to better universities, better jobs, and more Western-based social circles. Therefore, consumers of the EFL market in China range from pre-school children, students of all levels, and workers of different fields to non-workers who are looking to become more “cultured.”

2.1. Selling English as a life-changing skill and a dream

The EFL industry in Shenzhen is highly commercialized and competitive. The English language is packaged as a life-changing skill that promises a better future for individuals. Big teaching-center chains sell English with a comprehensive sales and marketing strategy through branding and driving sales with trained salespeople. Teaching centers of different sizes also use foreign ELTs as part of the learning experiences offered to their students. Since the EFL

⁴⁸ The 26 English teaching centers of the *Disney English* chain in China had been closed since January 2020 after the outbreak of the COVID-19, and announced the company would close down its business in June 2020.

market is ever-expanding and foreign ELTs are in high demand, foreigners find many job opportunities in the EFL industry in Shenzhen.

From my empirical research in Shenzhen, English language education is often packaged as a life-changing skill essential for one's social mobility, and a dream worth pursuing. The knowledge of the English language is promoted by EFL businesses to be a game-changer for one's life. English learning is believed to be a worthwhile "investment" for many adults as well as for parents who want their children to have a successful future. From children to adults, from white-collar workers working in international trade companies to salespersons working at local shops, there is one shared belief: Better English, better life. The promise that learning English can change one's life has only become more believable among people of all social strata.

In Shenzhen, from small independent teaching centers to big chain teaching centers, English language education is sold as life-transforming. Below is an advertisement (illustration 21) outside an English teaching center in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen. The slogan reads, "improve your English and change your life," while the body type above an image of a White man reads, "change begins today." The advertisement also highlights that the English language courses offered by the center include "oral English taught by foreign teachers," "exam English," "business English," and "English for overseas studies."



Illustration 21: an advertisement for the *Web International English*
Source: photo taken by the author in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen

Below is an advertisement (illustration 22) on the wall outside of another English teaching center. Although the English copy is poorly written, with grammatical mistakes, the Chinese copy was selling “one-on-one classes taught by foreign teachers” and “the space to realize your English dream” to customers. While the activity of English learning is romanticized as a dream-pursuing act, the image of a White man as a foreign ELT is also used to sell “English taught by foreigners.”



Illustration 22: an advertisement for *Hampson English*

Source: photo taken by the author on a street in the Futian District in Shenzhen

2.2.Branding, sales, and marketing

Wall Street English, *EF*, *Meten*, and *Web International English* were the “big four” English teaching center chains in Shenzhen. In the most developed areas of Shenzhen, such as the Nanshan District and Futian Districts, advertisements and branches of these four teaching center chains were everywhere. After visiting branches of all the four teaching-center chains, I realized they operated with a very similar sales and marketing strategy, from branding their teaching centers to having salespersons on different levels to close deals. Taking *Wall Street English* and *EF*, the two biggest brands in the EFL industry, as examples, they both promote their teaching centers as brand names in the EFL market by hiring popular Chinese celebrities to be their spokespersons. Moreover, learning the English language is depicted as empowering. In terms of sales strategy, the “big four” training center chains had their own sales teams, which

were well-organized with a clear division of labor. While salespersons on the street barely speak English, course consultants, who are higher-level salespersons in disguise, are fluent in English. A pattern regarding the location of these chain teaching centers is that they usually established their branches in shopping malls or near metro stations, where the traffic of people is high, so their “outreach sales teams” could approach as many potential customers as possible.

2.2.1. Advertising and branding

The *Wall Street English* advertisement (illustration 23) from an MTR station in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen features Chinese celebrity Zhang Liangying. The Chinese copy states, “Don’t be the audience, be the protagonist,” and “make it big with Zhang Liangying.” Above the “Wall Street English” logo on the right side of the advertisement, it says, “change your future.” All the texts advocate a sense of agency and empowerment. While the shifting position from an audience to a protagonist urges consumers to stop being passive and start taking the lead to “make it big,” the advertisement suggests that consumers have the power to change their future. This advertisement appeals to White-collar female workers, as the center of the advertisement features a female professional. Moreover, Zhang Liangying, the most prominent figure on the advertisement, not only dresses in a smart-casual manner, but her gesture, and even the denim fabric of her skirt, echo the feminist icon Rosie the Riveter (see illustration 24).



Illustration 23: an advertisement of *Wall Street English*

Slogan: “Don’t be an audience, be a protagonist.” “Make it big.” “Change your future.”

Source: photo taken by the author in an MTR station in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen



Illustration 24: the feminist icon Rosie the Riveter

Source: <https://youngandrefined.com/products/rosie-the-riveter-we-can-do-it>

EF's sales and marketing strategies are very similar to that of the *Wall Street English*. Below is an *EF* advertisement (see illustration 25) featuring Chinese celebrity Hu Ge, who dresses in a suit with a sleek hairstyle, conveying a sense of professionalism and power. The slogan in the largest font on the upper right corner of the advertisement reads, "the better your English, the better your job opportunities," which links English competency directly with career success. In the right bottom corner, the slogan encourages people to "strive for excellence." Next to the logo of *EF*, it says, "opening the world through education." In the advertisement, English competency promises endless possibilities – not only will you get a better job, but your world will be so much bigger, and your life experiences richer, if only you make an effort. The advertisement sends its audience the message that their life is in their hands, and the key to a successful and enjoyable life is improving one's English.



Illustration 25: an advertisement for the *EF* with slogans reading “the better your English, the better your job opportunities.” “Strive for excellence.” “Opening the world through education.”
(source: photo taken by the author in an MTR station in Shenzhen)

Apart from display advertisement, resourceful English teaching center chains also often promote their brand through event marketing. Eye-catching events are usually held in places with high traffic, such as shopping malls. Below is an image of a promotion event (see illustration 26) held by the *EF* teaching center in a shopping mall in Nanshan. The event took place on a Sunday afternoon and involved a team of sound-control professionals, entertainment artists, and existing teachers and students from the teaching center. While students wearing EF T-shirts were introducing themselves in English on the stage, other students and passers-by were free to be part of the audience or play LEGO games at the back. Outside of the performing and game zone, entertainment artists were there to attract the attention of potential customers. At the same time, leaflets containing course information were laid out on a long table for people to take away.



Illustration 26: A promotion event of the EF English training center.

Source: the photos were taken by the author on 11th June 2017 in the Garden City Center Shopping Mall in Nanshan District in Shenzhen.

2.2.2. Outdoor advertising and telemarketing

A typical sales strategy among the “big four” English teaching center chains is that they send out “outreach salespersons” onto the street to reach out to potential customers. While Fang’s story at the beginning of the chapter illustrates the sales strategy of *Wall Street English*, I also had the experience of being approached by an EF salesperson on the street. One afternoon, I was waiting for an interviewee at the entrance of a shopping mall when a young girl wearing a pink shirt approached me with a big smile. She introduced herself as an EF salesperson and gave me a coupon. She said if I called the number on the coupon and made an appointment to visit one of their many branch teaching centers in Shenzhen, I could have a free class with a foreign ELT. She also asked for my phone number and said she would send me updates on their promotional events via texts.

The day after, a saleswoman from the EF sales team called me on my phone. She asked me a list of questions, including what my English proficiency level was, which field of English I would like to focus on (sales, engineering, finance...), and which skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking) were my strengths and weaknesses, etc. After I had answered her questions, she invited me for a free trial class taught by a foreign teacher with a group of students who were of similar English proficiency levels and interests in learning. I accepted her invitation, and she made an appointment for me to go to one of their center branches in the Nanshan District two days later at 11 am. After I hung up the phone, I immediately received an SMS confirming the time and place, with a map to the center branch included. The day before the class, the salesperson called me again, but I missed her call. She sent me an SMS and asked me to reply if the message had been received. I answered her through SMS to confirm I had received the message.

2.2.3. Course consultants

At 10:30 am on the day of the class, the salesperson called me to remind me of the class. I arrived at the center at 11 am and told the receptionist I was there for a trial class. The receptionist said I had to fill out a form and talk to a course consultant first before I could take the class. After I filled out the form, a course consultant came to meet me and took me to his office. The course consultant was a young Chinese man dressed in a full suit. He greeted me in English and carried on talking in English. He told me he was an English-major graduate and

had worked for EF for three years. However, he had a strong accent, and I had great difficulty understanding him, so he had to switch back to talking in Chinese after a minute.

He talked to me about their course structure, learning models, and online learning program for an hour before he asked me to do an online test. The test consisted of a reading test and a grammar test, and it took me about half an hour to finish. After the test, he took me to his office and recommended a program for me, according to my test results. There were two options, the 12-month program, and the 18-month program, depending on the level of proficiency I wanted to achieve. The 12-month program costed RMB 32,000 (USD 4,500) and the 18-month program costed RMB 42,000 (USD 6,000).

I told him I would like to decide after I had taken the trial class with a foreign ELT, which was promised by his colleague on the phone. However, the course consultant said he could not arrange a trial class for me unless I made a down payment on enrolling in their course. He was very strict about my having to pay first, and I had no intention at all of spending a fortune on an English course, so I was getting ready to leave. Seeing that I was leaving and assuming I was going to go to other English teaching centers, he suddenly gave me his advice, “no matter what, don’t pay any upfront payment, even it’s only RMB 500. Also, two things: first, check if they have many classes to offer; second, see if their teachers are full-time. Other centers only offer limited classes, but we have many different classes during the day. Also, other centers don’t have as many teachers as we have, and other centers mostly hire part-time teachers.”

Analysis

English language education in the private sector was highly competitive. While both sizeable and small English-teaching centers could be found everywhere in the downtown area of Shenzhen, the “big four” English teaching center chains in Shenzhen shared a strikingly similar pattern in advertising, branding, sales and marketing. Selling English language courses as dreams and hopes to people who were eager to move up the social ladder or who were anxious about their middle-class status, commercial English schools charged people fortunes. However, the life-changing effects of learning the English language might be over-estimated. Edison was running his own English teaching center at the time of our interview. Before having his own English center, Edison had worked for EF as a top salesman in the position of course consultant. Speaking from the perspective of a salesperson, Edison thought teaching centers sold English courses as dreams and hopes to people.

Most of the time, students who go to these training centers don't know what they want from life and what they can achieve, so we give them a dream by telling them what they can achieve if they improve their English; for example, salary increase and improvement on life situation. We give them a dream... It is easy to reach the English language levels we plan for them, but that does not mean anything. In the end, many of them still can't speak English because that relies on practice. I was a top salesman in our teaching center, and I once had a client who worked as a waitress. She had to borrow money from 13 of her relatives in order to have enough money to pay for her tuition fees. I felt bad because that was her sweat money, and I knew the course wouldn't change her life much. But at the time, I had to brainwash myself into believing that these courses were life-changing; otherwise, I wouldn't be able to do my job.

(Edison, Chinese, male, 36-year-old)⁴⁹

Charles, a foreign ELT who taught in *Meten*, one of the biggest English teaching-center chains in Shenzhen, share a similar view with Edison.

They are hustlers. They focus on sales, but they have no products. If there are any accidental results from the aptitude of teachers and students, they take all the credits... They promise the students a dream and expect the teachers to deliver it.

(Charles, White, US American, male, late 40s)⁵⁰

3. The future of the EFL market in China: Selling English online

The popularization of cell phones and the accessibility of the Internet have also changed foreign ELTs' way of working. Teaching is no longer confined to classrooms and strict office hours. It can take place in a bar in the middle of drinking with a friend. I was having a drink with a teacher in a bar at around 9 pm. He said he would have to pick up a phone call at 9:30 pm because of some work. At 9:30 pm, he got a voice call on WeChat. He picked up his phone and listened attentively to the other person talking for 5 minutes. He jotted down notes while he was listening. Afterwards, he gave feedback on the pronunciation of some English words. After hanging up the phone, he explained to me that it was one of his part-time jobs. Students would

⁴⁹ My interview with Edison was conducted in his teaching center in the Bao'an District of Shenzhen on 9 September 2017.

⁵⁰ My interview with Charles was conducted in the Baia restaurant near the Coco Park shopping complex in the Futian District of Shenzhen on 5 October 2017.

make appointments to call at an agreed time, and would then read a passage that he had assigned to them, and he would correct their pronunciation on the phone.

Long-distance tutoring does not even require a teacher and a student to be online at the same time. One teacher has set up an English tutoring business with his Chinese business partner, who had been one of his students. The teacher would provide English tutoring services by answering students' questions on English learning anytime from 9 am to 9 pm. Their advertisement promoted that English learning can be "anywhere" and "anytime," and encouraged students to make use of trivial times to learn English. Students could send the foreign ELT an audio message anytime within the specified period of time, and the tutor would also reply to the message through audio messages anytime during the work hours. In this way, the tutoring is made flexible and interactive.

While the foreign ELT provides English teaching services, the teacher's Chinese business partner takes care of the marketing of the tutoring service. A catchy Chinese poster is only one means of promotion. The Chinese business partner's network is more effective. The teacher's business partner holds a management position in a foreign trade company. People who work in the company need to have a certain English language skill level for work. The Chinese business partner would promote her English tutoring service among her colleagues. Since she speaks good English, and she takes classes from the teacher, it has been useful for her to promote her English tutoring business through her professional and personal network.

It seems foreign ELTs do not even have to be in China in the future to share the profits from the lucrative English teaching market in China. A Chinese supervisor in an English teaching center I talked to told me that her main duty was quality control. She used to work as a Chinese English teacher for the company. The company had several different branches in Shenzhen and had hired one foreign ELT. The foreign ELT would be stationed in one branch for a week before he went to the next branch. The rest of the staff were Chinese English teachers. However, after the foreign ELT left, the company decided to change its business model. She was promoted to supervisor, and her job was to watch thousands of teaching demonstration videos sent from part-time English teachers from all over the world. She would give them feedback on their teaching demos and advise them on how to improve their teaching.

There are increasingly more English training companies that specialize in providing online English teaching services. Below are two advertisements from two online English training companies. The first one (illustration 27) features Yao Ming, an internationally renowned

Chinese basketball player, and the advertisement says, “VIPABC⁵¹: foreign ELTs online 24/7.” The second one (illustration 28) features Tang Wei, a famous Chinese actress, and emphasizes students’ improvement in speaking skills upon completion of courses.



Illustration 27: an advertisement for an online English language education company that says “VIPABC: foreign ELTs online 24/7.”

Source: photo taken by the author in the shopping Park MTR station in Shenzhen



Illustration 28: an advertisement for an online English language education company, “Hi talk online English: real-life oral English practice that enables you to speak naturally.”

⁵¹ The actual company name is written in lowercase as *vipabc*, but the author changed it to *VIPABC* to make it more immediately readable.

Before moving to China to teach English, Paul worked for a language learning software company as a salesman. In 2014, however, Paul's job position was eliminated because the company decided that the company's sales and marketing would be primarily done online. Having learned Russian and Chinese by himself and having worked with language-learning software for years, Paul thought he could go to China to teach English. An internationally renowned English training company accepted Paul's job application, and he had since been teaching adults English in the same center branch in Shenzhen. However, he expressed his concern about the development of online English teaching and how his job might eventually be eliminated.

I don't teach children, but in the future I might. I can see the trend for English teaching now is it's going online. Do you know the vipabc English? They offer online classes for adults and it's cheaper. For people who have work and family commitments, this is appealing to them. If they have to come to our center to take a class, they are giving up their time that could be spent with their wife, husband, and children. So it's great if they can take their classes at home. I can see these online classes will be taking students away from our center. I am a bit wary of this because I lost my last job because of technology.

(Paul, White, US American, male, 36-year-old)⁵²

Conclusion

This chapter examines the social context of English language education in Shenzhen by contextualizing the Chinese middle class's desire for the West and the way in which English competency is seen as a way to accumulate cultural capital and improve one's *suzhi*. The chapter argues that the EFL market is part of a stratified education market that includes other more expensive education products such as international school education and overseas education. The chapter also contextualizes the thriving EFL market as a result of the Chinese middle class's pursuit of cultural capital and *suzhi* improvement, as well as the Chinese government's English language education policy.

The chapter starts with two case studies with the aim to understand the motives of Chinese students who desire to study English. The chapter further traces the development of post-Mao China's English language education policy, which popularizes English language education as

⁵² My interview with Paul was conducted on 26 September 2016 in a café at the Coastal City Shopping Mall.

China's political and economic status in the global stage rises. The chapter further looks into the commercialization of English language education in Shenzhen by unpacking the sales strategies of English language education corporates in the city. The last part of the chapter looks into the future of English language education in China and predicts a shift in business model from the traditional classroom to the virtual classroom.

Compared to less cosmopolitan Chinese cities, English language education gets more attention in Shenzhen because Shenzhen strives to live up to the name of "world city" and Shenzheners strive to cultivate qualities that make them "world citizens." The Shenzhen Municipal government treats the promotion of the English language as part of infrastructure building, and the Nanshan District government puts a significant amount of resources into internationalizing the education sector and enhancing English language education. As for Shenzhen's middle class, who are generally more affluent and cosmopolitan, are also more able and willing to invest more resources in learning the English language.

Chapter 4 Legal provision of the central government

Introduction

The chapter looks into the changing legislation regarding employment of foreign workers in general and foreign ELTs specifically, and argues that law contributes to the production of “class” and “illegality” of foreign ELTs in the Chinese context. The analysis of the chapter is situated against the backdrop of China’s *Exit Entry Administration Law (EEAL)* reform in 2012 and relevant employment regulation changes up to 2017. Looking at China’s legal framework regarding foreign employees from a labor-rights perspective, Ahl and Czoske (2020) have already pointed out that there has been little improvement regarding labor rights protection of foreign workers. I further argue that, as part of China’s immigration control, China’s employment legislation on foreign workers follows the politics of encouraging top-level global talents and restricting other groups of migrants. On the one hand, the Chinese government has introduced more preferential visa regulations to attract and retain “the best and the brightest” foreigners in the past few years (Zuo, 2016; Zhuang, 2019). On the other hand, foreigners who are considered middling and low-skilled migrants are facing stricter visa regulations. Seeing the *EEAL* and relevant law reform as linked to the production of discourses on “class” and “legality” of foreign workers, the chapter aims to trace the Chinese state’s changing legislation regarding the employment of foreign ELTs and how their class and legal statuses are produced through law.

Firstly, the chapter argues that, the Chinese state’s new hierarchical categorization of and differential policies on international workers on the basis of their socioeconomic status reflect the Chinese state’s preference for “elite” foreigners and restriction of “non-elite” foreigners. Secondly, applying the analytical concept of migration infrastructure (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014), the chapter argues that, in China’s latest migration regime, regulatory infrastructure (work visa and business license policies) and commercial infrastructure (recruitment intermediaries) are increasingly competing with each other and thus contribute to the production of “illegality.” Various researches have critically examined migrant “illegality” as

produced by immigration law and “illegal migrants” as a term constructed in the interest of nation-states within various broader politics such as nationalism and citizenship. Thus, the legal status of migrants is a fluid power field mutually constituted by the nation-state and the rule of law (Coutin, 1996; De Genova, 2002; Dauvergne, 2008).

Using the analytical concept of migration infrastructure and focusing on the regulatory and commercial infrastructures, the chapter examines the regulatory infrastructure (China’s latest work-permit system for foreign workers) and how foreign workers of different classes are treated differently in the Chinese bureaucratic system. While foreign ELTs face more regulatory restrictions in their work-permit applications than professionals of a higher class, they are also subject to the Chinese state’s effort in regulating the illegal employment of foreigners. The second part of the chapter discusses a clash between regulatory and commercial infrastructure by examining what is considered by the state as legal employment of foreigners, and how the commercial infrastructure has gained the upper hand and sustained its profit chain through illegal employment of foreign ELTs.

Background of China’s immigration policy reform

Global talent competition

Getting ahead in the global talent competition seems to be critical for China’s future economy. Given China’s transformation from an export-based to a service-based economy, as well as China’s demographic trend of a growing aging population, Pieke (2016, 134) predicted that “in the next thirty years, China is bound to become a major player and competitor in the global immigration market.” Wang Huiyao (2012), the director of the Center for China and Globalization, pointed out that since China has been suffering from a brain drain and there is not enough homegrown high-skilled labor, the Chinese government must develop a comprehensive policy to attract and retain international skilled workers. Wang observed, “in the past three decades, China focused on attracting foreign capital, and in the three decades ahead, it should shift to foreign talent (Zuo, 2016).”

In recent years, China has launched various reforms of its international immigration system to address its increasing foreign population in the country. While highly-educated Chinese who remain overseas after their study abroad have been the main target global talents the Chinese government aims to attract, the number of high-skilled international talent of non-Chinese ethnicity is also growing. Statistics from the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs

(SAFEA) show that, in 2016, 672,000 foreigners (person-times⁵³) were employed in China on government money, and another 240,000 were employed in China by private companies (Liu, 2018). Domestically, apart from launching reforms of its immigration law, relevant regulations, and administrative procedures, China has also set up the Immigration Bureau to enhance its administration of international migrants. Internationally, to better cooperate with other countries and improve its immigration-management practices, China has become a member of the International Organization for Migration (Huang & Yan, 2018).

Following the global neoliberal trend of immigration law development and entering the global talent competition, China's recent immigration law reform has shown its preference and openness toward high-skilled international migrants. A series of legislative and administrative changes were brought about in the past few years to make China a more institutionally friendly destination for high-skilled international migrants to apply for work visas. For example, the simplification and digitalization of visa application and residence registration procedures aim to make the Chinese bureaucratic system more user-friendly to facilitate the movement of international migrants. The points system introduced in 2017 categorizes foreign workers into three different categories and grants exemption on visa application supporting documents to top-level foreigners. More foreigner-oriented management and service centers are set up to help expats navigate the Chinese legal and social system in order to facilitate their stay in China. However, at present, the Chinese government's mentality toward its foreigners still very much remains on "making the foreign serve China" (Brady, 2003). Thus, its immigration policies are designed to accommodate, instead of integrating foreigners into China. Despite a series of immigration law reform in recent years, Chinese citizenship and permanent residence are not yet readily available as part of the policy China includes to attract international migrants, at least not the so-called middling and lower-level migrants. For middling migrants such as foreign ELTs, although it is legally possible to apply for Chinese citizenship and green cards, the criteria are highly selective and thus make it an almost infeasible option for most regular skilled foreigners.

⁵³ The statistics includes foreign personnel who were employed for than one job, and for this reason one person could be calculated for more than one time, thus person-times.

China's contradictory immigration policies

On the one hand, China's immigration policies aim to attract foreigners to work in China; on the other hand, the policies do not encourage foreigners who are not "the best and brightest" to stay. As Frank Pieke pointed out, "China's immigration policies are contradictory in that they prioritize attracting foreign talent to increase economic modernization, while reflecting a deep-rooted instinct to keep foreigners at arm's length" (2017 cited in Ives, 2017). The contradiction in China's immigration law stems from the two goals stated in the law: developing China's economy and safeguarding its national security, in other words, the contradiction between China's open-door policies and sovereignty concerns. Three factors shape China's sovereignty concerns. Firstly, China suffered political, military, and economic invasion from Western powers and Japan during the 19th century, so it is wary of foreign intrusion. Secondly, China is subject to criticisms from Western countries due to their differences in political systems and values. Thirdly, China is concerned over its territorial integrity regarding Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan, and is sensitive to any foreign intervention that may lead to the separation of these regions from China (Wu, 2004, p.59-60). However, to further its economic development, China needs to open its doors to foreign talent, which is perceived by the Chinese state as economically beneficial and politically threatening at the same time. Thus, China's ambivalent feelings toward foreign talent lead to the Chinese government's contradictory immigration policies.

As China adopts a pragmatic and realistic foreign policy in order to pursue its economic modernization and to continue to open up to the outside world (Zhao, 2004, p.8), its immigration policies follow the same principle. While concerns of sovereignty and attempts to protect the Chinese racial purity are the primary motivations for the Chinese government to restrict and control foreigners, the Chinese government also recognizes it needs foreign talent for its further economic development. As a result, China's immigration policies are intended to attract and accommodate foreign talent on a short-term basis and not encourage their long-term settlement. While various policy changes facilitate the stay of international migrants in China, the Chinese government only makes a marginal opening for foreigners to pursue Chinese green cards. In terms of visa policies, most foreign workers still have to go through an annual visa review to guarantee their next year of stay in China.

Theoretical framework

Migration infrastructure

Conceptualizing migration infrastructure as “systematically linked technologies, institutions and actors that facilitate and condition mobility,” Xiang and Lindquist (2014, p.122) stipulate that migration infrastructure can be considered in terms of five dimensions: the commercial (recruitment intermediaries), the regulatory (state policies and procedures for documentation), the technological (communication and transport), the humanitarian (NGOs and international organizations), and the social (migrant networks). Xiang and Lindquist (2014, p.124) emphasize that the key to understanding migration infrastructure is that the above “five dimensions collide with and contradict each other”, making the migration process easier, but more complicated.

The chapter highlights the technological, regulatory, and commercial aspects of migration infrastructure and understands how they work and interfere with each other to produce a more convenient migration pathway yet a more controlled social environment for foreign ELTs in China. While the digitalization of visa and work-permit applications, together with policy reform, have reduced bureaucratic procedures and made applications more straightforward for migrants, the incorporation of technology and a stratified policy in immigration control have also enhanced the state’s capacity to control migrants. For example, the technology that collects and stores biological identification information has been adopted as part of the Chinese border control measures since 2017, starting with Shenzhen (Leng, 2017a).

Commercial infrastructure (recruitment agencies) in the EFL market facilitates the migration process of foreign ELTs by helping them with finding jobs and accommodation. However, China’s increasingly enhanced and restrictive regulatory infrastructure has clashed with the EFL commercial infrastructure and leads to illegal employment of foreign ELTs. Recruitment agencies are an important part of the EFL profit chain in China and serve to bridge foreign workers and employers (teaching centers and private schools) in order to provide English language-education services to Chinese students of the English language. Although some of the recruitment agencies are licensed and offer work visas to eligible foreign ELTs for licensed employers, a significant number of recruitment agencies are operating in the legally grey area without proper licenses, and hiring ineligible foreign ELTs for unlicensed employers.

1. The changing legal framework

While boundaries between classes are usually not precisely defined in most societies, a foreign worker's class position in China is clearly marked on their work visas, according to their scores in a point system based on a foreigner's income level, educational/professional qualification, work experience, Chinese language proficiency, age, etc.⁵⁴ This section traces and compares the Chinese state's changing legislation regarding employment of international migrants of different classes. The section also argues that while preferential treatments are given to foreign workers of a higher class, foreign ELTs, as foreign workers of a relatively lower class, face more bureaucratic obstacles.

1.1. New work-permit system and the ABC foreigner categories

This section introduces China's new work-permit system, in which foreign workers are ranked as A, B, or C- class foreigners, and illustrates how the concept of "class" functions ideologically to naturalize and justify preferential treatments of A-class foreigners and more restricted regulations on B and C- class foreigners. While "class" usually refers to social class, which is often associated with occupational status in a sociological sense, the Chinese uses it to indicate a foreign worker's position in the labor market. Based on a foreign worker's perceived economic value to Chinese society, policymakers justify why some foreigners are more deserving than others.

Since 2017, the Chinese government has introduced a new work-permit system nationwide. The new system integrates the previous work permits, the "Alien Employment Permit" and "Foreign Expert Certificate," into a single work permit named "Foreigner's Work Permit" (see illustration 29), which is based on a three-tiered classification system. The new system divides foreign workers into three categories, namely, A-class foreigners (top foreign talents⁵⁵), B-class foreigners (foreign professionals⁵⁶), and C-class foreigners (ordinary foreign personnel⁵⁷) (Bhattacharjya, 2016). While A-class foreigners include top global talents with outstanding academic qualifications, desired fields of expertise, internationally recognized achievements, and other qualifications deemed desirable by the Chinese state, C-class foreigners are mainly

⁵⁴ Detailed definitions for the categorization of international workers in China are listed in the *Classification criteria of foreign workers in China (for trial implementation)* (SAFEA, 2017b)

⁵⁵ 外国高端人才

⁵⁶ 外国专业人才

⁵⁷ 外国普通人员

seasonal workers and foreigners who work in China on a quota-based internship or in work programs. Foreign ELTs are categorized as B-class foreigners who are considered as professionals (SAFEA, 2017b).⁵⁸

The new system of foreigner management follows the principles of “encouraging the top, controlling the middle, and limiting the bottom.”⁵⁹ There is no limit set on the age, work experiences, and quota of A-class foreigners. B-class foreigners should be under 60 years old, with at least a bachelor’s degree and relevant work experience. The quota for foreigners of the B category is subject to the market demand. C-class foreigners refer to foreigners who work on temporary, seasonal, non-skilled, or service industry jobs, and the quota for foreign workers in this category is restricted (SAFEA, 2017a). While the validity of the work visa/residence permit of “top-level” foreigners can be up to 5 years (Ministry of Public Security, 2013, Art. 11, 16), the visa validity for non-elite foreigners such as foreign ELTs is only one year.



Illustration 29: a sample of the Foreigner’s Work Permit with “Category” indicated on the top right corner (source: State Administration of Foreign Expert Affairs)

⁵⁸ Detailed definitions for the categorization of international workers in China are listed in the *Classification criteria of foreign workers in China (for trial implementation)* (SAFEA, 2017b).

⁵⁹ 鼓励高端，控制一般，限制低端

1.2. Work- permit application procedures

As B-class foreigners, foreign ELTs have to go through more application procedures for their work permits than A-class foreigners. The new system simplifies the application and approval procedure of foreign workers' work permits. Technology plays an important part in the new work permit system. While the old system documented foreigners' information on paper, the new work permit system digitalizes foreign workers' ID numbers and photos. The integration of "Alien Employment Permit" and "Foreign Expert Certificate" into one single "Foreigner's Work Permit" is said to have cut out most old procedures and thus make the application process more effective (Gu, 2016). Moreover, the new work permit application system is especially made more convenient for A-Class foreigners. As A-class foreign workers not only go through a more simplified application procedure, but their applications are also handled in half as much time as the applications of other categories of foreign workers (see illustration 30).

Under China's new work-permit system for foreigners, to get a Chinese work permit, a foreigner needs to be employed by an institution in China that is licensed to hire foreign workers. Firstly, employers need to set up an online account before applying for a "Work Permit Notice" for their employees. After getting the "Work Permit Notice," a foreigner can then can apply for a work visa (Z visa or R visa) at the Chinese embassy in his/her country of residence and obtain his/her work visa before entering China. While Z visa has referred to a work visa in the old and new visa system, R visa is a new visa category that refers to a talent visa for "high-skilled" foreigners who are urgently needed for the development of Chinese society (Liu, 2014). Considered as "super talent," R visa holders enjoy various preferential treatments such as a simplified visa application route and more chances to be granted permanent residency in China.

After entering China with a work visa, a foreign employee needs to apply for a "Foreigner's Work Permit" at the local Human Resources and Social Security Bureau⁶⁰ within 15 days following his/her entry date. After being granted the work permit, a foreigner can then apply for a residence permit at a local public security station. Below are two flowcharts illustrating 1) application procedures for a Foreigners' Work Permit before a foreign employee enters China (illustration 30); and 2) application procedures for a Foreigner's Work Permit after a foreign employee enters China with a notification for the approval of Foreigner's Work Permit (illustration 31).

⁶⁰ 人力资源和社会保障局

Foreigner's Work Permit Notice (more than 90 days)

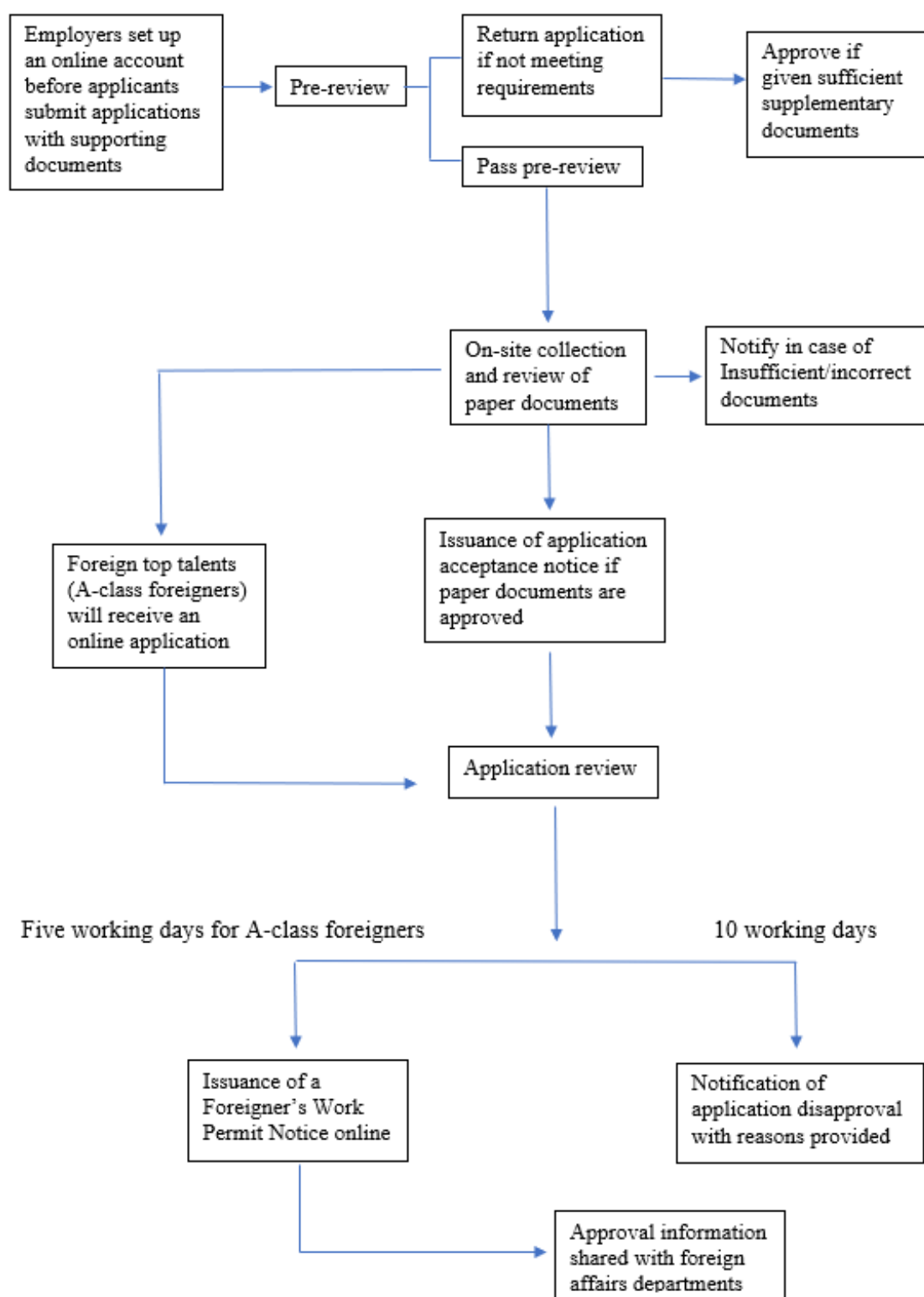


Illustration 30: a flowchart of application procedures for a Foreigners' Work Permit before entering China.
Source: Service Guide to the Foreigner's Work Permit in China (for trial implementation), issued by the SAFEA (2017a) in Chinese, translated to English by the author

Foreigner's Work Permit (more than 90 days)

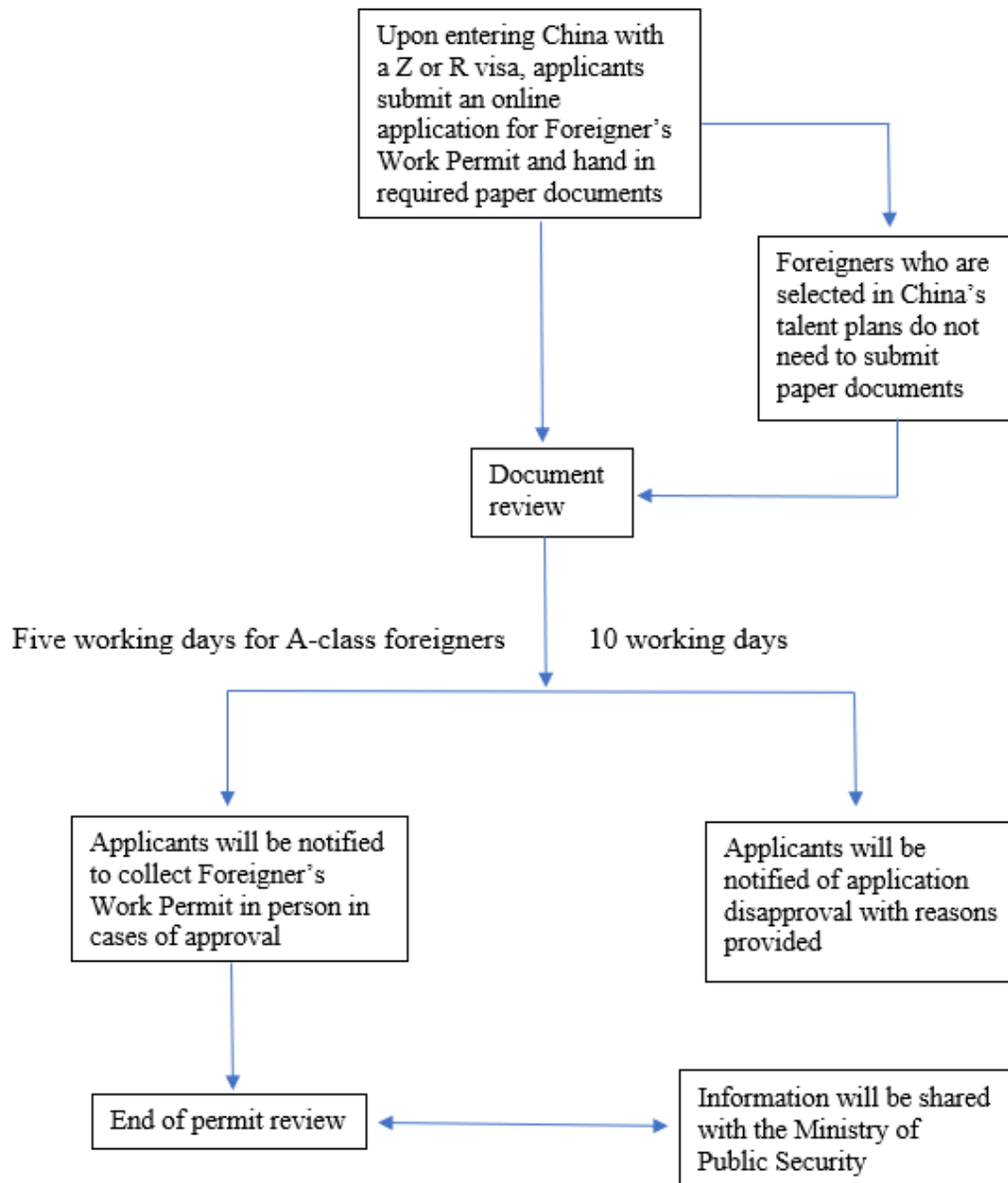


Illustration 31: A flowchart of application procedures for a Foreigner's Work Permit after entering China. Source: Service Guide to the Foreigner's Work Permit in China (for trial implementation), issued by the SAFEA (2017a) in Chinese, translated to English by the author

One of the main focuses of China's *EEAL* (2012) reform was to establish a more unified data-sharing platform on the administration of foreigners in China among different government departments (Mao & Bai, 2012). China's new work-permit system has simplified the work-permit application procedures involved by eliminating the application of "Foreign Expert

Certificate.” Digitalization of the work permit application also allows more efficient data sharing between the Ministry of the Public Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which are the two central government departments involved in the administration of foreigners in China.

1.3. Application documents for Foreigner’s Work Permit Notice and Work Permit

As B-class foreigners, foreign ELTs are required to submit more application documents for the application of their work permits than A-class foreigners. Under China’s new work-permit system, although the application procedures are simplified and digitalized, foreigners are asked to submit more application documents in general. Before entering China, individual foreigners need to apply for the Foreigner’s Work Permit Notice and submit the following documents required for the application.

- 1) Application form for Foreigner’s Work Permit Notice
- 2) Employment certificates from previous jobs and contact details of past employers
- 3) Education certificates from highest education degree obtained (notarized by the Chinese authority)
- 4) Non-criminal record issued by the police authority in applicant’s country of origin / country of regular residence (notarizing by the Chinese authority) and fingerprints
- 5) Medical certificate (can be submitted after entering China if applicants choose to do a medical examination in an authorized hospital in China)
- 6) Employment contract translated in Chinese
- 7) Passport or documents for international travels
- 8) Passport photo (SAFEA, 2017a)
- 9) Family members’ passport copy and other relevant documents (if applicable)

(SAFEA, 2017a)

The developments of adding criminal records and fingerprints as part of the needed documents for visa application in China are consistent with immigration control practices in most developed countries, which are modeled after the US immigration system since the 11 September 2001 attacks. The US government started to collect and store biometric information of foreigners entering the US in order to prevent potential terrorists and criminals from entering the country (Chung, 2010). However, in China, there is one particular group of foreigners that are exempted from submitting non-criminal records, and they are the “A-class” foreigners. In order to attract more top-level talents to work in China, A-class foreigners are also exempted

from submitting documents 2 and 3 (see above) and are only asked to prove their work experience, educational qualifications, and non-criminal record by gentleman's agreement. On the other hand, B and C- class foreigners have to go through a more complicated application process, wait for a longer time for the decision on their applications, and submit more official documents that are to be notarized by the Chinese authority.

Although there is no guarantee that an individual of higher socio-economic status does not have a criminal record, the Chinese government gives a vote of confidence to such a group of foreigners. Preferential treatments are intended to make China a more attractive place for "high-skilled" foreigners. However, this turning-a-blind-eye attitude can be interpreted as the Chinese government's desperate move to win "high-skilled" migrants. The exemption of non-criminal records made for A-class foreigners shows that class superiority, either by having abundant financial capital or world-renowned qualifications, can override rules and regulations. Assuming "high-skilled" migrants will have a more significant impact on the Chinese economic development than other groups of migrants, "high-skilled" migrants are treated as innocent rather than as suspects in the eyes of the law.

1.4. Visa restriction

Foreign ELTs have to go through more procedures, wait for a longer time, and submit more documents for the application of their work permits. Moreover, the criteria a foreigner has to meet to be eligible for the application of a work visa as an English language teacher have also increased. According to Article seven of the *Provisions on the Employment of Foreigners in China (issued in 1996 and revised in 2017)*, foreigners need to meet the following five basic requirements before being employed in China.

- 1) have attained the age of 18 and be in good health;
- 2) have specialized skills and work experience required by the job;
- 3) have no criminal record;
- 4) have a designated employer; and
- 5) have a valid passport or another international travel certificate which can substitute for a passport

(Ministry of Human Resources & Social Security et al., 2016)

Since 2014: Bachelor's degree holders with two years' teaching experience

Apart from meeting the above basic requirements, additional requirements are added for foreigners who want to apply for a work visa as English teachers in the past few years. The flowchart below illustrates the qualification requirements for foreign ELTs after 2014 and before 2017. For teachers who are native English speakers, they need to have an educational degree to teach. If they have a non-educational bachelor's degree, they need to have a teaching certificate or at least two years of teaching experience to be qualified to teach. For foreigners who are not native English speakers, if they have a degree from a native English-speaking country, they would also be qualified for a foreign ELT work visa if they fulfill the requirements on teaching certificate or teaching experience. Below is a flowchart (illustration 32) showing the qualification requirements for foreign ELTs after 2014 and before 2017.

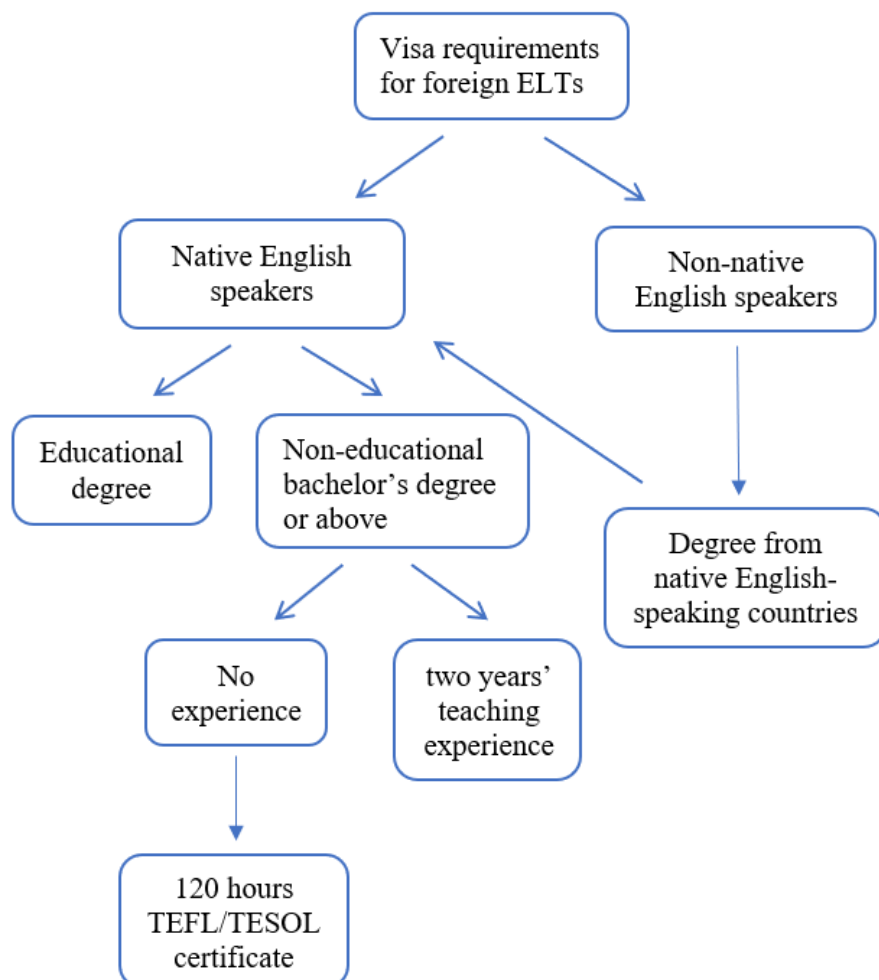


Illustration 32: A flowchart showing visa requirements for foreign ELTs between 2014 to 2017.

Source: produced by the author after asking various foreign ELTs what was required from them for the application of a foreign ELT work visa.

Since 2017: Native English speakers only

Since 2017, a new policy regarding the employment of foreign ELTs has regulated that only native English speakers are qualified to teach English in China. It is specified that foreign language teachers should be native speakers of the language they teach, hold at least a bachelor's degree, and have at least two years of language teaching experience. The Chinese government determines if a foreigner is a native English speaker based on his/her nationality. Only foreigners from the six following countries are considered native English speakers: the US, Canada, Ireland, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, although holding the passport of a particular country does not guarantee that the passport holder speaks the language of the country as his/her mother tongue. In terms of work experience, those who 1) have a degree in education, language, and pedagogical degrees; 2) are certified teachers in their country of origin; and 3) have obtained international language teaching certificates (in the case of the English language, TESOL, TEFL, TESL certificates are some of the most recognized ones) are exempted from the requirement for working experience (SAFEA, 2017b).

Although some think foreign ELTs should be hired based on one's teaching skills, instead of the country of origin (Sewell, 2017), imposing the "native English speaker" requirement may be the most straightforward way to respond to existing consumer complaints about foreign ELTs. From the Chinese government's view, regulating foreign ELTs would respond to Chinese parents' dissatisfaction with foreign ELTs who are not non-native English-speaking teachers (Liu, 2015) and improve the quality of foreign ELTs in China (Chen, 2017b). An official from the SAFEA said that the authority raised the bar of the requirement for foreign ELTs for the purpose of improving the quality of foreign teachers in the English teaching industry (Zhang, 2016).

It is not uncommon for foreigners who are non-native English speakers to work as foreign ELTs, so the new regulation regarding the "nativeness" of one's English is a concern in the ELT community. Although foreigners who had already held work visas as foreign ELTs can still be granted work visas by renewing their visas, newcomers will have to meet the "native speaker" requirement to be granted a foreign ELT visa. Under the new regulation, given the high market demand for foreign ELTs, foreigners from non-native English-speaking countries are still hired. However, not holding a passport from a native-English-speaking country might mean one has to go through more hassle (for example, applying for a visa as a translator while working as a teacher) to get a work visa if one does not want to engage in illegal employment.

Employers of a small business often rely on the help of visa agencies to apply for their employees' work visas.

1.5. Visa approval/refusal

Before entering China, foreigners need to apply for a work visa (Z visa). However, there is no guarantee that one's work visa application will be approved even if one submits all the required documents, as visa officers have the power to refuse a visa application based on his/her personal opinions. As stated in Article 21 of the *EEAL (2012)*, a "visa shall not be issued to foreigners" who "may endanger China's national security or interests, or disrupt social and public order, or engage in other illegal or criminal activities." The grounds upon visa officers determine if a foreigner is a potential threat to the Chinese national security and public order is unknown. Moreover, the law states that visa officers can refuse a visa application under "circumstances in which visa authorities consider a visa should not be issued." However, the circumstances are also unspecified, and "the visa-issuing authorities are not required to give reasons for refusing the issuance of a visa (SCNPC, 2012)."

Work visas for foreign ELTs are only valid for one year. After being granted a work permit, foreign ELTs have to meet visa officers annually to renew their work permits if they continue to work in China. Again, there is no guarantee that just because one was already working in China, his/her work visa would be extended. As different factors such as market demand, changing regulations, bilateral relationships, domestic political atmosphere, and even personal biases/prejudices all come into play when a visa decision is made. The relatively short work visa validity for foreign ELTs reflects the Chinese state's focus on short-term selection and admission of foreigners on the basis of their skills. It seems the Chinese government has little intention of incorporating foreigners into Chinese society in the long run (Ahl & Czoske, 2018). As one government official says, the purpose of the new policy is nothing more than to improve the management of and service for foreign talents (*Shenzhen Daily*, 2016).

2. Legal and illegal employment

Apart from attracting more "desirable" foreigners and restricting "undesirable" ones, the latest *EEAL (2012)* also emphasizes on eliminating "*sanfei*" foreigners, which refer to foreigners who enter, reside, and work in China illegally (*People's Daily Overseas Edition*, 2012; Haugen,

2015). It is perceived that, while foreign businessmen, middle-class professionals, and tourists have contributed to China's socio-economic development, “*sanfei*” foreigners have become a potential problem for the Chinese public security (Liu, 2014).

Foreign ELTs are more often associated with “*sanfei*” foreigners than foreign professionals of other occupations because of illegal employment. In fact, foreign ELTs are often part of the targets of the Chinese government's “anti-*sanfei*” campaigns because of unlawful employment. As stated in a government report, foreign language education is one of the fields in which illegal work was concentrated (State Council of the PRC, 2012). In the Chinese media, various terms such as “*hei waijiao*”⁶¹ (Hu, 2019) and “*shanzhai waijiao*”⁶² (Huang & Cai, 2017) are often used to refer to foreign ELTs who engage in illegal employment.

In order to tackle the issue of “*sanfei*” foreigners, the *EEAL (2012)* for the first time addresses illegal employment of foreigners by clearly defining what is considered as “illegally working in China” and by imposing more severe punishment on foreigners who engage in illegal employment in China (Ding & Koslowski, 2017). Moreover, recruitment agencies and employers are also held accountable for the employment of “illegal” foreigners. This section illustrates the role different parties play in constituting legal and illegal employment.

2.1. Defining legal employment and specifying legal liabilities

Defining legal and illegal employment, article 41 of the *EEAL (2012)* states that “foreigners who work in China shall obtain work permits and work-type residence permits in accordance with relevant regulations. No entities or individuals shall employ foreigners who have no work permits or work-type residence permits.” Article 43 of the *EEAL (2012)* states “any of the following acts of foreigners shall be deemed unlawful employment: 1) work in China without obtaining work permits or work-type residence permits in accordance with relevant regulations; 2) work in China beyond the scope prescribed in the work permits; or 3) foreign students working in violation of the regulations on the administration of foreign students working to support their study in China and work beyond the prescribed scope of jobs or prescribed time limit (SCNPC, 2013)”.

Legal liabilities of all parties (employers, job agencies, and employees) involved in illegal employment are specified in the *EEAL (2012)*. Article 80 under the chapter of “Legal Liabilities”

⁶¹ “*Hei waijiao*” (黑外教) refers to foreigners who work as teachers on the black market.

⁶² “*Shanzhai waijiao*” (山寨外教) refers to foreign teachers who are not qualified.

states that, “individuals and entities that illegally employ foreigners,” “persons who introduce jobs to ineligible foreigners,” and “foreigners who work in China illegally” are all responsible for any illegal employment of foreigners (SCNPC, 2013). The Article also specifies legal consequences for each party that violates the laws. For employers, regardless of individuals or entities, not only shall their gains from employing foreigners be confiscated, but they can also be fined up to 100,000 RMB (14,000 USD), with 10,000 RMB (1,400 USD)’s fine for each foreigner employed. As for middlemen, individuals who introduce jobs to foreigners can be fined up to 50,000 RMB (7,000 USD), with a fine of 5,000 RMB (700 USD) for each job introduced to a foreigner. For entities that act as middlemen/recruitment agencies, they can be fined up to 100,000 RMB (14,000 USD), with a fine of 5,000 RMB for each job introduced to a foreigner. For both individual brokers and recruitment companies, their gains from facilitating illegal employment shall be confiscated.

However, in the case of illegal employment, foreigners face more severe legal consequences than employers and job agencies who hire them, as possible legal consequences include fines, detention, and deportation. Foreigners can be fined from 5,000 RMB (1,400 USD) to 20,000 RMB (2,800 USD), and also detained from five to fifteen days in circumstances that are more serious. The most severe consequence a foreigner can face in cases of illegal employment is to be ordered to leave China or to be deported. As detailed in Article 81 of the *Exit-Entry Administration Law*:

Where foreigners engage in activities not corresponding to the purposes of stay or residence, or otherwise violate the laws or regulations of China, which makes them no longer eligible to stay or reside in China, they may be ordered to exit China within a time limit.

Where a foreigner's violation of this Law is serious but does not constitute a crime, the Ministry of Public Security may deport them. The penalty decision made by the Ministry of Public Security shall be final.

Deported foreigners shall not be allowed to enter China within 10 years, calculating from the date of deportation (SCNPC, 2013).

Legal regulations on employers and job agencies in the EFL industry

The existing law puts the spotlight on foreigners in cases of illegal employment, and employers and middlemen are only violating the law because of hiring “illegal” foreigners. However, sometimes, foreign ELTs only become “illegal” because their employers and recruitment

agencies do not have licenses for hiring foreigners. To constitute legal employment, employers and employees, and middlemen (if involved), should be qualified. Without having the license to employ foreigners, employers violate the law by hiring foreign ELTs, either through direct employment or through a recruitment agency. Job agencies should also be licensed to recruit foreigners, and the foreigners they hire should meet the latest visa requirements for foreign ELTs in China. As for foreign ELTs, not only should they work on work visas, but they should also work solely for the employer specified on their visas.

Although the *EEAL (2012)* does not mention that employers in China need to have a license to hire foreigners, it is stated in other legal provisions. Nationwide, the employment of foreign ELTs is regulated by the *Circular on Issuing the Provisions Governing the Employment of Foreign Professionals by Schools and Other Educational Institutions (1996)* (学校及其他教育机构聘请外籍专业人员管理办法), which states that the administration of foreign ELTs is to be included as part of the administration of foreign cultural and educational experts (Article 4, State Bureau of Foreign Experts Affairs & State Education Commission, 1996). Schools and other education institutions must hold an approval certificate⁶³ for hiring foreigners before hiring foreign teachers. To obtain the certificate, schools and education institutions must fulfill a list of criteria set out by national and regional regulations regarding the employment of foreign experts in the education sector⁶⁴.

In Shenzhen, according to the *Regulations on The Employment of Foreign Experts in Non-higher Education Institutions in the Guangdong Province (2009)* (广东省中等以下教育机构聘请外国专家单位资格认可办理规定), a non-higher education institution must meet the following conditions to be qualified as a licensed organization to employ foreign experts. It is further stated that newly established schools and other education/training institutions⁶⁵ must be in operation for more than one year before applying for qualification approval, given that

⁶³ 《聘请外国文教专家单位资格认可证书》 (*Approved Institution Certificate on Employment of Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts*)

⁶⁴ Some of the national regulations include 《聘请外国文教专家单位资格认可办法》 (1993) (*Qualification approval measures on the employment of foreign cultural and educational experts*); 《外国文教专家聘用合同管理办法》 (2008) (*Administration Measures on the Employment Contracts of Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts*); 《外国文教专家工资和生活待遇管理办法》 (1996) (*Measures for the Administration of Wages and Living Treatments for Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts*)

⁶⁵ Formally established joint-venture schools and schools for children of foreign personnel are not within the scope of this regulation.

teachers, students, and school management are in a stable condition (HRSSB of Shenzhen, 2015).

- 1) qualification of an independent legal person,
- 2) qualification approval on setting up schools or training centers
- 3) a department specialized on the management and service of foreign experts with well-trained staff who are familiar with legal knowledge regarding the employment, exit, entry, residence, and administration of foreign experts
- 4) sound policy on the administration of foreign experts and foreign affairs
- 5) equipped with the working conditions, everyday facilities and safety equipment needed for the employment of foreign experts
- 6) financial capital required for the employment of foreign experts

To legally establish businesses as recruitment agencies for foreign workers in China, recruitment agencies need to be approved by a relevant authority and registered under the national and local State Administration for Industry and Commerce. The registration and operation of recruitment agencies must comply with Chinese regulations on the administration of recruitment agencies of foreign experts in general as well as measures on the administration of foreign experts in the cultural and educational sectors.

In 1993, the SAFEA first issued *Interim Measures on the Administration of Overseas Organizations and Domestic Agencies on the Introduction of Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts to China*⁶⁶ (关于对介绍外国文教专家来华工作的境外组织和境内中介机构管理的暂行办法) and regulated that recruitment agencies must obtain a qualification approval certificate from the SAFEA before engaging in the recruitment of foreigners (SAFEA, 1993). According to *Comments on the Further Regulations on the Recruitment of Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts*⁶⁷ (关于进一步规范外国文教专家聘请活动的意见) further regulated that licensed job agencies must only introduce qualified foreign experts to institutions that are licensed to hire foreigners (SAFEA, 2010). Agencies must sign a three-party agreement with foreign cultural and educational experts as well as the institutions these experts are sent to, as agencies and receiving institutions share responsibilities in administering the hired foreign experts. Agencies should not introduce unqualified foreigners to work as

⁶⁶ Translated by author from Chinese.

⁶⁷ Translated by author from Chinese

foreign cultural and educational experts, nor should agencies forge, sell or use counterfeit work permit work visas and approval certificates for the employment of foreign experts.

2.2. Law changes and illegal employment

Despite a clearer definition of illegal employment of foreigners and heavier penalties for law violations, illegal employment in the EFL market continues to persist, as the number of employers that are qualified to hire foreigners and the number of foreigners who are eligible to apply for an English teacher work visa are both far below the market demand (Wu, He & Yang, 2013; Wang, 2015). As a result, given the strong market demand and relatively mild legal consequences of law violation, a series of visa restrictions on foreign ELTs in the past few years has only turned originally “legal” teachers into “illegal” teachers. Thus, instead of eliminating “illegality,” the change of regulations produces more “illegality” (Dauvergne, 2008; 2014).

A conflict between regulatory infrastructure and commercial infrastructure has made the issue of “illegality” more pronounced in the EFL market in China. The following section seeks to understand how different actors sustain Shenzhen’s underground EFL market despite the Chinese government’s aim of curbing illegal employment. Through empirical studies, the section shows that law cannot always be fully enforced in reality because what happens on the ground is shaped by different regulatory forces. In the case of the illegal employment of foreign ELTs, one dominant regulatory force is the market demand for foreign ELTs in China and the incentive of different interest parties involved in the EFL industry, namely, foreign ELTs, employers, and recruitment agencies.

2.2.1. Foreign ELTs

It is estimated that more than half of foreign ELTs were engaged in illegal employment in Shenzhen (Zheng, 2013). Since the introduction of the “native speaker only” regulation in 2017, the shortage of qualified foreign ELTs has become even more intensified. As the new legislation has turned many originally qualified foreign ELTs who were non-native English speakers into disqualified teachers. While some such teachers decide to leave China when they fail to get a work visa, others choose to remain and work “under the radar”. Despite not being eligible to apply for a work visa, it is still easy for non-native English-speaking foreigners to get jobs because of the high demand for foreign ELTs in the EFL market.

Foreign ELTs engaged in illegal employment typically work in teaching centers and local schools/nurseries on a part-time basis, and they are usually hired through recruitment agencies. When working through a recruitment agency, teachers only need to go to the schools when they have to deliver a class. Some teachers enjoy such work arrangements, as they usually only need to teach 10 hours a week, and they could manage the rest of their time as they wish. While some use the time to take up more part-time teaching jobs, others use the time to develop businesses or hobbies. Some teachers consciously choose to work part-time, so they can have more control over their time and engage in other activities. Although these teachers are not protected by any work contracts, as their employment is illegal to begin with, some of them are able to see the bright side of the non-contract arrangement: There is no commitment, and they have the freedom to leave their jobs anytime.

Foreign ELTs who have work visas but take up jobs from an employer that is not specified on their work visas are also considered to be working “illegally”, according to the *EEAL (2012)*. It is not uncommon for foreign ELTs to have multiple teaching jobs because of high market demand and the ease of finding EFL jobs. It is a popular strategy for qualified visa applicants to first find a main employer, who provides them with work visas, accommodation, and flight tickets before they take on other part-time jobs to increase their income. With the legal legitimacy and stable salary their main employers provide, foreigners can be more at ease to look for extra jobs through their social network. Their side jobs usually bring more income than their main jobs because they do not need to pay tax for their side jobs.

Working on a tourist/business visa

In the EFL industry, working on a tourist/business visa is popular among foreigners who could easily get tourist/business visas to enter China. In Shenzhen, it used to be popular for foreigners from Russia, Ukraine, the Philippines, India, and some Western and African countries to teach English in China on tourist/business visas before China restricted its issuance of visas. Some informants working in the EFL underground market reported that, while a lot of teachers had left China because of visa restrictions, more Serbians are coming to China to take up English teaching jobs in Shenzhen since 2017 because of the latest visa-free arrangement between Serbia and China. In 2017, Serbia and China mutually abolished the requirement to obtain an entry visa for its citizens, and this makes China an easy and popular destination for Serbians to work as foreign ELTs on a tourist or business visa.

Staying and working on a tourist/business visa in China is especially popular for US Americans because of the ease with which US Americans can attain Chinese tourist/business visas. In 2014, the US government and the Chinese government reached a ten-year visa agreement. While Chinese citizens can get multi-entry tourist/business visas that are valid for ten years to enter the US, US American citizens can enjoy the same treatment when entering China. During my fieldwork, some US American teachers who were working on tourist or business visas expressed that they were particularly happy about this Sino-US bilateral agreement, as that meant they would not have to return to the US to apply for a new visa as often. It would also cost them less money and time in applying for visas.

Visa runs

A common practice for foreigners who reside and work in China on tourist and business visas is that they have to do “visa runs” regularly to extend their legal stay in China. For visa-run purposes, Shenzhen is considered a convenient place for many foreigners as it borders Hong Kong. Foreigners who hold a tourist or business visa could exit China at a border checkpoint to enter Hong Kong and then re-enter Shenzhen with a new visa on the same day. One Ukrainian woman, Sarah, who used to teach English in Hangzhou, moved to Shenzhen for the ease of visa runs. She shared with me her memory of Hangzhou with a smile on her face.

I feel happier and more at home in Hangzhou because of the city and the people. There is more nature there, and the pace of life is slower. People are more friendly there. I like the way of life there. Near Xi Hu (the West Lake), in the morning, you see old men playing Chinese musical instruments or doing calligraphy on the ground with huge brush and water... but flying from Hangzhou to Hong Kong to renew my visa is expensive, I couldn't save up, so I moved to Shenzhen.

(Sarah, White, Ukrainian, female, 24-year-old)⁶⁸

Although Sarah enjoyed living in Hangzhou more, she still chose to move to Shenzhen for the convenience and low cost of visa renewals. She said when she was working in Hangzhou, she had to take a two-hour flight to go to Hong Kong every month and get her visa renewed. However, she could not save much money after paying for the flight and her accommodation in Hong Kong every month, so she decided to move to Shenzhen a year after flying back and forth between Hangzhou and Hong Kong.

⁶⁸ My interview with Sarah was conducted on 20 September 2016 in a Starbucks cafe in the Coco Park shopping complex in the Futian District of Shenzhen.

Working on a student visa

The phenomenon of foreigners teaching English on a student visa is common among two types of international: the actual international students and the pragmatic international students. While exchange/international students are studying in China for their degrees, some foreigners enroll in university courses, usually Chinese language courses, to stay in China on a student visa and find business opportunities.

According to relevant regulations on the administration of exchange/international students in China, international students are only allowed to engage in internships or jobs that are approved by the Chinese universities that host them. Also, international students are only allowed to work for limited hours each week. However, because of the ease of finding English teaching jobs and the fact that it is “good money” to teach English in China, it is common for foreign students to work in language teaching centers or take up private tutoring jobs.

Some foreigners obtain student visas by enrolling in Chinese language courses, while getting involved in small trading business and teaching English at the same time. The strategy of entering China with a student visa is particularly popular for nationals from countries on which the Chinese government imposes strict visa restrictions, because of national security concerns or worsening bilateral relationships. Since it is getting difficult for nationals from these countries to gain tourist or business visas to enter China, enrolling in Chinese language courses and entering China on student visas has become a means to work around the Chinese visa restrictions.

Working for more than one employer

Various laws and regulations state that a foreign worker can only work for one specific employer in a specified area in China. The purpose of tying a foreigner to a specific employer is for the state’s easier control and surveillance of the foreigner. However, in the EFL industry, it is a common practice for foreign ELTs, with or without work visas, to work for more than one employer. A teacher who worked in a local Chinese school told me that he worked for the local school because it provided him with a work visa and free accommodation. However, since the salary was not very high, after finishing his work in the school during the day, he worked in various teaching centers in the evening and during weekends to bring in more income. Private tutoring is also popular among foreign ELTs because it is highly profitable. For example, the tutoring fees for tutoring a child range from an hourly rate of RMB 250 (USD 35

/ Euro 32) to RMB 500 (USD 70 / EUR 63). Because these part-time jobs are paid under the table, foreign ELTs can keep all the salary and do not have to pay tax.

2.2.2. Employers

Most small teaching centers often do not have the licenses to hire foreigners, or they hire part-time teachers on purpose in order to save money. The recruitment requirements for foreign ELTs in less regulated teaching centers differ. While some require “native English speakers with a BA degree only,” some would settle for “Europeans” (or explicitly stating “White”), and some would hire anyone as long as they look foreign. Teachers who work for these teaching centers are considered “backpack teachers” and often work on a part-time basis, although in fact they might have stayed in China for years and worked on a part-time basis. These teaching centers usually only require their teachers to show up in the centers when they are booked for classes. These teachers are paid on an hourly basis without any extra employment benefits.

In 2014, the number of education and business institutions that are qualified to employ foreign ELTs in Shenzhen was only 336 (Shenzhen Administration of Foreign Expert Affairs, 2015). The majority of these qualified employers were public nurseries and schools that only hired one or two foreign English teacher(s) to teach a few spoken English classes per week. Thus, numerous private English training centers, nurseries, and schools that were not on the list of “registered institutions qualified of hiring foreign experts in the cultural and education category” in Shenzhen were dubiously hiring foreigners to teach English. Despite not having the licenses to hire foreigners, many teaching centers, schools, and nurseries employ foreigners to teach English anyway in order to boost their profit, as the profit a school/teaching center can make by hiring a foreigner far surpasses the fines of being caught. Also, the chance of being caught can be minimized or even eliminated by bribing relevant authorities.

Although it is widely believed that foreigners from native English-speaking countries would make the ideal foreign ELT in China, some employers with smaller businesses prefer to hire non-native English speakers more cheaply. With such employers, since their ultimate concern is to lower the cost, they cannot care less about “legality” nor “quality,” as long as teachers look foreign and charge reasonably cheaply. Commenting on why most employers would hire anyone who looks foreign, a foreign ELT summarized the motive: employers try to hire as many foreigners with as little money as possible to maximize their profit.

... it'll be more about good face than it will be about good reputation. In order to get a lot of teachers in some of the lower education here in China, you are hiring people who are a bit questionable in their education standard and even a bit questionable in their personality or their level of sophistication. So you might have someone who's basically not a very good teacher. And so if you have that and then you have the pressure from all these families with kids who say we want our students to get the right education and go to the big schools. Alright. Well, you're going to try to get as many teachers as you can for as much money as you have, especially when you can cut some corners. If the manager of the school has a choice, they can hire this teacher whose level is not so good for some cheap amount of money, or a teacher who's excellent for this amount of money. The parents aren't necessarily going to know that or know the difference, so most of them (managers of schools) are going to take this choice and say "why am I going to spend money or work on the qualifications of some high-level teachers when I can have someone whom the parents will never know the difference." And they will never know what their children are really getting in terms of education.

(Felix, US American, White, male, 36-year-old)⁶⁹

While teaching centers often employ foreign teachers by themselves directly, local schools and nurseries usually hire their teacher(s) through recruitment agencies. They are not involved in any direct employment with foreign teachers. As a result, they often know nothing about the qualifications of the foreign ELTs they hire. Local schools and nurseries prefer to recruit foreign ELTs through recruitment agencies for many reasons. Firstly, most Chinese schools do not know where they should advertise to find qualified foreign ELTs. Secondly, they might not have the recruitment staff who are able to interview and a job applicant and make a sound judgment. Thirdly, complicated visa and work permit application procedures for foreign employees can hold local schools back from recruiting their own foreign ELTs. Since most public schools only need one foreign ELT to come to their schools to teach a few spoken English classes per week, they would rather hire a foreign ELT through a recruitment agency than go through the hassle of hiring by themselves. Some unqualified entities hire foreigners through recruitment agencies not only as a way to save the hassle of recruiting employees but also, more importantly, to get around legal restrictions through such forms of indirect employment of foreigners.

⁶⁹ My interview with Felix was conducted in a café in the Nanshan district on 13 June 2016.

2.2.3. Recruitment agencies

While there are certified recruitment agencies that work as middlemen to match foreign ELTs with different schools, there are also unlicensed individuals and entities that recruit foreigners to supply schools with foreign ELTs in order to earn monthly commission fees from teachers. Since these recruitment agencies act on behalf of employers to do background checks and qualification validation of foreign ELTs, they are responsible for ensuring that the teachers they employ are qualified. On the other hand, they also act on behalf of foreigners in search of qualified employers, so they also have a responsibility to find licensed employers for foreign teachers. However, in reality, because of the huge demand for foreign ELTs and the massive profit they can earn from introducing teachers to schools, recruitment agencies do not necessarily work according to the law.

Acting as a middleman between Chinese schools and foreign ELTs, recruitment agencies not only assist foreigners with their visas (either helping them to get a work visa or advising them how to get around the regulations), but also help them find accommodation and work. In return for their service, recruitment agencies charge foreign ELTs commission fees once teachers start working. The commission fees can range from one third to half of the salary of what a school pays a teacher. Also, instead of a one-off charge, recruitment agencies charge their teachers monthly for as long as their teachers are on the job. Schools first pay recruitment agencies, who will then pay teachers after they take away their commission fees.

While some recruitment agencies only work with teachers who are qualified to apply for a work visa, some of them would take in anyone who looks foreign. Since the fine for hiring non-qualified foreigners is much lower than the profit gained by doing so, recruitment agencies have a strong incentive to operate without a license and hire non-qualified teachers. While a middleman gets fined 5,000RMB (700 USD / EUR 632) for each job he introduces to an ineligible foreign English teacher, the monthly commission fees he charges from one teacher alone can be close to or more than that. Also, the risk of being caught in a police crackdown is low, since while it is possible for recruitment agencies to tip the police off, it is also easier for those agencies as they can be operating secretly.

To ensure foreigners have to go through recruitment agencies to look for jobs, those agencies would approach private schools and nurseries actively and sign contracts with them. According to the contracts, schools and nurseries are usually made to promise that they will only hire foreign ELTs through the recruitment agency they have a contract with. In this way, there is

very little chance for foreigners to find work individually by going to different schools and nurseries. Since working with recruitment agencies is the primary channel for finding work, foreigners, especially the newly arrived ones with a limited network, often have very little choice but to go through recruitment agencies to get a job. Thus, by actively establishing contracts with private schools and nurseries, recruitment agencies can maximize their profit from the commission fees they charge teachers.

Since the turnover rate of foreign ELTs is high, recruitment agencies need to recruit foreigners constantly and have them “in stock.” Recruitment agencies often use online platforms to post job advertisements to recruit foreign ELTs. The most popular websites for foreigners to look for English teaching jobs in Shenzhen are *eChinacities*, *Dave’s ESL Cafes*, and *Shenzhen Party*. Sometimes, they post job advertisements for one of their clients, which are schools or nurseries that are looking to recruiting foreign ELTs. Very often, the job advertisements they post do not even have to be for real jobs. By regularly posting information on real or made-up jobs, they collect curriculum vitae of foreigners who are sending in their job applications and thus accumulate a pool of potential teachers for future use.

Conclusion

This chapter looks into the context of reception of foreign ELTs in the framework of China’s *EEAL* (2012) reform and relevant legal legislation by focusing on how the “class” and “legality” of foreign ELTs are defined and produced in the Chinese context. The chapter argues that China’s latest employment legislation facilitates A-class foreign workers but restricts lower-class foreign workers such as foreign ELTs. In 2017, the Chinese government introduced a new work-permit system for foreign workers. The new system categorized foreign workers into three classes based on a points system and applies different immigration control principles to each class of foreigners. The single-work-permit reform has benefited foreign workers in general by reducing bureaucratic procedures involved in the application of work permits. However, compared to A-class foreigners, foreign ELTs, who are defined as B-class foreigners, have to submit more documents, wait for a longer time, and face more visa restrictions, and uncertainties in their visa decisions.

Applying the analytical concept of migration infrastructure, The chapter has also shown that, the clash between the commercial and regulatory infrastructures in the EFL industry has led to the production of “illegality.” The *EEAL* (2012) emphasis on regulating “*sanfei*” foreigners

puts foreign ELTs under the spotlight because of their association with illegal employment. As a result, visa regulations for foreign ELTs have become increasingly restricted. The *EEAL* (2012) gives clearer definitions of illegal employment and specifies legal liabilities for different parties involved in unlawful employment. However, illegal employment in the EFL market remains common, as stakeholders have a strong monetary incentive to sustain their business.

By looking at how foreign ELTs are positioned in China's legal framework regarding employment of foreigners, the chapter argues that the migration of foreign ELTs to China starts in a disadvantaged position in terms of their perceived class and legal legitimacy in the Chinese context. Positioned as B-class foreigners who are associated with illegal employment, foreign ELTs not only face more bureaucratic barriers and restrictions in their visa applications, but they are also subject to more state surveillance in their everyday lives. Although certain aspects of the regulatory and technological infrastructures work together to facilitate the migration process of foreign ELTs, a clash between the regulatory and commercial infrastructures have complicated the employment situations of foreign ELTs.

Chapter 5 Experiences with law changes and law implementation: Perspectives of foreign ELTs

Introduction

The last chapter analysed how the “class” and “illegality” of foreign ELTs were produced through employment legislation for foreign workers. This chapter looks into how differential visa regulations and law enforcement, which are justified by the perceived “class” and potential “illegality” of foreign ELTs, are exercised. Kalir (2013, p.325) advocates studying migration by putting the perspective of migrants under the spotlight and “bringing in the state” as people experience it. State policy is one of the most critical factors that shape the migration process and experiences of international migrants. For example, through work visa system reform, foreign ELTs are classified as non-elite foreign workers (B-class foreigners, as opposed to A-class elite foreigners) who are subject to more bureaucratic examinations. Also, as eliminating migrant “illegality” is emphasized through the latest *EEAL* (2012), foreign ELTs also become the targets of high-profile law-enforcement measures such as workplace raids.

Based on the discussion of the last chapter on the legal production of “class” and “illegality” of foreign ELTs, this chapter is an ethnography on how teachers experience work-permit applications and immigration-control measures in China as a consequence of their designated “class” and perceived legal legitimacy. As B-class foreigners whose occupation is often associated with illegal employment, foreign ELTs experience more bureaucratic barriers and are also subject to more law enforcement measures targeting “*sanfei*” foreigners. As Zhu and Price (2013) observe, the Chinese government attempts to control “*sanfei*” foreigners at the source through more stringent visa regulations and stricter law enforcement on foreigners’ residence registration and employment.

In Shenzhen, the Shenzhen municipal government has been delegated power by the central government to handle foreign affairs regarding the employment of foreigners. Thus the Shenzhen government has the power to issue work permits and visas to foreigners independently. This chapter, therefore, examines how national law is implemented in Shenzhen locally in relation to the authority’s definition of foreigners’ “class” and “legality.” Focusing

on “class,” the first part of the chapter provides an ethnography on foreign ELTs’ experiences with applying for work permits in Shenzhen during the time of changing legal framework. Teachers’ responses to new document requirements of non-criminal records and fingerprints, work-permit application procedures, visa officers’ attitudes, and the new regulation of “native English speakers only” will be captured. The second part of the chapter focuses on “illegality” and documents how foreign ELTs experience the Chinese state’s immigration-control measures such as residence registration, residence check, and police raids at the workplace.

1. Foreign ELTs’ experiences with the new work-permit system

1.1. Non-criminal records and fingerprints

Starting from April 2017, the Chinese government requested criminal records and fingerprints from B-class and C-class foreigners as part of their work visa application documents. Before the new visa regulations came into being, ELTs from the US were only required to submit a personal statement or a copy of state criminal record as part of their visa application documents. However, under the new regulations, new teachers are required to submit an FBI criminal record, which usually takes three weeks to process. In contrast, foreign teachers who had already been working in China before the new regulations took place could renew their work permits in China and submit their fingerprints through visa agencies.

Lucy⁷⁰ is from the US, and she started working as an English language teacher in an international school in Shenzhen in September 2017, after China’s new work-permit system was launched nationwide in April 2017. Before going to Shenzhen, Lucy had to apply for her work permit, and also her husband and son’s visas as accompanying family members. Lucy recalled her experiences with the application as “a very extensive process.”

We started our application in March and did not get it until August. We had to go to Chicago to do our fingerprints and interviews. When we were at the interview, the officer said nothing but “ok,” nothing too difficult, but the process was tedious.

(Lucy, White, US American, female, 43-year-old)⁷¹

⁷⁰ The names of all informants are anonymized in the purpose of protecting their privacy.

⁷¹ The quote was paraphrased from a conversation with Lucy during her new teacher orientation program in August 2016.

Although the new requirements of criminal records and fingerprints were seen as a burden to foreign ELTs, the new rules were welcomed by Chinese administrators in schools. Claire had been working as an administrator in the international school Lucy worked in for years, and she considered the requirements of criminal records fair and necessary.

Lai Pik: What do you think of the new requirement of criminal records?

Claire: I think it's fair for our government to require foreigners who come to China for criminal records and credential notarization. Chinese who want to work overseas have been asked to submit these. It was just our government did not raise the threshold that we should have raised before... And now, I can see why these documents are necessary because many foreigners in China are making troubles.

Lai Pik: What kind of troubles?

Claire: Finding prostitutes, doing drugs, riding e-bikes. You can find this kind of news easily online. A few years ago, there was a big incident in Shenzhen. You have probably heard of it. There was a big party under the bridge near where the IKEA is. People were doing weed. More than four-hundred people were arrested, and more than one hundred of them were foreigners. They were all taken away and made to do urine tests.

Lai Pik: Do you think, with the new requirements, it will decrease the number of foreigners in China?

Claire: I don't think so. Because the government has also simplified some visa application procedures. The only thing that takes more time is that they have to go back to their home country and apply and wait for their criminal records. But once they get hold of the documents and give them to us, it is reasonably fast.

(Claire, Chinese, female, 38-year-old)⁷²

1.2. Work-permit application documents and procedures

Upon entering China with a Foreigner's Work Permit Notice and a Z visa, foreigners must apply for a work permit at the Shenzhen Human Resources and Social Security Bureau before applying for a residence permit at a local public security station. For international school teachers who work in Shenzhen on overseas assignments, once they enter China, they have

⁷² My interview with Claire was conducted on 10 August 2016 in her office during the new teacher orientation program.

specialized staff in their schools to guide them through every visa application procedure. However, foreign ELTs who are self-initiated migrants are mostly left to handle the applications all by themselves. Felix teaches English at a university in Shenzhen. He recalled his work-permit application experiences as “difficult” and “confusing.” He especially highlighted his experiences with getting a medical examination in a local hospital in Shenzhen.

Felix: In the US it’s not complicated. You know, you just go get a physical (medical exam certification) or a piece of paper or two. Once you get here (Shenzhen), it’s very difficult. The international office (in the university) ... er... there’s some organizational deficiency. And so when you get there, there’s no support system in our university. It’s not the kind of university when you get there, there’ll be people who are there to orient teachers or help them with paperwork or help them with the system. We don’t have that at our university.

Lai Pik: I read from your university website that you have this international cooperation department that is responsible for helping teachers with all the...

Felix: Absolutely, you will go to them and say, “we have all these things to do.” And they will say, “great. We have some more things for you to do”. “Well,...” you say, “how do I do this?” They say, “oh, we’ll drop you a map. Here’s your map, go get it done. You have until this time”.

Lai Pik: Ok. Then you have to do it all by yourself?

Felix: Yes. For me, it was very difficult. Since I had bad knees, I could barely walk.

Lai Pik: The university website says they assign each foreign staff a Chinese buddy who’s also an academic staff in the university to help you?

Felix: Nope, there’s no help.

Lai Pik: Oh, ok, it didn’t happen.

Felix: It doesn’t happen. The visa process is complicated for me. And especially when you have to have a physical (medical examination) in China. Like a medical physical. Because the office would say, “go downtown to get your physical at this hospital,” and no one has any idea what to do there. There’ll be other foreigners who will just refuse to do it. So you’re going around in different places in the hospital, having to do this, having to do that. And people were just kind of pointing or pushing you in the right direction.

(Felix, White, US American, male, 36-year-old)⁷³

⁷³ My interview with Felix was conducted in a café in the Nanshan district on 13 June 2016.

In addition to the language barrier and lack of knowledge of the Chinese bureaucratic system, insufficient guidance and lack of support from employers also make the application process of work permits more confusing than it already is for foreign employees.

1.3. Visa officers

1.3.1. Change of attitude

Even if one managed to get all the documents for visa applications, there is no guarantee one's visa application process would be smooth or if one's visa would be approved. In Felix's case, despite having all the right papers, he was initially treated rudely by a visa officer.

Lai Pik: What do you do after the medical check?

Felix: Then you take all that, and you have to get a form from the police station. A form you get from somewhere else. And whatever residence form they are, you put them all together, you go down to the grand theatre area to that building there, and you set up an appointment. And your first time, you will meet some very rude gentlemen who will look over your stuff and demand things and stuff like that. And it's up to them whether they accept it or not. But what happened in our situation is, the guy in charge was very rude. He went through the stuff and was like, "where's this paper, where's that paper?" I went like, "I don't know. There's a paper here. I don't know." I got angry. He said, "who do you work for?" I said, "the university." He said, "what university?" I said, "XYU⁷⁴" (a reputable university in Shenzhen). "Oh ok," ... He immediately shuffled my papers back together and said, "oh well, thank you very much. Welcome to Shenzhen, and if you don't want to have this problem next time, just go here do this go here to do that. Everything's taken care of. Have a wonderful day."

Lai Pik: Did he speak English?

Felix: Yes.

Lai Pik: What a change of attitude. Who do you think he thought you were when he was rude?

Felix: That I worked for some training centers. High schools. Something else. That I was just a bad foreigner, you know, in this country taking a job from someone whom he thought deserves it more. But once he sees you are a professional for whatever reason, then his attitude immediately changed.

Lai Pik: So would you say there is a hierarchy in the English teaching industry?

⁷⁴ The university name was anonymized for the protection of privacy of the interviewee.

Felix: There's definitely a hierarchy, at least in people's minds. So like, in this artificial hierarchy, someone at the lowest level would be working for like a training center with no reputation...

(Felix, White, US American, male, 36-year-old)

In the visa approval scenario above, the visa officer did not seem to respect Felix because he initially assumed Felix as a "lowly" foreign ELT working in some dodgy training centers. What saved Felix from the official's rude treatment was the reputation of the university Felix worked at. The fact that Felix worked in a prestigious university in Shenzhen conveyed to the official that he was more qualified, which set Felix apart from a teaching center teacher, who was heavily stigmatized.

1.3.2. Arbitrary visa refusal

Talking about visa officers' attitudes, Felix recalled the experience of a Russian student who once studied in the university he taught in. The student was also teaching English part-time on her student visa until her visa renewal was rejected.

Felix: Sometimes people will get rejected though. Usually, native speakers will not. They [visa officers] will just give them some hard time, but sometimes Russians or some Southern Europeans will have a perfectly valid reason for staying, but one of the overseers, the guards, will not like them. When they look at the paperwork, they say, "no, I am not going to approve this. Get out." ... There's a Russian girl who went to our university and had to go home. Because they looked at her paperwork and basically said in Chinese, 'no, you are a whore, you are a prostitute. Get out.' She's a student. He said that very directly. She gets, of course, very upset, and says "no, I was studying at the university, here's my stuff." He said, no, you are a prostitute. We don't want prostitutes in the country.

Lai Pik: So the Russians have a bad reputation here in China?

Felix: With the administrators, absolutely, and the police and others.

Lai Pik: Do you think they think that way for a reason?

Felix: Sure. They might have been for two reasons. One is a little fair. One is a little unfair. The unfair one is, some Russians, you know, work illegally at schools. The wrong paperwork, the wrong visa, whatever else. They work as English teachers, entertainers, models, or something in the adult nature. Em... or a lot of Russians might have some reputation because they get into more fights or things like that.

They could either be very rough and have some trouble with other Russians or foreigners or whoever that's gonna fight.

(Felix, White, US American, male, 36-year-old)⁷⁵

The visa rejection of the Russian student above shows that visa approval in China can be very subjective. Visa officers could make decisions on foreigners' visa applications based on the reputation a particular group of migrants has in the host society. International migrants from a certain country and of a certain gender are more prone to visa rejection due to existing prejudices against them. For example, in the case above, the officer assumed the Russian woman was a prostitute, and the assumption stemmed from the reputation of Russian women working in the entertainment industry in Shenzhen. However, such subjective and assumptive reasons for visa rejection are legitimized by the *EEAL* (2012). As the law states that, visa officers can refuse a visa application under "circumstances in which visa authorities consider a visa should not be issued." (SCNPC, 2012).

1.4. Getting a work visa as unqualified applicants

Starting from 2017, Chinese regulations state that foreigners who work as foreign ELTs must be native speakers to be considered qualified for a work visa, and the authority determines if a foreigner is a native speaker based on his/her nationality. Thus, only people who hold a passport from the US, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and Canada are considered native English speakers. The new regulation was first announced in 2016 before it would be implemented in 2017. Not long after the announcement was released in 2016, I asked Max, who had been teaching in China for seven years, if he had heard about the regulation and his thoughts on it.

I have, but I don't see how they'll be able to do that. I don't know how they will possibly do that. No idea how they will ever assume to be able to enforce that. The same in the States (the US), there's no official language, so your first language in the States (US) can be Spanish, but hey this guy's American, he must speak English. He's not a native speaker though (laughing). You grow up in a Hispanic community, and there are Hispanic communities in the States (US) that don't speak English. In Miami, north Cuba, north of Havana, it's the only place in the States where the first language on signs and everywhere is in Spanish instead of English. English is

⁷⁵ My interview with Felix was conducted on 13 June 2016 in the Starbucks café across the west gate of the Shenzhen University.

second in Miami. If you grow in Miami, there could be a chance where you don't speak English very well. It's a small chance, but there's a possibility. And sometimes in the mid-West, they speak German. That's where all the German immigrants went. So I have no idea how they could ever even possibly think to enforce it. Am I surprised that they are saying it? None the least. Because it's rhetoric, it's propaganda...to show that we have the power to control these things.

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)⁷⁶

Max had doubts about the new “native English speakers only” regulation because there was no guarantee that people from an English-speaking country must speak English as their first language. Max gave examples of US Americans growing up in Hispanic communities in Miami and German immigrants in the Mid-West US to illustrate his point. Although Max did not take the regulation seriously and thought it was nothing more than rhetoric, it did become more difficult for foreigners from non-English-speaking countries to apply for foreign ELT work visas when the regulation came into force in 2017.

Emma was a 32-year-old East European with a MA degree in English Literature and a Ph.D. degree in Education. Since she did not have any luck finding a university teaching job in Europe upon finishing her Ph.D., she decided to apply for teaching jobs overseas. She got an English teaching job in China and flew to Shenzhen in September 2016 to start her job. At the time of our interview in October 2017, Emma had just left her first teaching job and started her second English teaching job.

It was a few days after Emma got a work visa for her second job when I met her. She said that compared to 2016, when she first arrived in Shenzhen, getting a visa had become more difficult because of visa regulation changes for foreign ELTs. Emma said her current employer had arranged for her to go to a visa agency for the application of her work visa. When she took all her documents to the visa agency, Emma was told that it was extremely difficult for her to apply for a work visa as an English teacher under the new regulation, because she neither came from a native English-speaking country nor had valid proof of her work experience in teaching English. The visa agent who helped Emma suggested that she should file a visa application for the job position of “translator” instead of “foreign English language teacher.” Emma was frustrated by the strategy and felt unfair that, although she was even qualified to teach at a

⁷⁶ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on June 1, 2016.

university with her Ph.D. degree, she was made to lie about her actual job position in order to be eligible for a work visa in China.

Emma: So this year is not so easy. I think it wasn't easy even last year, but this year they told me since it's the first year of implementing this new regulation (the new rule says foreigners who work as EFL teachers have to be native speakers of English), they are quite strict.

Lai Pik: who told you?

Emma: The agents who tried to organize my visa stuff.

Lai Pik: So your visa does not say you are working as an English teacher?

Emma: No, because obviously, I cannot be an English teacher because I am not native, but if I have a certificate in drama teaching, I can be a drama teacher. Because you don't need to be a native for drama teaching.

Lai Pik: And you have that?

Emma: Not at the moment, but I am going for training, so I might have that soon.

Lai Pik: So what is your job on your visa now?

Emma: A translator. At first I felt really bad, because I have all the papers, why should I lie that I am not a teacher, but a translator?

Lai Pik: So now on paper, you are a translator?

Emma: Yeah.

Lai Pik: And what did you get last year?

Emma: Translator manager.

Lai Pik: But can you not renew it? Why did you need to get a new visa this year? Ah, because you changed your employer.

Emma: Yeah.

Lai Pik: Did your employer take care of this for you? Or did you have to do it by yourself?

Emma: They hired an agent to do this.

Lai Pik: But you still have to go to the agent by yourself?

Emma: Yes, there was an agent hired by the company who organized the visa stuff, and the company is kind of the mediator between the agent and me, so I don't have direct contact with the agent, but it's a great help. At the first time (with the last employer), everything was so messy, and the company didn't inform me. With this company, they are really open. They told me "now you need to contact her, you meet her, bring this, bring that..." coz you

know for us... I am lost if there's no one to help us. And the first company, they didn't care. They just told me "bring this," and if I asked why, they either didn't want to reply or they didn't know.

(Emma, White, East European, female, 34-year-old)

Although Emma eventually managed to get a "translator" work visa to work in Shenzhen "legally," she did not see why a highly-educated person like her had to find ways to circumvent visa regulations for a job she was over qualified for. Also, with a Ph.D. degree in education and a high level of English language skills, Emma felt it was unfair that she was considered not as good as any random native English language speaker in terms of an English teaching job. She felt the hiring system in the EFL industry in China gave more preference to native English speakers and overlooked other qualities that might be more important in a professional educator.

Emma: I find it unfair that because someone is native, they can get higher salary, compared to those people who are not native but have a qualification in education.

Lai Pik: Is it happening?

Emma: It's happening. It's a reality.

Lai Pik: To you?

Emma: To me also, but I am ok with it. I am at a good place now with my current job, now I can say okay. But still, I still can get a lower amount of money compared to native speakers who have no qualifications in education just because he or she is native. I understand the policy behind this, but I think it's a trap for the country. Because if we want to give English education to the kids in a quality way, I agree that we need to have people with qualifications and being native, which is not so easy to find. But don't pay more just because somebody's native... the logic behind, for me it's strange, I understand there's such a huge demand for English teachers, it's quite open.

Lai Pik: So if you are the owner of a training center, what would be the most important criteria for hiring a teacher?

Emma: First, the ability to teach, the teacher's vision in teaching, and some education qualification. I would require at least a degree.

(Emma, White, East European, female, 34-year-old)⁷⁷

⁷⁷ My interview with Emma was conducted in the Ban Xian café in Baishizhou in Shenzhen on 23 October 2017.

China's new visa regulations in 2017 listed that foreigners must be native English speakers in order to get work visas as English language teachers. While holding the passport of a certain country does not guarantee that the passport holder speaks the language of the country as his/her mother tongue, this is, however, how the Chinese authority determines if a foreigner is a native English speaker. In reality, however, the remuneration packages most Chinese employers offer are simply not attractive enough to motivate more qualified native English-speaking teachers to work in China. A vast amount of ESL teaching jobs needs to be filled, but there is only a limited number of native English speakers applying for the jobs. Thus finding a way to help non-native English speakers obtain work visas becomes essential for employers and employees who would not want to take the risk of violating the law. Although it means more hassle, with the help of visa agencies, non-native English-speaking foreigners still find ways to obtain work visas under other job titles while working as ELTs.

Despite being a native English speaker from Ireland, Damon was not qualified for the application of a foreign ELT work visa because he did not hold a Bachelor's degree. For years, he had been working on a business or tourist visa in China. Apart from teaching English, Damon ran a small trading business. However, in the face of restricting visa rules for foreign ELTs, Damon did not seem to be worried at all.

Lai Pik: Are the visa regulations getting more restricted?"

Damon: Well, if I can't get a business or a tourist visa, then I can always enroll in a Chinese course to get a student visa to stay."

Lai Pik: But you have to fulfill a certain attendance rate? I heard.

Damon: Some schools are looser with attendance because they just want to make money.

(Damon, White, Irish, male, late-30s)⁷⁸

Within China's latest visa regulation framework, foreigners have to fulfill more requirements in order to be eligible for the application of a foreign ELT work visa. In Damon's case, without a Bachelor's degree, it was difficult for him to get a work visa. However, as an Irish national, it remained easy for him to get a business, tourist, or student visa.

⁷⁸ The quote was part of my conversation with Damon at a party on 9th August 2017.

2. Foreign ELTs' experiences with law implementation

Foreign ELTs are not only often assumed and stereotyped to be working “illegally” in public discourse, their association with illegal employment has also long come to the attention of the Chinese authority (State Council of the PRC, 2012). Anti-*sanfei* campaigns, which are conducted by local public security bureaus to regulate foreigners who enter China without visas, overstay, and/or engage in illegal employment, consist of immigration measures such as residence registration, residence check, passport check, and workplace raids. Africans in Guangzhou are the most racially visible foreigners targetted by China's anti-*sanfei* campaign nationwide (Lan, 2014). Occupation-wise, foreign ELTs, often associated with illegal employment, are also targets of anti-*sanfei* operations.

2.1. Residence registration

Residence registration used to be a control measure that was applied to both internal and international migrants in China. While the measure was abolished among internal migrants, it was still implemented among international migrants (Haugen, 2018b). The latest *EEAL (2012)* states that foreigners should register their residence in the local public security organ within 24 hours of their arrival in China, and a fine of CNY2,000 (USD 280 / EUR 253) will be imposed on those who fail to do so (SCNPC, 2012). Local public security bureaus are responsible for the law enforcement of residence registration. The Shenzhen Public Security Bureau has reinforced residence registration of foreigners in the past few years. The authority has promoted the law of residence registration among foreign residents. It has also conducted residence checks to crack down on various “illegal practices” such as failures to register residence, illegal letting, and long-term residence on temporary visas.

In Shenzhen, the enforcement of residence registration of foreign residents started in the Shekou sub-district. Since Shekou is the most foreigner-concentrated area in Shenzhen, a residence registration campaign was first initiated in the area by the Shekou sub-district public security station in 2016. Apart from promoting the law through websites, leaflets, and legal knowledge-promotion events, the importance of residence registration was also emphasized and reinforced through irregular residence-check campaigns. Although a residence check might be scary to newly-arrived foreign residents, it is experienced as part of life by long-term foreign residents.

Residence Registration in Shekou, Shenzhen

Article 39 of the *Exit-Entry Administration Law* states that “For foreigners who reside or stay in domiciles other than hostels, they or the persons who accommodate them shall, within 24 hours after the foreigners’ arrival, go through the registration formalities with the public security organs in the places of residence.” In reality, many foreigners did not register with the police for different reasons, and reinforcing this regulation was not the police’s priority. In June 2016, however, the Shekou public security station started an intensive campaign to enforce foreigners’ residence registration. A week before a large-scale residence check campaign took place, the Shekou public security station put up the following announcement (illustration 33).

深圳市公安局蛇口派出所

(translation: Shenzhen Public Security Bureau Shekou Branch)

Announcement

All foreigners:

No matter who you are no matter where you come from, you are in China now, so, obey our law do the register in the local police station (shekou police station) or you will be fine up to 2000rmb. We will give you one week to do the register *[sic]*. One week later we will have a big operation against those foreigner *[sic]* who have no register *[sic]* in police station. Thank you.⁷⁹

Shekou police station

2016.6.2

Illustration 33: Announcement of residence registration campaign

⁷⁹ Fieldnotes from June 4, 2016.

The announcement went viral on the internet because the way the message was conveyed was considered too blunt and rude. Nevertheless, the announcement successfully caught foreign residents' attention and urged those who had not yet registered their residence to do so, as the week after the announcement was released, the Shekou public security station was packed with foreign residents waiting to be registered when I purposefully walked past the station a few times. Some people appreciated that the Shekou public security station made an effort to construct a message in English in order to reach to the foreign resident community in Shekou. At the time, very few Chinese government announcements were in English, and this announcement was the very first English announcement released by the Shenzhen Public Security Bureau.

The authority also used social platforms that were popular among expats in Shenzhen to spread the message. An English blogger posted a comprehensive article on *Shenzhen Party*, a widely read website by foreigners in Shenzhen, explaining why it was important to perform residence registration and what the procedures were. The article featured a foreign resident who was helping with the registration in the Shekou public security station and also called for foreign volunteers to help. The highly-publicized registration campaign in Shekou serves to raise awareness of residence registration not only among the foreign population in the area but also in the wider Shenzhen city. The incorporation of the use of the English language and foreign volunteers in such campaigns makes the management of foreigners more effective.

2.2. Residence check and passport check

New foreign residents: “It is confusing and uncomfortable.”

In the Shekou area of the Nanshan District in Shenzhen, police conducted random residence checks from time to time. Sometimes accompanied by social workers from the Shekou Management and Service Center for Expats, police would go from door to door to check if residents in each apartment had registered their residence. Before knocking on the door of each household, police could gain access to the personal information and photos of the residents by scanning a QR code on the door (see illustration 34 on the following page).



Illustration 34: A QR code outside next to the door of an apartment in Shekou.
Source: a WeChat group for foreigners in Shenzhen.

Residence checks can be intimidating for foreigners who experience them for the first time. While having police visit in the middle of the evening out of the blue could be an unsettling experience, some foreigners also reported feeling uncomfortable with the situation because they could not even be sure if the people who came into their apartment were real police. After a residence check took place at her friend's place, a confused foreign resident asked a question for her friend in a WeChat group that was established for expats in Shenzhen to ask questions and share information.

Last night the Authorities/Police visited my friend who lives and works legally in Shenzhen. They asked to see her passport. The police did not speak English and they communicated via a translation app. My friend said that one person was dressed in "normal" clothes and the other one was dressed in uniform. She said they had an ID card around their necks, but it was in Chinese. The issue was not the checking of the passport, but the concern was that the police took a photo of the passport. Is that normal? My friend did not have her police registration form

with her. She will get it from her company this week. This happened in our compound, so my building may be next tonight. My question is, is it possible to refuse to have the passport photo taken? I am not comfortable having my passport details on someone else's phone...

(A member from a WeChat group for expats in Shenzhen)

Another foreign resident living in Shekou resonated with the woman's feelings and posted a message as follows.

Hi this happened to me about 5 months ago at our apartment. It was 10:30 pm. 2 non-uniform and 1 uniform police knocked at our door. They wanted to know our names, country and if we rented or owned the apartment. One of the security guards from our residential compound hovered around helplessly behind them. They started to take pictures of our faces with their Nokia flip phone. So my husband started to take their pictures also, which made them put their phone away. They refused to say why they were there asking us questions. They didn't ask to come in and didn't ask to see our passports. We were respectful, but vague with our answers, since we didn't know why they were there. I told my landlord about it, who was very nice. She went and spoke to the security guard the next day, who told her that police went to a few apartments of foreigners that night because they were concerned with owners illegally renting out apartments for short holiday lets. Not sure if that's really the case but nothing happened after that!

(A member from a WeChat group for expats in Shenzhen)

After the two women shared their experiences, a foreign resident who seemed to be very familiar with the residence check shared his knowledge on what the check was about and why police they took photos.

This is a regular police check on registration. So we will suggest expats always keep the receipt of the registration with them for checking, or at least a copy in a cell phone. If not, the police need to have your passport info and send back to the station to check in the system if you've done registration or not. Taking a picture is a quick way for them to send the info back to the station for checking.

(A member from a WeChat group for expats in Shenzhen)

Long-term foreign residents: “I am used to it.”

Foreign residents who had lived in Shenzhen for a longer time are more familiar with residence check and experienced it as part of their everyday lives in China. Tom, who had worked as an EFL teacher in Shenzhen for more than a decade and lived in one of the most popular residential compounds for foreign residents in Shekou, shared with me his experience with residence checks.

They (police) used to come to check every three months, but now they come every month. We (foreigners) have a QR code on our doors. When they scan the QR code, they have the information on each household and know who lives in each apartment. One time when they came, my wife had gone out for grocery shopping, so I told them my wife was out. They instantly showed me a picture of my wife on the screen of the electronic device they used to scan the QR code with, and asked me, “is your wife this woman?”

Asked if he felt intimidated or uncomfortable to be checked in his own home every now and then, Tom shook his head.

Not at all! I am so used to it now. Sometimes when they knock on my door and I happen to not have my shirt on, because it is really hot in summer, I would just get the door half-naked.

(Tom, White, US American, male, 58-year-old)⁸⁰

The Shenzhen authority has enforced the law of residence registration of foreigners in recent years in order to strengthen the management of foreign residents, identity “illegal” migrants, and prevent any possible “illegal” activities. The Shenzhen authority has also attempted to enforce the residence registration law by informing foreign residents in English as well as conducting passport checks and residence checks; however, there was still room for improvement in terms of how the law was conducted. For example, the language used in announcements could have been more professionally written, and residents could have been better informed about residence- check procedures.

The enforcement of residence registration gradually improved in Shenzhen. Starting from 2017, instead of going to police stations in their residential areas, foreign residents could register their

⁸⁰ The quote was extracted from a conversation with Tom during a lunch break in his school on September 13, 2016.

residence in foreigner management and service centers, where English-speaking Chinese social workers are stationed to provide various services to foreigners. While residence checks continued in Shekou, foreign residents were usually properly informed in advance. Also, residence checks were also conducted with the linguistic help of social workers from foreigner management and service centers, so social workers could facilitate communication between police and foreign residents. In November 2017, when another round of residence check was to be conducted in a foreigner-concentrated residential compound in Shekou, the notice (see illustration 35 below) put up to inform foreign residents was much more well-written and polite.

Notification of Census in Coastal Rose Garden

Dear Residents,

In order to better serve the residents in the neighborhood, Exit and Entry Administration, Nanshan Sub-Bureau of Shenzhen Public Security will carry out a six-day (Nov. 21st to 27th) census operation in Coastal Rose Garden Phase to confirm household's *[sic]* basic information. Please excuse us if it causes any inconvenience to you.

Thank you for your understanding and support!⁸¹

Exit and Entry Administration,
Nanshan Sub-Bureau of Shenzhen Public Security
November 21st, 2017

Illustration 35: A Notice on population census in the Coastal Rose Garden residential compound

Compared to the Shekou Public Security Sub-district's first notice on residence registration in 2016, the signature has changed from "Shekou police station" to "Exit and Entry Administration, Nanshan Sub-Bureau of Shenzhen Public Security." This signifies organizational changes in the public security bureau. The "Exit and Entry Administration section" was created within the Bureau to focus on the management of foreigners in the Shekou area.

⁸¹ Fieldnotes from November 21, 2017.

Passport check

In order to enforce residence registration, police in Shekou carried out passport checks and residence checks from time to time. Police not only stopped foreigners on the street to check their ID and registration documents, but they also carried out residence checks door to door in Shekou (Yuan, 2016; Zhang, 2016). According to Article 38 of the *Exit-Entry Administration Law (2012)*, foreigners must carry their passports with them all the time, and the police have the right to check their passports in the street. Sally was a teacher who lived in Shekou. She told me how one of her colleagues was caught by the police on the street when she went out without her passport.

They (the police) trace you. Even we have a work visa and everything, we still need to carry our passports when we go out. We had a teacher who was walking on the street, and she was stopped by the police. They asked for her passport, but she did not have it with her. She had the print-out though, but they would not accept it. So they took her to the police station. The teacher texted us in the WeChat group and told us what happened. The police called the school and the school had to prove the teacher was their teacher. They trace you down because what if you are not who you say you are?

(Sally, White, US American, female, 34)⁸²

2.3. Workplace raids

Police raids targeting foreigners are carried out often in various industries and situations in Shenzhen. For example, police raids in bars are targeted at illegal employment of foreigners, and raids at parties are targeted at foreigners involving in drug dealings and drug use.⁸³ While the police would never raid high-end international companies where “high-skilled” foreigners work, police raids often take place in teaching centers and schools, because the EFL industry is considered to be a concentraton of illegal employment of foreigners.

Police raids targeting foreign ELTs often take place at the beginning of new semesters when new teachers are expected. The time before the Chinese New Year is also when raids are most frequent, as police officers need money for the festival and catching foreigners who engage in

⁸² This quote was extracted from a conversation with Sally on June 11, 2017 at the Hey Tea tea shop near Window of the World.

⁸³ Fieldnotes, September 5, 2016, Shenzhen.

illegal employment is an easy and profitable way to gain extra income from fining schools and teachers. An English education consultant told me that, if school owners are connected to the local police, they will be notified about any raids carried out by district police stations. However, sometimes the municipal government would raid schools spontaneously without necessarily informing the schools. In the cases of unpredictable police raids, teachers who do not have work visas have no other choices but to escape or hide.

James was a certified teacher in the US and worked as an ESL teacher in an international school in Shenzhen. It was the first year he was working in China when we met. Despite working in a legitimate school and having the right papers, he did not like police raids. James told me about one occasion when the police suddenly came to his school and opened his classroom door in the middle of one of his classes. He said although he knew he was working on a work visa and had not violated any Chinese law, it was still a terrifying experience to be surrounded by a group of policemen and to be asked to show his documents.⁸⁴ James was careful not to criticize anything about China during our interview when my recorder was on. However, after I stopped recording, James looked around to make sure that no one could hear our conversation, and he said,

There is this element about China, that makes you feel you are watched all the time. I know we are watched in the US too, but you don't feel it this much. You feel like someone is going to knock on your door anytime and check you here.

(James, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)⁸⁵

While there are teachers who are terrified of police raids, there are foreign ELTs who welcome police raids at the workplace, and Jack was one of them. Jack had a MA degree in TESOL and taught English at a university in Shenzhen. He was very confident of his qualifications and considered himself to be one of the best foreign ELTs in Shenzhen.

There are so many teachers here in China who do not know how to teach. I am happy the police are doing some crack-downs, so there will be less unqualified teachers and the reputation of English teachers won't be so bad.

(Jack, White, Australian, male, 28-year-old)⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Fieldnotes, October 11, 2016, Shenzhen.

⁸⁵ My interview with James was conducted on September 21, 2016 in his school in the Shekou area of the Nanshan District in Shenzhen.

⁸⁶ My interview with Jack was conducted on September 9, 2016 in a café near the Shenzhen University.

2.4. Deportation

There were stories about teachers being deported because of illegal employment. When I interviewed Max, it happened that the police were having a series of operations in schools to crack down on illegal employment of foreign ELTs, and Max brought that up to me.

Max: The police are having a new cracking down on this (illegal employment) these days.

Lai Pik: Are they doing that?

Max: Yeah, you get some schools that do get raided. Em... I've never been involved in one.

Lai Pik: Do you know people who have?

Max: Yes, I do. They give you a slap on the face for the first time, and then they blacklist you for five years the second time.

Lai Pik: So, the first time is like a warning, but you can still stay on your job after you've been warned?

Max: Yeah, if you are illegal there anyway... Just if you get caught again, some of my friends are fucked. But I've never been involved.

Lai Pik: So, these people will get deported?

Max: Yeah, you get deported after the second time that you get caught with that. Blacklisted it is. You cannot enter China for five years.

(Max, White US American, male, 28-year-old)

Foreigners can also be deported for committing other crimes in China. Sally said she got her job because her school needed someone urgently to replace a teacher who was deported.

Personally, I don't know anyone who has been deported because people I know are mostly people working on a work visa. However, I heard the teacher I was replacing was deported because he broke some Chinese rules. Rumors have it that 1) he smoked pot, 2) he went to a prostitute and was caught, 3) he did some other nasty things. It might be a combination of different things. I heard he was arrested by the police, who contacted the school and wanted the school to guarantee he would not break the rules again, but the school just fired him instead because the school didn't want any trouble. They simply found someone to replace him.

(Sally, White, US American, female, 34-year-old)⁸⁷

⁸⁷ The quote was extracted from a conversation with Sally on June 11, 2017 at the Hey Tea tea shop near Window of the World.

2.5. Implementation deficiency

Regulation restrictions on the employment of foreign ELTs do not seem to eliminate the illegal employment of foreigners in the EFL industry. Analyzing the causes of “illegal” migrants in China, Song (2015, p.58) criticized the fact that the existing law conveys a false impression that as long as the fine is paid, breaking the law does not lead to any severe consequences. Reviewing the *EEAL* (2012), Zhu and Price (2013, p.11) observed that the emergence of “*sanfei*” foreigners stemmed from high demand for foreign labor in certain industries and mild penalties in cases of law violations. Moreover, the authors pointed out that a lack of cooperation among responsible government departments and the reluctance of frontline police to deal with foreigner-related cases also made the problem of migrant “illegality” persistent.

Indeed, despite restrictions of regulations on paper, implementation deficiency of frontline police gives leeway to employers and foreign teachers in the EFL industry to recruit and work not necessarily according to relevant regulations. In Shenzhen, law enforcement by the police is not only exercised differently in different districts, it also sometimes differs within the same district. Depending on factors such as the political atmosphere at the time of law enforcement, and the relationship between individual police officers and employers, police raids may or may not be consequential. Usually, employers can take “preventive measures” by paying police officers for advance notices of raids in order to hide employees without work visas. In this way, police officers gain extra income from receiving “information fees” from various employers who needed the information. In the events of foreign teachers being arrested, employers can also pay the police to bail their teachers out and let them continue working despite the lack of work visas.

Apart from the financial interest of getting receiving bribes and fines from local employers who are complicit in illegal employment of foreigners, it might also be in the personal interest of some police officers to not crack down foreign teachers entirely. Thus, while police raids are intended to combat foreigners working “illegally” by raiding schools and teaching centers, there might be more harm than benefits for local police to enforce a comprehensive crackdown on foreigners engaging in illegal employment. As an education consultant who worked in the EFL industry said,

It is very likely that the police’s children might also be taking private English tutoring classes from an “illegal” English teacher. If all these “illegal” teachers are

cleaned up, it means the police will have to pay a high tuition fee to send their children to legitimate English teachers, or they will not be able to afford any.

(David, British, male, White, 55-year-old)⁸⁸

Because of differential law enforcement in different districts, and the possibilities of being “prepared” for police raids, employers adjust their hiring criteria according to the location of teaching-center branches. The advertisement below is a job advertisement posted by a small English training-center franchise in Shenzhen in 2017. The company was looking for foreign ELTs to work in their two branches located in two different districts in Shenzhen: the Futian District and the Bao’an District. While the Futian District is the home to the Shenzhen municipal government and also the city’s central business district, the Bao’an district was geographically at the edge of Shenzhen and was not officially part of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone until 2010.

Requirements for teachers in the Futian Branch:

1. Full time, *English native speaker* needed due to working visa application
2. Having teaching experience with teenagers
3. Stay in Shenzhen or come to Shenzhen very soon

Requirements for teachers in the Bao’an Branch:

1. Full time, English native speaker *or European English teacher needed*. We need female English teachers for kids teaching
2. Having teaching experience with 5-13 yrs old students
3. Stay in Shenzhen or come to Shenzhen very soon

When hiring foreign ELTs for its Futian branch, the training center required native English speakers as part of the job requirements. The advertisement specified that such a requirement was due to “working visa application.” The employer had more incentive to comply with the law as law enforcement was stricter in the Futian District, and it would be riskier to violate the law in the area. However, the recruitment of foreign ELTs in the Bao’an branch was more relaxed with following visa regulations. Applicants for English language teacher positions did

⁸⁸ My interview with David was conducted in the Costa Coffee in the OCT area in Shenzhen on November 9, 2017.

not necessarily have to be native English speakers, and foreigners from any European countries were also welcomed.

However, as Europeans are not native English speakers and thus are not eligible to apply for work visas as English language teachers, the employment constituted in the Bao'an branch job can possibly be illegal employment, and this could be why nothing about "working visa application" is mentioned. Although the employer eventually might or might not use the help of a visa agency to somehow get European teachers (if hired) work visas under a different job title, there is obviously less pressure to strictly comply with the law in a suburban area where law enforcement is not as strict as the central business district.

From foreign teachers' perspective, although they experience more immigration control measures than A-class foreigners, some teachers have managed to stay out of the sight of the authority. Max had been teaching English in China for seven years. He was working in a mid-scale city in northern China for two years on a work visa, but he had not had a work visa since he moved to Shenzhen five years previously. However, in the past five years, Max has never got into any trouble because of illegal employment. Max recalled one occasion when he was very close to being caught but was "saved" by his employer, who warned him in time.

In one school that I used to work at, out of the blue one day, as I was getting ready to go in, I got a text message saying, "don't come to work today." And that was the day the police came in and checked everybody's visa. And they told me "don't come in. Don't do that."

Asked how prevalent it was for schools to help their teachers avoid police raids, Max said,

You hear about that occasionally. Talked to teachers in some schools, this school that school. "Oh yeah we got raided a couple of times, but usually the boss paid someone at the police station and they will tip them off, you don't come into the school today. Come in in a couple of days. So be prepared. And that's that." Or the school pays a bribe, and the police don't come around. But for me, it's never really been an issue because it's not something I think about too often. Honestly, there's always a danger there. There's always a possibility. I mean if the police come to my school, I will be in trouble.

Max was not the only one who successfully avoided police raids. A teacher who was working in a teaching center told me that he and a few other colleagues were working on tourist visas, and a few police raids took place during the time he was working there. However, he never had to encounter the situation because, on the day of a police raid, the teaching center manager would ask the teachers not to come to work. He speculated that the manager was able to get information from the police beforehand, and thus was able to be prepared for it by asking teachers to hide.

Max also knew about the regulation of residence registration, but he had remained unregistered throughout his time in Shenzhen. Max talked about how he managed to do that.

Max: A couple of years ago, they changed the law to... em, it's something to do with the rules that you couldn't be here that long if you are on a tourist visa. You couldn't do this; you couldn't do that. You need a residence permit. You need it to do all this all that. But... hush, hush (putting his index finger over his lips). I don't have any of that. I don't have that. I have been living in my apartment for two and half year now. I don't have it. Officially my landlord lives there.

Lai Pik: So your landlord is a Chinese, and he doesn't really care.

Max: No, he doesn't, and the only bad part about it is I don't get a *fapiao* (receipt).

Lai Pik: What do you need a *fapiao* for?

Max: I mean, I can get a housing allowance from my school (with *fapiao*). But I get a housing allowance from my school anyway because they buy receipts from some company and then forge it.

(Max, White US American, male, 28-year-old)⁸⁹

With the help of his employer and landlord, Max was able to work and reside in Shenzhen without having a work visa and a residence permit. Although relevant Chinese legal provisions⁹⁰ specify that employers and landlords of foreigners have an obligation to ensure foreigners are working and residing in China with the required documents, it is not in the interest of employers and landlords to do the police's job. Economically, in order to gain profit,

⁸⁹ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on June 1, 2016.

⁹⁰ *Interim Provisions of Guangdong Province on Administration of and Services to Aliens*

it makes more sense for employers and landlords to turn a blind eye and complicit with their foreign employees and tenants.

Conclusion

Through ethnography, this chapter shows how foreign ELTs experience China's immigration law and its implementation. The chapter shows how immigration control is exercised differently on different groups of international migrants. While "high-skilled" foreigners receive preferential treatment, "middling" and "low-skilled" migrants often face stricter immigration control. For instance, belonging to the latter group, foreign ELTs have to submit more visa application documents such as criminal records and fingerprints. In terms of immigration control from within, apart from being subject to residence check and passport check as other foreigners, foreign ELTs are treated explicitly as potential "illegal migrants" whose workplace becomes the target of frequent police raids. The chapter argues that China's immigration law and its implementation marginalize foreign ELTs' social position in Chinese society through tactics of othering and stigmatizing. Categorized as a lower class of foreigners (B-class foreigners) and perceived as potential "illegal" foreign workers, foreign ELTs are faced with stricter immigration-control measures both in their work-permit applications and workplace surveillance. Thus, in the name of regulating the EFL industry, the Chinese legal framework and law enforcement not only position foreign ELTs as the Other of Chinese citizens, but also as the Other of high-skilled, law-abiding "good" migrants.

State power and immigration law go hand in hand to exercise their control over migrants. While the state relies on the judicial system to justify its exclusion of certain foreigners, the law also depends on the state to materialize its influence. The state power affects the lived experiences of international migrants through immigration law and relevant control measures. From visa applications to border checks, to residence registration and police raids, foreign ELTs are reminded of their Otherness and vulnerability. All foreign ELTs are treated as potential "illegal" aliens subject to routine repression measures such as residence checks and police raids, and "illegal migrants" live in constant fear of being caught. Although the rising threshold of foreign ELT work visas and intensified law enforcement have made it more complicated for foreign ELTs to work and live in China, there is still room for teachers to circumvent the law. Due to the implementation deficiency of frontline police, law enforcement varies in different districts.

Also, different interest parties, such as employers and landlords, have monetary incentives to be complicit with foreign teachers by helping them to avoid immigration control. Thus, this chapter argues that the recent immigration policy reform was symbolic in curbing migrant illegality.

Chapter 6 International migrants' labor citizenship and the (im)possibility of permanent residence

I've never seen anybody permanently retire here unless they were married to a Chinese person or a Chinese citizen... so when I see it, I'll believe it.

- A foreign English language teacher working in China for 19 years

Introduction

This chapter discusses, in a legal and political sense, what citizenship means for foreign ELTs in the Chinese context. Through ethnography, the chapter looks into a common expression in the foreign ELT community in Shenzhen: "I only planned to stay in China for one year and never thought I would have stayed for so long!" Since foreign ELTs only get a one-year work visa, they usually do not envision a long stay in China when they first arrive. However, those who end up staying for years and wish to retire in China eventually are faced with the fact that it is almost impossible for them to obtain permanent residence.

Although foreign ELTs are not working in China through temporary migrant-labor programs, their legal status in China is essentially temporary, as China's immigration policies are designed for short-term accommodation, rather than long-term integration of foreign workers (Wang, 2012; Ahl & Czoske, 2018). Even though the Chinese government has relaxed its visa and green-card policies for "top-level" foreigners in recent years (Zhuang, 2019), relevant policies remain restrictive for middling and lowly-skilled migrants. For middling migrants such as foreign ELTs, their work visas are only valid for one year and subject to annual renewal. Moreover, their residence permits are tied to their work visas and become invalid as soon as their work visas expire. Also, while international migrants in China can theoretically obtain permanent residence, it is much harder for non-elite foreigners (in the Chinese context, non-A-class⁹¹ foreigners), not to mention Chinese citizenship, which is heavily defined in the ethnic

⁹¹ China divides its foreign workers into ABC categories, with A-class foreigners being the high-skilled, B-class being the middling professionals, and C-class being the lowly-skilled.

term. This is only the situation of those who are working “legally.” for those who are working on other types of visas, their conditions as migrants in China can be even more uncertain and precarious.

Informed by the analytical framework of labor citizenship (Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014) and racial discourse (Dikötter, 1994, 1997a, 1997b), the chapter contextualizes the temporary migrant worker status of foreign ELTs in relation to China’s latest immigration policies, in which an ambivalent attitude toward foreigners is observed. With ethnography, the first section of the chapter illustrates how China’s immigration policies legislatively construct a status of temporariness for foreign ELTs, who unintendedly stay for years and become long-term settlers. The second part of the chapter discusses the prospects for foreign ELTs to obtain permanent residence and legal citizenship in China with reference to China’s immigration policies on a national and regional level. The chapter argues that China’s immigration policies have turned foreign ELTs into temporary migrant workers whose permission to stay in China is time-limited and uncertain, and whose labor and social rights are highly restricted. While temporariness justifies rights restriction, it makes it almost impossible for most foreign ELTs to make family or retirement plans.

Theoretical framework

Labor citizenship

In their discussion of the migration of temporary labor, Dauvergne and Marsden (2014) argue that “citizenship” has transformed into “labor citizenship,” as labor “skill” is not only reified, but also becomes the basis of mobility and citizenship itself. In other words, migrants’ value as laborers affects both individuals’ migration opportunities and the availability of trajectories toward permanence. Identifying “temporariness,” “the labor market” and “rights” as the three core concepts of analysis on temporary migration policies, Dauvergne and Marsden (2014) argue that these concepts ideologically constrain temporary migration policies, as “labor market” not only presents the migration context of temporary migrants as politically neutral, but also puts migrant workers in a subordinated position, in which their legal status in their receiving country depends on their employers’ endorsement. Also, “temporariness” normalizes and justifies the fact that temporary migrant workers enjoy fewer rights than permanent migrants and citizen workers. Based on Arendt’s (1998 cited in Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014, p.232) philosophical understandings of human conditions, Dauvergne and Marsden (2014)

argue that there are two points Arendt is critical of regarding temporary migrant labor – firstly, “labor is never self-contained, but is always productive of something more than itself, and is an aspect of being human,” thus it is impossible for the states to simply import “labor”; secondly, since temporary migrant labor is defined by the government as less-skilled labor, Arendt is critical of the distinction between skilled and unskilled workers and points out that the labels of “skilled” and “unskilled” reflect social values rather than inherent qualities.

The theoretical framework of labor citizenship is relevant to the migration reality of foreign ELTs. Castles (2017, p.209) observes that, besides modifying their citizenship laws to be “a combination of *ius sanguinis* with *ius soli* (citizenship by birth in the country) and *ius domicilii* (citizenship on the basis of long-term residence),” all traditional immigration countries also accepted dual citizenship. However, as a non-traditional immigration country, China’s *Nationality Law (1980)* does not follow such conventions. Unlike other countries that use accessibility to citizenship and permission for dual nationality to retain high-skilled international migrants, China does not easily grant citizenship, and it also strictly forbids dual nationality. As a way to attract the best and the brightest, most countries with more developed immigration systems provide the opportunity for international migrants to become citizens or obtain permanent residence status. For example, in the US, after having held a green card for a certain length of time and having met other eligibility requirements, one can find out from government websites the specific steps that need to be taken to apply for a US citizenship, as well as downloading each and every form that is required throughout the application process (Department of Homeland Security, 2019). For countries that are not traditional immigration countries, most of them also explicitly or implicitly allow dual citizenship to retain high-skilled immigrants (Wang, 2012).

Racial nationalism

By offering limited pathways for the acquisition of permanent residence and citizenship, most foreign ELTs and other non-elite foreigners in China are turned into temporary migrant workers with permission to remain in the country for a limited period of time. Temporary migrant-labor programs are popular in immigration and non-immigration countries around the world under neo-liberal governments in a globalizing age. However, what is particularly prominent in the rationale behind China’s restrictive immigration regime is a deep-rooted racial discourse that defines “Chineseness” as “primarily a matter of biological descent, physical appearance and congenital inheritance” (Dikötter, 1994). In other words, the Chinese identity is perceived to

be intrinsic and essentialist, rather than a process of becoming. In popular Chinese perception, an individual is either born to be Chinese or non-Chinese. The racial narrative is nevertheless a political construct, which results in a conflation between the Han ethnicity and Chinese nationality, as it is often the Han Chinese, who constitute 92 percent of the entire domestic Chinese population, that most people are referring to as Chinese.

Analyzing how racial discourse in China has been adapted constantly to serve political purposes, Dikötter (1997a) concludes that an ethnically homogeneous society is preferred by the Chinese authority as an imagined Chinese national identity unifies people and stabilizes society. Therefore, “multiple identities, free choice of citizenship, and ambiguity in group membership are unlikely to appeal to a one-party state in charge of an empire” (Dikötter, 1997a, p.368). The Chinese government maintains a high threshold for its issuance of citizenship and green cards to foreigners not only because foreigners are the ethnic Other, but also because they are seen as potential foreign threats to China’s national security. China’s national identity needs to be understood through its national insecurities, which are defined by a discourse of China’s history of humiliation by foreign invasion in the 19th Century since the Opium war (Callahan, 2004).

The mentality that foreigners are considered as a threat to national security is still reflected in contemporary Chinese government propaganda. For example, in 2016, as part of an education program on the National Security Education Day in China, the Beijing government published a comic-style poster warning Chinese civil servants against foreign spies who engage in romantic relationships with them in order to gain access to government documents (*South China Morning Post*, 2016b). In 2018, the Ministry of National Security launched a website in both Mandarin and English to encourage people to report on foreigners who pose threats to national security (*South China Morning Post*, 2018). Thus, in contemporary Mainland China, “Chineseness” is not only fundamentally defined based on blood and descent, but the notion of “race” has also been adopted as a symbol of national cohesion against foreign threats. Today, the “Han” majority and “Chinese” are often overlapping as terms used interchangeably for “ethnic group,” “race” and “nationality” (Dikötter, 1997a; 1997b).

1. Accidental long-term stay on temporary visas

Stay or live?

As soon as I told him that my research was about “international migrants in China,” Bob immediately interrupted me and already had something to say about the term “migrant.”

I don't think the English teachers should be termed migrant or immigrant workers in China because they (the Chinese government) don't give you anything that says that you're an immigrant. You're just a resident from overseas with permission to *stay* here. I don't even really feel like it's permission to *live* here. It's permission to stay here for one year, and then after a year review again and see if they want you to stay, which is different from other places I've worked in. In Japan, they gave you three years. They gave you a foreign alien registration card, and so there, I would say that eventually, you could be an immigrant, but not in China. In Hong Kong, they give you a Hong Kong ID card... The Chinese visa is subject to review, and if they want to change the law, they can at any time.

(Bob, White, US American, male, early 40s)⁹²

Comparing his previous experiences of working in Japan and Hong Kong, Bob did not seem to be happy with China's visa policies. When he was teaching English in Japan, Bob was granted a three-year work visa. Also, having worked and resided in Hong Kong for seven years, Bob had attained a permanent resident card for Hong Kong before he started his job in Shenzhen. In China, however, as with other foreign ELTs who were working on a work visa, Bob held a one-year work visa that was subject to renewal annually.

Bob's dissatisfaction with the limited time scope of his work visa and the uncertainties of a successful renewal in the following year was representative among foreign ELTs. Also, the fact that his continuous presence in the country was subject to legal legislation, which could be changed anytime, led to a greater sense of uncertainties and powerlessness. Such feelings, which were common among the interviewees I talked to, reduce foreigners' incentive to put down roots in China. It was not a coincidence that many foreign ELTs told me that they only planned to stay for one year.

What is interesting, however, is that a significant number of teachers end up staying in China for an extended period of time, despite the inconvenience and uncertainty of annual visa renewal. Some of these teachers are married to Chinese partners, and some are not.

⁹² My interview with Bob was conducted in a café on his university campus in Shenzhen on June 29, 2016.

Nevertheless, their extended stay in China become a kind of accidental migration (Von Koppenfel, 2014). However, for those who plan to settle and retire in China, it is extremely difficult to obtain a Chinese permanent residence card, let alone Chinese citizenship. Thus, some of them end up staying in China for decades on a renewable temporary visa until it becomes unfeasible.

“I never planned to stay in China for so long!”

Charles never planned to stay in China for long and thus did not have a plan when he went to China seven years previously. Before coming to China, Charles had a small business in the US until he went bankrupt in 2010. After his bankruptcy, Charles left the US and went to Hong Kong to work in his friend’s company. When his job in Hong Kong did not go well, Charles found an English teaching job at a university in Shenzhen. At the time we met, it was the seventh year since Charles first started working in Shenzhen. Charles said if he had kept on working in Hong Kong instead of Shenzhen, he would have become a permanent resident of Hong Kong already, given that foreigners are eligible to apply for permanent residence after seven years of living in Hong Kong.

Although they do not give permanent residence permits to Filipinos who work in Hong Kong for years, they would give it to me if I am working as a teacher. Sometimes I think of that too, but I never planned to stay in China for so long.

For Charles, as it is for many other foreign ELTs, a major incentive for him to keep staying in China was the abundant opportunities to make money through teaching English. It was during the summer holiday when I encountered Charles, and there were no classes at the university. I wondered what he was doing in Shenzhen. It turned out that the summer holiday was the golden time for Charles to make extra money.

I am not going on holiday during the summer because kids need English teachers during this time. It’s good money! I am giving private classes, and it pays much better than the university job. With the university job, I only work there because they provide me with a work visa, accommodation, and flight tickets. For private classes, I specialize in IELTS, TOFEL, and SAT, so I am helping kids to prepare for these exams. Most of them are already studying at international schools, and I prepare them to study abroad.

Although teaching English had worked out for Charles so far, he sounded worried about the future as the status of foreign ELTs was declining in Chinese society.

I have been here for seven years, and the benefit of being a foreign English teacher in China is becoming less and less. Every year when I go to renew my visa, they are getting more and more suspicious.

Asked what he thought the reason was, Charles said,

One reason is because of nationalism. Since Xi came into power, nationalism has been on the rise, and foreigners, as outsiders, became less welcomed. And they don't need us as much as before. I am sure when they do not need us, they will just ask us to leave.

Charles's feeling that foreigners are living in China on borrowed time resonates with many foreigners. Charles felt China needed foreigners for its economic development temporarily, and they would be easily replaced as soon as there would be Chinese who could do the same jobs in the future. Charles paused for a while, and sounded bitter:

They (the Chinese government) wouldn't think of us as people who help them build their country and always remember what we contribute. It's a different mentality.

(Charles, White, US American, male, 48-year-old)⁹³

It is not uncommon for foreign ELTs to plan to stay for only one year but end up staying for many "one year." A teacher once described teaching in China as a "swamp." Because working as a foreign ELT in China means a decent salary, minimal working hours, and plenty of leisure time, it keeps foreigners staying. Many foreigners are aware that teaching English is a dead-end job because there is not much room for career advancement, but it is still favored compared to the job options and the lifestyle they have in their home countries. There were stories in which foreigners worked as English teachers for a few years before they returned to their home countries only to find that they were not desirable in the domestic job market. After slaving away for minimum salary in their home countries for a few months, some of them could not bear it and went back to China to teach English. Most Westerners I talked to in Shenzhen could

⁹³ This is part of our conversation during my encounter with Charles at a sushi bar near his workplace in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on July 11, 2017.

not imagine going back to their home country after staying in China for some years. Having little competence in the local job market and having not paid tax for years in their own countries, most Westerners who left their countries for more than five years found it difficult to settle back home again.

Accidental migration

Moving beyond the dichotomy between temporary and permanent migration, Von Koppenfel (2014, pp,43) used the concept of accidental migration to explain the shift from temporary to permanent migration by looking into how migration decisions can sometimes be taken more lightly than they otherwise would, and thus a temporary move could shift into a permanent settlement. To some foreign ELTs, moving to the country they ended up staying in for a long time is not necessarily a thoughtful and conscious decision. When Cawo was desperately trying to escape from her life in the US, teaching English in China was the most accessible exit.

Lai Pik: Did you decide, before you came to China, how many years you were planning to stay? What was the original plan?

Cawo: The original plan was just to get out of the US. My plan was... so ok, I applied to different schools around the world, and China was the first country that responded to me. Just like that. I knew nothing about the city. I looked it up on the internet. I watched it on YouTube. I mean, I know China, history, 5,000 years ago. The dynasty and emperors. But communist China? I know about Hongkong, 'cause Hongkong has been open to the world. There are a lot of Hongkongese Americans in the US, especially New York... so I was inside their culture. When I went to Hongkong, it was easier for me to adapt. Em, also Hongkong was under British rule for 100 years, so it's very easy for me to go there. In China, I have no idea what things are like. I did this Skype interview, and I was on the plane to China a month later.

Lai Pik: That's fast.

Cawo: Yes, I was like, "get me out of US. Anywhere but the US."

Lai Pik: Why?

Cawo: I had graduated from college. I worked for two years in school, and I hated it. Basically, I was miserable. I didn't know how to get out, and I was like a trapped rat. I was looking for an exit. And at that point, I was living with my parents, and I hated that. There's nothing worse, in my opinion, than going to college, not living with your parents, then coming back to live with your parents. So I was like, "God please! Anywhere, anywhere!" And then as soon as this English job called me, I

was like, “I knew nothing about China, but I would come.” That’s how I came to China.

(Cawo, US American, female, 27-year-old)⁹⁴

Without planning to leave their home countries permanently, some foreign ELTs became long-term residents in China unintendedly. Most foreign ELTs, especially men, initially only planned to teach English in China for one year when they first went, and then they either “got comfortable” in their EFL jobs, or fell in love with a Chinese woman, or both, and ended up staying in China for an extended period of time. By the time they considered moving back to their own country and getting a non-English-teaching job, they had often lost their competency in the local job market and had no choice but to remain in China and teach English. Such stories are not uncommon among foreign ELTs, and I heard many of them during my fieldwork.

The story of Don and Ken

Don is a typical example of foreign ELT who stayed in China for an extended period of time unintendedly. He is many teachers before him and many lecturers after him. In 2008, after losing his job as a manager in a US company in Mexico City, Don went to Shenzhen to visit a friend. During his stay, Don was asked to cover for a sick English teacher. Don soon realized he enjoyed teaching as well as the attention he got as a foreigner in China, so he decided to stay for some more time in Shenzhen. He easily got an English teaching job at a university. As Don became familiar with his job, he gradually took up more part-time teaching jobs and started to make more money. He also started dating Chinese women one after another.

Time went by, and Don was turning 50 in 2019. Before he knew it, Don had already been in Shenzhen for eleven years. The excitement Don felt when he first moved to Shenzhen had long passed, and he did not enjoy living in China for many reasons. At the age of 50, he was planning for his retirement. However, Don was in a dilemma because neither the US nor China seemed ideal for his retirement. Returning to the US did not seem to be an option because of the high living expenses in the US and the lack of good job opportunities. Don could not see himself

⁹⁴ My interview with Cawo was conducted on August 19, 2017 in a Starbucks café in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen.

retiring in China either because he would lose his residence permit, which is tied to his work visa, once he reached his retirement age⁹⁵ in China.

During the past decade, Don made a few attempts to return to the US by applying for company management jobs in the US. Although he had worked as a manager in US companies before he taught English in China, he heard nothing about his job applications. Through failed job applications, Don came to realize it was difficult for him to return to the US because he had no advantage in the US job market.

I don't like living in China, and that's why I lock myself in my room when I am not working... but I haven't thought of going back to the US because there are more opportunities here. In the US, you earn good money, but you will need a car to get around, and the expense that comes with a car, and you will need to pay for the apartment and the internet bills, phone bills, which are all much more expensive than the expense in China... I have been trying to look for management jobs in the US though, but as I am getting old and I have not been in the field, I don't think I stand a very good chance.

(Don, White, US American, male, 50-year-old)⁹⁶

Ken worked in the same department as Don. Ken was 36 when I first met him at the beginning of my fieldwork in June 2016, and he had been very helpful in introducing potential interviewees to me, for example, Don was one of the teachers Ken introduced me to. Ken and I have kept in touch since 2016, and I gradually “saw” Don in Ken over the years. I still remembered in October 2016, Ken told me that, “It’s my fourth year in Shenzhen. I will leave China by the end of next June when this academic year is over. Five years are the maximum years I can stay in one place. I’ve got plans ahead...” However, when I went back to Shenzhen in September 2017 for my second field trip, Ken was still working in the same university in Shenzhen. When I asked him about his plans for leaving China and starting his other projects, Ken said, “one more year, and I will be out of China.” In November 2018, during my brief visit to Shenzhen, Ken was still teaching English in Shenzhen; this time, I did not ask him when he was leaving China, and he also did not mention any plans for departure. Not surprisingly, Ken was still in Shenzhen in the same job when I texted him via WeChat in 2019 and 2020, which marked the eighth year of his stay in Shenzhen.

⁹⁵ The retirement age for men in China is 60 year old.

⁹⁶ My interview with Don was conducted in the D-Street Café in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on August 8, 2017.

2. Grim prospects of becoming permanent residents and Chinese citizens

In 2004, the issue of the *Regulations on the Approval and Management of Aliens' Permanent Residence in China* signified the possibility for foreigners to obtain Chinese “green card” and become permanent residents of China. The Chinese green card policy seems to be a breakthrough for China’s migration law development, as it formally provides pathways for foreigners to be admitted as permanent residents in China. However, it is designed not to encourage the immigration of international migrants to China, but rather to make it more convenient for the kind of foreigners China wants to attract to live there. For example, with a permanent residence card, the exit-entry and residence of elite foreigners will no longer be constrained by visas. As emphasized by the then spokesperson of the Ministry of Public Security, Hao Chiyong, when regulations on the permanent residence of foreigners were first issued in 2004, “China is not an immigration country, and the new regulations are aimed at attracting high-level foreign personnel.” He also determined that “there will not be many foreigners applying for the green cards” (*Sina News*, 2004).

2.1. Green card policies in China

Although it is not explicitly stated in any public legislation, Chinese ethnicity appears to be one of the most important considerations when it comes to the decision on a successful Chinese green card application. To the Chinese state, the ideal global talents are foreign nationals with Chinese ethnicity. In fact, according to statistics from the Public Security Bureau, 53% of the 4,700 Chinese green cards issued in 2011 in China were given to overseas Chinese (*Reference News*, 2014). Most of these overseas Chinese were Chinese emigrants who obtained a high level of educational qualifications and foreign citizenship overseas. By issuing green cards to high-skilled overseas Chinese who lost their Chinese citizenship when they adopted their foreign nationality, the Chinese state tries to lure them back to the country with the issuance of green cards. The green card relaxation measure goes hand in hand with the Chinese government’s various programs of attracting overseas Chinese talent. Nationwide programs such as “Thousand People Plan” (*Qianren jihua*), and regional programs such as Shenzhen’s “Peacock Plan” (*Kongque jihua*), are designed to recruit high-skilled overseas Chinese to work in China (Wu, 2016).

Comparing the Chinese immigration policies with those of Japan and South Korea in an interview, Pieke observed that the immigration policies of these Asian countries are “predicated

on a very strong nation-state that defines itself as the home of a particular ethnic and cultural group that wants to maintain its purity and wants to let in only what it really, really desperately needs” (Ives, 2017). The Chinese government’s concern for racial purity explains why overseas Chinese are perceived to be the ideal overseas talent to be granted Chinese green cards or Chinese citizenship, as they do not only fit into the Chinese state’s racialized imagination of Chinese citizens, but are also thought to be more likely to integrate into Chinese society because of their familial link in China. The Chinese government’s concern for racial purity also explains why the government has only intended to open its door for skilled international migrants for economic development, while looking to its domestic population to address its demographic change. Since 2016, the Chinese government has abandoned its One-Child policy and introduced the Two-Child policy in response to the demographic change of an aging population and low fertility rate (Wang, Gu & Cai, 2016). Instead of importing young foreign nationals to reverse the aging population trend as some traditional immigration countries do, the Chinese state insists on domestic population growth, due to its deep-rooted ideology of “Chinese.”

In the Chinese racial discourse, the boundary between “Chinese” and “non-Chinese” is drawn by birth and ethnicity. The Chinese concepts of “distinguishing between the close and the distant” (*qinshu youbie*) and “distinguishing between the insider and outsider” (*neiwai youbie*) could be applied to understand China’s Han-Chinese-centered definition of Chinese. Compared to Chinese nationals of the other 55 officially recognized non-Han ethnic minorities by the Chinese government, Han Chinese are placed at the inner circle of Chinese political and economic power. Here, Han-Chinese is defined as “real” Chinese, while Chinese of other minor ethnicities are perceived to be more distant from the national identity. At the same time, while non-Han Chinese occupy the outer circle of “Chineseness,” foreigners of non-Chinese ethnicity are not even in the circle. Not even remotely given the possibility of being seen as “Chinese,” foreigners of non-Chinese ethnicity are considered as outsiders. The compound the Han-Chinese ethnicity and the Chinese identity explains the Chinese government’s preference for overseas Han-Chinese over foreign nationals of other ethnicities. In this light, China’s green-card system is more of a response to the demand of Chinese emigrants for the recognition of dual nationality, than a policy to retain non-Chinese foreign talents (Liu & Ahl, 2018).

On an everyday level, it is improbable that a non-Chinese looking foreigner will be accepted and regarded as Chinese due to deep-rooted ideology regarding the Chinese ethnicity, which is first and foremost associated with specific biological features. “I will never be Chinese even if I get Chinese citizenship because the Chinese will never think I am Chinese,” a White

American said after living and working in China for five years. Although Chinese citizenship might be unobtainable and undesirable, from foreigners' perspective, the Chinese green card is considered attractive for those who work and live in China regularly for an extended period of time, as it not only exempts foreigners from the hassle of visa application and annual renewal, but it also allows them greater autonomy in various aspects of life within the country (Cao, 2017). However, although more foreigners are moving to China for work and many are staying for years, China's immigration policies do not easily issue green cards to foreigners, especially those who are considered as middling and low-skilled.

2.1.1. High threshold for green cards in China

Since the Chinese government predominantly sees the foreigners they let in as foreign labor that add value to the Chinese economy rather than potential future citizens, the Chinese state has a very low incentive to integrate foreigners into Chinese society and expand the number of Chinese green-card holders among foreigners. Although China started to issue its first green cards to foreigners in 2004, only 7,356 foreigners in total became Chinese green-card holders in the decade that followed. In a press conference in 2004, the head of the Exit Entry Administration Bureau of the Public Security Ministry stated, because China was not an immigration country and China's aim was to attract more high-level talents, China did not want too many foreigners to obtain permanent residence status (Zhou, 2017). Although the Chinese government has slightly relaxed its green card rules in the last few years, it essentially serves as a measure to retain highly skilled foreigners to work in China by facilitating their exit-entry and stay in China.

Discussing the accessibility of citizenship in Asian countries, Asis and Battistella (2013, p.41) observed that the pathways by which international migrants could obtain citizenship can be categorized as "possession of skills/talents or capital" and "marriage to nationals." In China, these pathways are applied to the application for green cards by international migrants. The former pathway emphasizes the values a foreigner brings to Chinese society, and the threshold remains high. According to Article 6 of the *Measures for the Administration of Examination and Approval of Foreigners' Permanent Residence in China* (2004),⁹⁷ a foreigner can apply for green cards through 1) investment, 2) holding high-ranking positions in Chinese institutions, and 3) making a significant contribution to China's development (Ministry of Public Security

⁹⁷ 《外国人在中国永久居留审批管理办法》

& Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004). For the investment immigration track, one has to invest above 2 million USD to be eligible to apply for a green card. For foreigners who apply for green cards based on their high-ranking positions, they need to have resided in China cumulatively for no less than three years within four successive years to be qualified as applicants. As for the pathway of “making a significant contribution to China’s development,” this is vague and difficult to quantify. In other words, because the threshold for China’s existing green-card policy is too high, the global talents China wants to attract might not be interested, while those who are interested might be far from meeting the requirements (*Phoenix News*, 2015).

2.1.2. A stratified green-card policy

In recent years, however, the Chinese government has eased green-card policies in order to attract and retain foreign talents. After the new *Exit-Entry Administration Law* took effect in 2013, the Chinese government leadership has shown a more evident attitude toward welcoming high-skilled international migrants. In 2014, Li Keqiang, premier of the People’s Republic of China, stated that the Chinese government would make it easier for foreigners to attain Chinese green cards (Ouyang, 2014). Since 2015, the Chinese government has started to ease the requirements for foreigners to obtain permanent residency progressively. As a result, 1,575 foreigners were granted such status in of 2016 alone, an increase of 163 percent from the previous year (Cao, 2017; Wong, 2018).

In Guangdong Province, the local government has relaxed its green-card policies in order to attract more foreign professionals to work in pilot free trade zones in the area. In 2016, 16 favorable exit-entry regulations were introduced for expats working in pilot free-trade zones in Guangdong Province in China. The measures relaxed the green-card rules for foreigners by 1) simplifying permanent residency application procedures and providing fast-track approvals for skilled foreign workers in the zone, 2) increasing visa and residency application channels, 3) lowering permanent residency application thresholds for investors. Among the rules, most of them were specially introduced for foreigners working in the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in Shenzhen, and four out of the six rules relaxed green-card regulations for the following groups of foreign workers: 1) High-skilled workers and their spouses and underage children, 2) high-skilled workers in the technology and innovation sector, 3) highly-educated foreign workers, and 4) investors. The remaining two rules included removing the age limit for the application for residence permits by overseas Chinese who wanted to start a business in China, and

allowing international students studying at overseas higher-education institutions to work in enterprises in FTZ (*Shenzhen Daily*, 2016).

Not only are visa and green-card applications made easier for foreign professionals working in the Free Trade Zone in Shenzhen, but foreign professionals' family needs are also taken care of for them to relocate to Shenzhen. For example, spouses of foreign workers working in the Free Trade Zone were granted the right to work in China. Also, their children will also be given education resources in China (*Shenzhen Daily*, 2016). However, middling migrants such as foreign ELTs, who are not considered "top talents," do not enjoy such rights and social welfare. Thus, it shows foreigners' social rights in China are extended based on one's economic values, which is reflected in one's grading in the Chinese work-permit system.

At the same time, the Chinese government sends the message that low-end foreigners are not wanted in the country. When representatives from the business sector proposed to import temporary labor workers to address the labor shortage and increasing labor cost in the manufacturing industry in Guangdong province, officials from the Exit-Entry Administration Department of the Ministry of Public Security turned down the proposal. Officials reiterated that regulations regarding the employment of foreigners in Guangdong followed the central government's principles on the management of foreign workers and adhered to "encourage the high-end, control the average, and restricting the low-end (*guli gaoduan, kongzhi yiban, xianzhi diduan*)" (Yang, 2014).

What the Chinese government really means when it says it will make it easier for foreigners to obtain Chinese green cards is that, it will make it easier for "high-skilled" foreigners to obtain Chinese green cards. As for middling migrants, their possibility of being granted a Chinese green card remains low, and their social rights remain limited. Being at the bottom of China's ranking of its foreign workers, "low-skilled" migrants are not even approved to enter China as legal workers, even though there is a labor shortage in relevant sectors. As Anderson (2015, p.44) observes, "keeping out the poor and facilitating the mobility of high net worth individuals / 'highly skilled' and so on is the sign of a well-designed immigration policy." Although policy restrictions do not prevent illegal migrant workers from filling the market demand, working in China and contributing to the economy, politically, it is not the government who lets them in.

2.2. Foreign ELTs and the unobtainable Chinese green cards

China's current immigration law is designed to address its short-term shortage of skilled labor, and thus while relevant policies are oriented toward maximizing the instant utility of international migrants to the Chinese economy rather than their long-term integration into Chinese society, foreigners of higher economic value are given more preferential treatments than those considered to be less beneficial to the Chinese economy. To many foreigners who do not have outstanding skills or substantial capital, such as foreign ELTs, being married to a Chinese citizen is the most feasible way to stay permanently in China.

Paulo moved to the US from Brazil at the age of 13 and held both US and Brazilian passports. Identifying himself as a Brazilian, Paulo compared the Brazilian citizenship law with the Chinese *Nationality Law (1980)*. Paulo did not understand the irrelevance between a foreigner's length of stay and his eligibility for becoming a permanent resident in China.

In Brazil, if you live there for more than 15 years, then you can become a Brazilian. You are allowed to hold two passports from different countries in Brazil. But in China, no matter how long you live here, you will never be Chinese. I won't stay here unless I marry a *baifumei* (a rich, beautiful woman with fair skin)⁹⁸.

(Paulo, Latino, Brazilian/US American, male, late thirties)⁹⁹

For foreign ELTs who neither see the possibility of obtaining a Chinese green card by "possession of skills/talents or capital" nor "marriage to Chinese nationals," Chinese green cards are simply beyond imagination. Some teachers I talked to did not even know Chinese green cards existed, and after being told of the possibility, most did not think it would happen in reality since most foreign ELTs had never met a foreigner who held a Chinese green card.

Tom had been living and working in China since 2000 with his wife and their son. He first taught English in an international school in Shanghai, where his son was born and raised. Then he moved to Shenzhen with his family and worked as an English teacher in an international school in Shekou. Since Tom had lived in China for 17 years when I interviewed him in 2017, I asked him if he had ever imagined himself living permanently in China. Tom laughed and said,

⁹⁸ *Baifumei* (白富美) literally means White, rich and beautiful. The term refers to a rich and beautiful woman with fair complexion. A *baifumei* is considered as an ideal Chinese woman in the mainstream Chinese society.

⁹⁹ My interview with Paulo was conducted in the D-Street café in Nanshan District in Shenzhen on June 21, 2017.

That's kind of a pipe dream, I think. Because I don't see how that can happen. I've heard people say you can get permanent residency, but I just don't believe it. When I see it, I'll believe it. I've never seen anybody permanently retire here unless they were married to a Chinese person or a Chinese citizen... so when I see it, I'll believe it.

(Tom, White, US American, male, 58-year-old)¹⁰⁰

In the subsequent conversations I had with Tom during my visits to his school, a topic that came up frequently was that he might have to leave China in two years. Tom was 58-year-old, and when he turned 60, he would no longer be eligible to apply for a work visa in China. Seeing that one of his colleagues who turned 60 was asked to leave by the school, he knew he would have to find jobs elsewhere. According to relevant Chinese measures¹⁰¹, 60 is the mandatory retirement age for male workers, and 55 for female workers. As a result, foreigners who reach the statutory retirement age would no longer be eligible to apply for a work visa in China. As foreigners' residence permits are tied to their work visas, they will also lose their residence permits. Although exceptions are made to "top-level" foreigners, foreign ELTs such as Tom are not within the exceptional cases.

Seventeen years of working and residing in China did not guarantee Tom a legal status of permanent residence in China. Tom said he had tried to find ways to continue to work in China in the previous two years, but no international schools would take him at his age. He turned down teaching-center jobs because he was worried they would cast a bad impression on his resume if he were to continue working at international schools later elsewhere. Having resided and raised his family in China for nearly two decades, Tom did not want to leave. However, after weighing the advantages and disadvantages of working in teaching centers in China and working at international schools outside of China, Tom decided to leave China. In 2019, Tom found an English teaching job in an international school in Kazakhstan and had to say goodbye to China. Before he moved to Kazakhstan, Tom said he was worried that his wife might not like living in Kazakhstan, and he would miss the Nanshan mountain, his friends in Shenzhen, and Chinese food. However, Tom had no other choice but to leave.

¹⁰⁰ My interview with Tom was conducted in his classroom in an international school in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on June 14, 2016.

¹⁰¹ *The State Council Temporary Measures on Providing for Old, Weak, Sick, and Handicapped Cadres* 《国务院关于安置老弱病残干部的暂行办法》 and *The State Council Temporary Measures on Workers' Retirement and Resignation* 《国务院关于工人退休、退职的暂行办法》 (1978)

Many foreign ELTs are aware that their stay in China is tied to their work visas, and it would be nearly impossible for them to retire in China unless they are married to a Chinese citizen. They are also aware that even if they find a way to stay for as long as they want to, they will never be regarded as Chinese as they do not look Chinese. While some foreigners still try to learn the Chinese language and culture as an interest or a way to navigate through life during their stay in China, some only make minimal effort to integrate into Chinese society. Knowing they will never become Chinese, and they are only in China for a limited period of time, most foreign ELTs live in China with the mentality of a transient. Felix said,

I know I will never become Chinese no matter how long I stay, and I will not stay in China for long, so like most foreigners here, I try to grab as much as possible, whatever that is, while I am here.

(Felix, White, US American, male, 36-year-old)¹⁰²

Felix did not feel he belonged to China and only saw his relationship with China pragmatically because of policy constraints and the racial nationalism in China. Immigration policies play a crucial role in shaping international migrants' sense of belonging to their host countries. Anderson (2013, p.85) compares international migrants from EU member countries with those from non-EU member countries in the UK. While both EU and non-EU citizens might remain in the UK temporarily, the temporariness of EU citizens is not enforced by the state, and they can expand their length of stay at will. In contrast, the development of "permanent attachment" of many non-EU citizens in the UK is likely to be "obstructed or downright prevented by immigration controls and citizenship legislation."

In the same vein, China's immigration policies structurally prevent middling and low-skilled migrants from attaining permanent residence status and developing a sense of belonging. Living with the mentality of "I am leaving China next year," and not being in a position to make long-term plans in China, most foreign ELTs focus more on making money than finding a way to connect and belong to the local society. The chapter argues, Foreign ELTs' legal status as temporary migrant workers with grim prospects of getting a Chinese green card induces a sense of temporariness in migrants' sense of being in China. Thus, for those who stay in China

¹⁰² The quote is from a conversation I had with Peter during my trip to Shenzhen in 2018.

for an extended period of time, a significant amount of their life is spent in a status of permanent temporariness.

2.3. Chinese citizenship for foreigners

Although acquiring Chinese citizenship is far less heard of and far more complicated than, for example, obtaining a US citizenship, technically foreigners can be naturalized as Chinese citizens. According to Article 7 of the *Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China (1980)*¹⁰³, a foreign national can apply for Chinese citizenship if he or she meets one of the following criteria:

1. they are near relatives of Chinese nationals;
2. they have settled in China; or
3. they have other legitimate reasons.

Despite the legal possibility, successful cases are only limited so far. According to the latest national census, the number of foreigners who had managed to gain Chinese citizenship was only 1,448 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). There are two reasons for the low number of Chinese citizenship acquisitions among foreigners. One is that there have not been many eligible applicants, who must be permanent residents in China. Although it is not specified in the *Nationality Law* that one has to be a permanent resident of China to obtain Chinese citizenship, a permanent residence permit is stated as one of the required documents for the application for Chinese citizenship. In other words, one has to get a Chinese green before applying for Chinese citizenship. The other reason is that, among the limited number of foreigners who have a Chinese green card, their incentive to be naturalized as Chinese citizens applicants is not high, as the acquisition of Chinese citizenship is at the expense of giving up one's existing nationality. As racially homogeneous societies that define their national identities on an ethnocultural basis, China and Japan have similar naturalization policies. That is, "naturalization applicants must not only renounce their allegiance to their country of origin but must also demonstrate evidence of cultural assimilation" (Chung, 2010, p.13).

China's prohibition of dual nationality means a foreign national would have to give up his/her foreign citizenship before he/she could apply for Chinese citizenship, and this is not considered very attractive by most international migrants. As pointed out by Liu and Ahl (2018, p. 24-25),

¹⁰³ 《中华人民共和国国籍法》

...naturalization plays only a minor role in attracting foreign experts, as it is only attractive to returning overseas Chinese who want to settle permanently in China and register in the national household registration scheme. The single-nationality rule codified in the *Nationality Law* is seen as a hurdle by both, Chinese citizens, who have to abandon their former nationality because their new home overseas required them to naturalize abroad, as well as foreigners, who would like to keep their former nationality and thus rather abstain from naturalizing in China.

Apart from the dual-citizenship restriction, some foreigners also consider the Chinese passport unattractive as the number of destinations it allows its holder to travel to visa-free is limited. According to the Henley Passport Index, which is based on the number of visa-free or visa-on-arrival destinations each passport grants its holder access to, the Chinese passport ranks 69 worldwide, as of January 2019 (Henley & Partners, 2019).

Conclusion

By and large, immigration in China is still treated primarily as an issue of immigration control and public security, rather than a matter of integration and citizenship. For example, institutionally, although China established a new immigration bureau in 2018, it is not an independent administration organ, but is under the management of the Ministry of Public Security. Moreover, despite a simplified bureaucratic system and partially relaxed green card rule, the reforms are mainly intended to facilitate international migrants' stay in China rather than integrating them as future citizens. As Ding and Koslowski (2017, p.114) point out, China's new immigration laws and regulations may have facilitated the entry, stay and work of international migrants in China, but administrative changes in themselves are not likely to enable social and political integration of foreigners and overseas Chinese.

Although China has become more open to foreigners' visiting, living and working in China, the Chinese government still holds onto a certain imagination of "Chineseness" and is wary of foreigners as potential national security threats. In contemporary China, "Chinese" is constructed both as a "race" that is primarily defined by biological specificity, and a national identity that is partly defined by the nation's unforgettable history of foreign invasion. Thus, the Chinese government is highly selective of who the country lets in, how long one is allowed to stay, and who gets to stay permanently. In China's global talent competition, it not only prefers overseas Chinese talents, but also makes only a marginal opening to the "best and brightest" of non-Chinese ethnicity in terms of granting permanent resident status.

Under China's current immigration rhetoric, highly skilled foreigners are encouraged to work and stay in China, while middling migrants are controlled, and lowly-skilled migrants are restricted. A major effort of China's immigration law reform in recent years involves making it easier for high-skilled migrants to work in China on an institutional level. Top-level foreigners enjoy preferential treatment in visa regulations, and their visas are usually valid for multiple years. Moreover, they are also more likely to obtain green cards, and enjoy more social rights based on their skills and capital. As for middling migrants such as foreign ELTs, their residence permits are tied to their work visas, which are valid for only one year and subject to annual renewal.

With limited trajectories toward permanent residence in China, non-elite foreign workers such as foreign ELTs become temporary migrant workers whose permission to remain in China is time-limited, and their social and labor rights are also constrained. Thus, for foreign workers in China, citizenship has transformed into "labor citizenship," a concept that was first derived from studies on temporary labor migration in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK by Dauvergne and Marsden (2014). Such labor citizenship determines one's possibility to remain and the amount of rights he/she is granted based on one's labor value, and can be understood as a governance regime that selects and regulates international migrants based on neo-liberal ideals. Applying the concept in Guangzhou Province, "high-skilled" foreign workers in the free trade zone are given more channels to obtain Chinese green cards, and they are also granted more rights. However, foreign workers in the manufacturing industry, who fall into the category of "low-skilled" migrants, are denied such legal permission to enter China.

By exploring the (im)possibility for foreign ELTs to obtain Chinese green cards and citizenship, the chapter discusses the changing attractiveness of China as a migration destination for non-elite migrants. Within China's current immigration regime, although a significant number of foreigners work as ELTs in China, government policies do not encourage long-term settlement of these foreign workers. The one-year work visa regulation functions ideologically to limit the rights of foreign workers of less desirable skill sets and expand the state's rights to control and deport them. The ABC categorization in the Chinese work permit system for foreign workers justifies unequal treatments of "high-skilled" and "low-skilled" workers. China's immigration policies restrict and reduce foreign ELTs in China as merely economic beings without making it possible for most to consider family and retirement life in China. In this light, rights restrictions serve to ensure temporary stays, although the time frame of "temporary" in the case of foreign ELTs in China spans from one year to decades.

Chapter 7 The privileged: International school teachers

Teachers in the US are the middle class, but at the bottom of the middle class; In China, we are middle class at the upper level.

- An international school teacher in Shenzhen

I feel offended when people think I am an English teacher. I always tell people I work in an international school. I am a professional.

- Another international school teacher in Shenzhen

Introduction

There is not only inter-group stratification among international migrants in China; there is also intra-group stratification within the occupation of foreign ELTs there. In public perception in China, foreign ELTs in China are often treated as one homogeneous group. However, there is an implicit internal hierarchy among those who work as foreign ELTs in China. Some teaching positions are considered as the “top jobs” within the English teaching profession because of the attractive remuneration package (including salary, accommodation, flight tickets, healthcare, children’s education, etc.) that comes with them. Some EFL teaching jobs are considered as the “McJobs” for expatriates in China (Schofield, 2015), as these jobs often only offer local wages with very few or no benefits. Distinctions among different tiers of teachers can be distinguished by the kind of institution one works in. As shown in the pyramid¹⁰⁴ below (see illustration 36), “top jobs” in the English language-teaching field in China are offered by overseas employers, such as satellite campuses of overseas universities and foreign-owned international schools¹⁰⁵. Teachers in second-tier teaching positions are English language lecturers at local higher-education institutions, while teaching positions at the bottom can be found at local Chinese schools, nurseries, and teaching centers.

¹⁰⁴ The pyramid is derived from the author’s discussions with various foreign ELTs who had been working in the EFL field in China for years.

¹⁰⁵ The official name for such type of international schools is “schools for children of foreign personnel”.

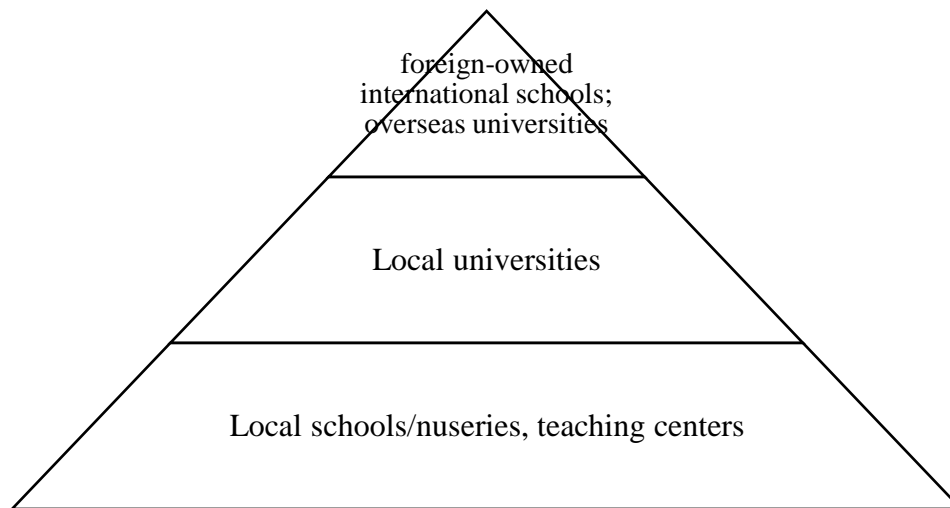


Illustration 36: A pyramid showing different tiers of teachers distinguished by employment institutions.
Source: The chart is derived based on my discussions with various teachers.

This chapter and the following chapter, which aim to look into nuanced distinctions among different tiers of teachers under the broad category of “foreign ELTs,” are meant to be read as a pair for the purpose of comparative studies. This chapter will focus on the top of the teacher hierarchy (the more privileged teachers) before moving on to the analysis of teachers placed in the lower tiers of the hierarchy (the less privileged teachers) in the next chapter. The two chapters compare migration motivations and employment experiences of teachers of different social positionings. Empirical findings from the two chapters suggest that, although migration motivations of the more privileged and less privileged teachers are both characterized by economic reasons, escapism, and pursuit of lifestyle, the two groups of teachers prioritize their multiple migration motives differently. In terms of employment experience, not only are the remuneration packages of the more privileged and less privileged teachers in stark contrast to each other, the less privileged group are also more socially marginalized and often face precarious employment situations.

My empirical findings suggest that what distinguishes teachers in top teaching positions offered by Western institutions from teachers in lower-tier teaching positions offered by local Chinese institutions is their education and professional qualifications. Taking university teaching positions for example, while an English language lecturer teaching in an overseas university China branch has to hold at least a Ph.D. degree, an English lecturer in a local Chinese university only needs to hold a master’s degree. Also, while teachers hired by foreign-owned international school teachers have to be licensed teachers in their countries of origin, teachers teaching at local Chinese schools are not trained to be teachers, although

some of them have completed short-term teacher-training courses and have TEFL/TESL teaching certificates.

Theoretical framework

Expatriate literature

Drawing on expatriate literature (Cohen, 1977; Fecher, 2007; Lindley, 2012; Farrer, 2018), this chapter examines the migration experiences of international school teachers. International school teachers can be categorized as “privileged migrants” (Fechter & Walsh, 2010). As their migration processes are facilitated by powerful transnational corporations and they are “protected” by institutional power. As a result, the migration experiences of international school teachers is more of that of traditional expatriates and differs greatly from the migration experiences of self-initiated foreign ELTs who teach at local Chinese schools (see chapter 8).

While the term “expatriates” is commonly used to refer to mobile professionals in a colloquial sense, it is controversial in academia as the term tends to be reserved for White Western migrants (Fechter, 2007). Scholars of critical expatriate studies (Kunz, 2016; Farrer, 2018) suggest to resolve the contested nature of the term through an “emic” approach by investigating the term as a “category of practice” that implies economic, gendered, and racial privileges of “expatriates.” Although enjoying privileges as expatriates in Asia, foreign teachers are placed at the bottom of the stratified expatriate community (Farrer, 2018).

Critical cosmopolitanism

From a bigger picture, I use critical cosmopolitanism as an analytical concept to understand how the social positions of different groups of migrants can differ, even if when they are in the same occupation. Critical cosmopolitanism (Glick-Schiller & Irving, 2014) challenges the existing hegemonic understanding of cosmopolitanism that is dominantly defined by the “tolerance of other” (Glick-Schiller & Irving, 2014, p.6), and argues that different people have different and relational social positionings. The comparative analysis in this chapter and the following chapter demonstrate that the term cosmopolitanism has different connotations when it applies to a more privileged and less privileged group of migrants. For instance, compared to organizational migrants, self-initiated migrant teachers have less institutionalized resources that facilitate their migration process.

International schools in Shenzhen

Considering the scope of writing, this chapter will only focus on ESL teachers working at foreign-owned international schools, which are officially called “International schools for children of foreign personnel” in China. The dissertation selects international school teachers as an example of the relatively more privileged teacher group because the number of international schools is much higher than China-branch campuses of overseas universities¹⁰⁶ and thus more representative. The international school sector has been one of the most vibrant educational developments in China. Compared to state schools, international schools are more market-oriented because they charge high tuition fees, even when they are operated by not-for-profit organizations (Yamato & Bray, 2006). The demand for international education in China mostly comes from wealthy Chinese middle-class parents. They see sending their children to international schools as a pathway to prepare their children to study abroad, as international schools provide international curriculums that allow their children to apply for universities in Western countries.

International schools are welcomed by the Chinese government, as they help to alleviate the situation of unequal resource distribution in the public education sector and help cultivate more globally competitive labor. In 2010, the Ministry of Education emphasized the opening up of education, including increasing international educational exchange and introducing overseas education resources (The State Council of the PRC, 2010). In 2012, in order to encourage the establishment of more international schools, the central government even delegated the power on the administrative examination and approval of international schools from the Ministry of Education to provincial education bureaus (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2015).

Due to increasing market demand as well as relaxed government policies, the number of international schools in affluent Chinese cities has been growing rapidly. In terms of ownership, international schools in China can be divided into three categories: 1) Foreign-owned international schools, 2) private Chinese-owned international schools, 3) international school sections in Chinese public schools. Until 2018, there were 821 international schools¹⁰⁷ in China, among which 121 were schools for children of foreign personnel (foreign-owned international

¹⁰⁶ Until 2018, the total number of overseas universities that have set up branch campuses in Mainland China is 38 (Zhu, 2018), while the total number of foreign-owned international schools is 121 (*Newschool Insight Media*, 2018).

¹⁰⁷ International schools counted in the statistics are strictly those whose study programs are authorized by international education program institutions or schools that are certified by international school quality assurance organizations.

schools), 426 were private Chinese-owned international schools, and 274 were international school sections in Chinese public schools. In the Guangdong province, there were more than 130 international schools, making it the region with the most international school nationally (*Newschool Insight Media*, 2018).

As Shenzhen aspires to become a world city, internationalizing education is the Shenzhen government's top development agenda. The number of international schools, which are highly sought after by parents who are overseas Chinese returnees and affluent Chinese middle class, has continued to rise. In 2018, there were 67 international schools in Shenzhen, in which most were concentrated in the Nanshan district (*Tencent News*, 2018). Below is a chart (illustration 37) showing the distribution of international schools in different districts of Shenzhen.

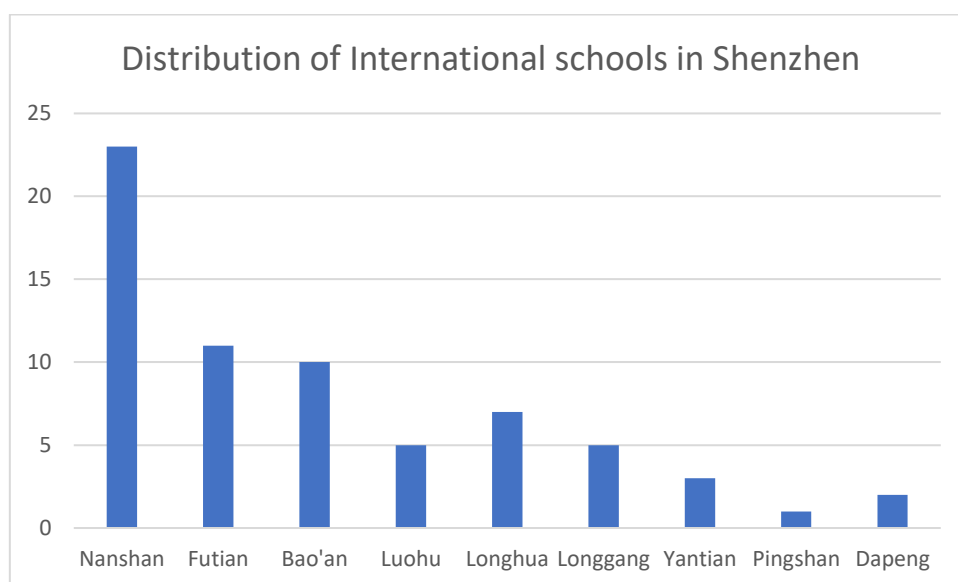


Illustration 37: A chart showing the distribution of international schools in Shenzhen.

Source: The chart was made by the author according to statistics available on *Tencent News* (2018).

The chapter provides an ethnography on foreign ELTs who work in a foreign-owned international school, and whose job contract terms are those of employees on overseas assignments. Highlighting the privileged status of international school teachers, this chapter examines their migration experiences in Shenzhen. Observing a strikingly high number of Chinese students in this foreign-owned international school, the chapter also captures teachers' experiences of teaching in a transnational and intercultural environment.

1. Shenzhen International School

The chapter is based on my fieldwork in an American-owned foreign-accredited international school (The Shenzhen International School¹⁰⁸) that offers an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program. The school has 37 branch schools in more than 30 countries globally. In China, the school has five branch schools, and one of them is located in the Nanshan district of Shenzhen. The Shenzhen International School in Shenzhen has more than 300 teachers, who teach from pre-school level to high school level across five different campuses. Participant observation and interviews were conducted in 2016 and 2017 on the main campus of the school. I participated in various school programs and activities, including orientation events for new teachers, professional development training for staff, school open days, and training programs for parents, as well as observing classes. Twenty-six teachers were interviewed, of which ten specialized in teaching English to students who spoke English as a second language.

1.1. Student demography

A glimpse of a paper reminder (illustration 38) in a toilet of the Shenzhen International School shows the demography of the students in the school. The “wash your hands” reminder was printed in three languages – South Korean, English, and Chinese, the mother tongues of three major groups of students on the campus.



Illustration 38: A photo of a reminder in the Shenzhen International school.

Source: The photo was taken by the author in the Shenzhen International school on August

¹⁰⁸ The name of the school as well as the names of all the people interviewed in the dissertation appear in the form of pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

Foreign-owned international schools are supposed to be comprised of foreign students, as such schools only accept students with foreign passports. However, surprisingly, the student population of the Shenzhen International School was predominantly Chinese. As one of the key expatriate institutions that culturally “reproduce” expatriates, international schools across Asia are experiencing radical decolonization; as local Asian children are dominating enrolment in such schools, it is no longer an exclusively White experience (Farrer, 2018).

Although the Shenzhen International School only accepted students with foreign passports (including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), a large student population in the school was still of Asian ethnicity. Among the 1,195 enrolled students in the school, 41% of the students were Mainland Chinese with Hong Kong passports. To overcome the passport restriction, many Mainland Chinese parents in the Shenzhen International School obtain Hong Kong passports, so their children can meet the enrolment requirement of foreign-owned international schools. The table (illustration 39) below shows the number and percentage of enrolled students of different nationalities in the Shenzhen International School in 2016. The table only includes nationalities of which student numbers reached five or more than five.

Shenzhen International School
Enrolled Students as of the end of June 2016
Student information summary

Total number of students: 1195

Nationality	Number	Percentage (%)
Hong Kong	489	41%
South Korea	219	18%
United States	143	12%
Canada	54	5%
Taiwan	53	4%
Japan	46	4%
India	3	3%
Australia	18	2%
Malaysia	16	1%
Philippines	12	1%
United Kingdom	11	1%

Brazil	10	1%
France	10	1%
Netherlands	8	1%
Singapore	8	1%
New Zealand	7	1%
Russia	7	1%
Macau	6	1%
Guinea-Bissau	5	0%

Illustration 39: A table of student information summary of the Shenzhen International School.
source: The admission office of the Shenzhen international school

A major reason that led to the changing student demography of foreign-owned international schools is the decrease in number of Western expatriate children. At the same time, foreign-owned international schools are becoming popular with Chinese children who hold foreign passports. An experienced international school director in Shenzhen observed that the reason for the decrease of “true” expat children and increase of ethnic Chinese students at international schools in the past years was because overseas talents were increasingly replaced by overseas Chinese returnees or local Chinese professionals.

There are fewer expats with children in China because this is expensive. Many companies either have local employees doing those jobs that they used to hire expats for, or they bring in people and they try not to bring families because it’s so expensive. Across China, the number of true expat children – when I say “true”, it’s in terms of not just their ID; They live aboard, and they are here for a few years, and they are going to leave, so that type of international children are fewer in China than they used to be – the number is going down quite a bit. So the demand from expats is going down and the demand from ethnically Chinese children who have a foreign ID is going up and up and up.

(Jay, White, US American, male, 70-year-old)¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Expert interview with the director of a renowned international school in Shenzhen on May 31, 2016.

1.2.Parents

I met Pan at an open house event at the Shenzhen International School in July 2016 before the summer holiday started. Pan was one of the parents invited to the event in which students' artworks and performances were showcased. The photo below (illustration 40) shows a students' singing and dancing performance during the open house event on the pre-school campus.



Illustration 40: A photo of students' performance during an open house event with their Filipino teacher at the foreground.

Source: The photo taken by the author on July 13, 2016 in the Shenzhen International School.

Pan's preference for international schools for her children

To get a better idea of why Chinese parents sent their children to the Shenzhen International School, I interviewed Pan, a housewife in her late thirties and a mother of two boys. Pan was the mother of two school-age sons who both studied at international Schools. Pan's younger son was attending the Shenzhen International School, which only admitted students with foreign passports (including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan). Her older son, who did not have a foreign passport, was attending another international school that was open to Chinese nationals. Pan told me that she could send her younger son to the Shenzhen International School

because he was born in Hong Kong and had a Hong Kong passport. As for her older son, he was born in Mainland China and studied in a local Chinese school in Mainland China until grade two, before he followed his Dad to the US and studied there for a few years. When Pan's husband relocated back to Shenzhen for work, their older son came back to China too. Pan and her husband decided to send their older son to an international school instead of a local Chinese school because it was difficult for him to catch up with the Chinese public school curriculum after being abroad for a few years. Pan said she preferred international education anyway because international schools allowed students more choices and gave them the freedom to choose before their university studies. She compared traditional Chinese education with international school education, and used eating as a metaphor.

In traditional Chinese schools, you have to recite selected articles that are considered to be well-written, no matter you like it or not. Everybody has different taste in terms of reading, it is ok to read an article you don't like for once, but it is too much if you are asked to memorize every word of it. At international schools, they don't ask you to recite. They ask you to read a book every week and write a book report. You spend more time reading instead of memorizing a few articles. In the Chinese education, it is like asking kids to eat certain dishes because the adults think it's good for them. In international education, it is like going to a buffet, and kids get to explore all the food that they can eat, and they can choose for themselves.

Pan felt that schools in China expected students to be good in all subjects, but overseas schools valued students' strengths. Pan said her older son was not good in the Chinese Language and Physical Education subjects, so in the Chinese system, teachers would be driven mad and call her up to talk about her son's "problems." However, in the US, her child was valued because of his talent in Maths and computers. "He got a few offers from different schools in the US because they thought he was strong in certain areas." Pan also liked that international schools cultivated students' ability to think differently and independently.

Kids are less restricted at international schools. They are allowed to have different answers. For example, if you are doing a history exam in an international school, you will be asked, "what do you think would be different if this war did not take place?" and kids could have their own thoughts as long as the arguments are sound. In a Chinese school, you will be asked the year and place the war took place, as well as the causes and consequences of the war, which were covered in the class.

Pan's decision to send her children to international school was a decision made with no turning back. As she explained, "once you are in the international schools, you cannot go back to mainstream Chinese education because the curriculum and everything are different." Although Pan thought international school education was better than local Chinese school education for her children, she did not think international schools in China were as good as education in Western countries. One of the reasons was that she was not entirely convinced of the teachers' qualifications at international schools in China. "For example, here (the pre-school campus for students between three to six years old), you have many Filipino teachers teaching because it is cheaper."

Therefore, Pan and her husband had planned for both of her sons to study abroad as soon as they were old enough to take care of themselves. The couple had also planned for their children to attend universities overseas in the future. Pan told me that her older son, who was thirteen years old, was leaving to study in the US soon, while Pan would stay in Shenzhen with her husband and their younger son. Pan said her older son was going to stay with a host family in the US, so I asked if she and her husband would worry that her son was still too young to live in the US without his parents. She said they were not too worried:

Because he needs to become independent someday. We cannot take care of him forever. If he doesn't like this school or this host family, then we will change another one for him. We call this "free-range parenting."

(Pan, Chinese, female, late 30s)¹¹⁰

Analysis

Pan's story is the story of many Chinese middle-class parents who want the best education for their children. Preferring Western education to local Chinese education, Chinese middle-class parents are sending their children to study in Western countries at a younger age (Chong, 2016). Before sending their children to study overseas, Chinese middle-class parents would send their children to study at international schools in China so they would be equipped with the English language they need for their overseas studies. Thus, international schools in China, as a

¹¹⁰ My interview with son was conducted on 13 July 2016 during the open house event of the Shenzhen International School.

stepping stone for further education in Western countries, are growing at an unprecedented speed, especially in wealthy Chinese cities.

The thriving international school market in China is closely linked with the commercialization of overseas higher education in Western countries, as students of international schools in China are predominantly Chinese students who are international-students-to-be in Western colleges and universities. In China, overseas education credentials are seen as valuable cultural capital that can be converted into economic capital in a global knowledge-based labor market. Thus, parents are eager to send their children to study in Western countries, especially English-speaking countries. In her book *Education, Migration, and Cultural Capital in the Chinese Diaspora*, Johanna Water (2008, p.3) opens with two phenomena common in East Asia. The first phenomenon is that women in their late pregnancy fly to the US to give birth to their babies, so their children can get US citizenship¹¹¹ and will have a chance to study in a US university at local student fees when they grow up. The second one is that parents in Hong Kong send their children away for overseas education to save them from having to take highly competitive national exams, which determine their chances for local university education. The examples above show that parents in East Asia will go great length to provide Western education for their children because it is not only a way out of highly demanding local education system, but it is also a valuable form of cultural capital. As Ong (1999, p.95) observes, “For many ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, both the well-off and the not-so-rich, strategies of accumulation begin with the acquisition of a Western education...”

Overseas education, commonly used in China to refer to education in English-speaking countries, has become more common because of China’s growing economy, China’s expanding middle class (Cheng, 2010), relaxation of state regulation, and rise of commercialized education agencies (Lan, 2018). While self-funded overseas study used to be an elite privilege, it has become a mass-consumed commodity by the Chinese middle class (Lan, 2018). As the affluent Chinese middle class sees overseas education as one of the exclusionary tactics for them to accumulate cultural capital in the form of academic credentials and reproduce their social status. Also, as higher education in China democratizes, overseas education is perceived as a way to stand out among hundreds of thousands of annually produced university graduates (Waters, 2008). What is more, the quality of Chinese university education is also a concern, as educational resources in China are highly stratified between rural and urban areas as well as

¹¹¹ In the US, children obtain their citizenship at birth through the legal principle of *jus soli* (“right of the soil”), which means they are automatically granted a US citizenship if they are born in the US.

between coastal and inland cities, with more than half of government and non-governmental funding concentrated in coastal cities (Mok, Wong & Zhang, 2009).

2. Teachers in the Shenzhen International School

2.1. Motivations

Teachers at the Shenzhen International School are certified teachers with two years' teaching experience in their own countries. While the majority are from the US, there are also teachers from other English-speaking countries, such as Canada, the UK, and New Zealand. Most of them were recruited from outside of China through international job fairs and did not have a destination in mind when they applied to teach overseas. In the case of US Americans, when talking about the reason they left the US to work in China, one of the common push factors that was brought up repeatedly was the stress and underpayment of working as a teacher in state schools in the US. As summarized by a newspaper article illustrating the contrast between working in the US and China as a teacher – “In the US and Canada, teachers are often underpaid – and many have quit the profession because they could not make a decent living,” whereas “in China, there are hundreds of millions of children whose parents are willing to pay if they can get high-quality education (*South China Morning Post*, 2016a).” In the US, high-school teachers make only 61% of what other full-time workers of similar education level make, while teachers in France and New Zealand earn more than non-teaching professionals with similar educational achievement (Kopf, 2016). On the other hand, there are many attractive aspects of working in China, including a higher socio-economic status, a better lifestyle, and the opportunities to travel.

2.1.1. Push factors

Job dissatisfaction in the US

Experienced teachers who left the US to teach in China were often not happy with the working environment for teachers in the US. Some teachers complained that since the US education policies were constantly changing and put a lot of pressure on teachers to ensure students' academic success, it was stressful for teachers to keep up with the changes as well as to be overly responsible for students' academic results. For example, when George W. Bush was the US president, he launched a “No Child Left Behind” education policy and emphasized the

academic performance of students. However, the education policy changed with the change of each of the subsequent US presidents. Thus, some teachers from the US left their home countries to escape adverse working conditions back home.

American teachers aren't paid very well in the States, you know. And they are not really well recognized as well. They don't get a lot of recognition from the administration. There's not a lot of funding in education unfortunately in the States, which I think Obama tried to rectify that a little bit. But unfortunately, I don't think Trump had any interest in it. So yeah, that's the background.

(Justin, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)¹¹²

While being a teacher in the US is not that rewarding, China presents more opportunities for foreign teachers. Leo, who was teaching in the Shenzhen International School, summarized his reasons for moving to China as, "the education policies, the result-oriented system, kids' classroom behavior, the inflexibility of teaching other subjects, the corrupted Teacher Union who does not really help to improve teachers' well-being." Leo and his wife were both teaching in the Shenzhen International School in Shenzhen. He said the decision to move to China was spurred by his wife's ideas. Leo's wife had also been a teacher back in the US, and the school she was working for wanted to eliminate her position without having to violate the contract, so she was made to leave the job by herself. At that time, Leo had been working as a Spanish teacher for ten years already. He said he did not like teaching in the US for many reasons. Firstly, he did not like the policymakers who made data demonstrating progress the priority of teaching. He did not like the fact that the school did not care about children's behaviors, and students did not bear any consequences when they acted out in the classroom.

They get a suspension, but isn't it what they want? They didn't want to come to school, that's why they acted out in the first place. Instead of giving the kids what they wanted, I thought the school should make the kids understand what the consequences are and help them understand the purpose of coming to school every day.

¹¹² My interview with Justin was conducted in a café in the Haiya Binfen Cheng Shopping Mall in the Bao'an District in Shenzhen on September 15, 2017.

Leo was also not happy with the inflexibility regarding which subjects a teacher can teach in the US. Since Leo was certified to be a Spanish teacher in the US, he was only allowed to teach Spanish.

I was teaching Spanish for ten years, and I wanted to be able to teach different subjects, but the employers in the US always said, because my resume only said about my experience in teaching Spanish, they could not offer me jobs on teaching other subjects. In the US, learning a second language is not taken seriously. Kids start learning when they were six, although many research showed that the earlier the kids start the better. And then Spanish was an elective subject, so the whole system and mentality just made the kids care less about the Spanish language subject. The school told the kids if they pass the test, they wouldn't have to take the final test. However, wouldn't it make the kids learn more if they stick it out till the end of the year instead of just passing one test in the middle of the semester?

(Leo, US American, male, 36-year-old)¹¹³

After Leo's wife lost her job, the couple went to an international school job fair in the United States and got job offers from the Shenzhen International School in Shenzhen. In Shenzhen, Leo became a homeroom teacher for 10-year-old students and was responsible for teaching a few different subjects to his class. Compared to his frustrating experience of teaching Spanish in the US, Leo was happy to be able to engage in teaching different subjects in China.

Burnouts in the US

A few teachers in their fifties reported that they were suffering from burnout before they left the US and needed a change. Since China was the first opportunity that came up, they took the job offer and moved to China without planning to. Robin had been working as a teacher of special education for 17 years in a public school in the US before he became an ESL teacher in the Shenzhen International School. He said it was never his plan to go to China as he had never lived abroad by himself before. However, Robin desperately needed a change after working in a stressful environment for 17 years and suffering from burnout. Therefore, when his friend told him about the opportunity to work in China, Robin decided to give it a try.

¹¹³ My interview conducted on 23 September 2016 in Leo's classroom on the main campus of the Excellence international school.

If you would have told me five years ago that I would have come to China to live, I would have been like, “no” ... But then I really needed a change. I was in the same school for 17 years. I taught the same subject at the same school in the same classroom for 17 years. I was ready for something different. I was like, “Let’s give it a shot. It’s one year. If I don’t like it, I can go back and pick up where I stopped.”... I was a little burned out. Special ed(ucation) is a little rough, especially the population that I was working with... The kids that I worked with had mental disabilities, and the parents felt like there was nothing really wrong with them, that they could do a lot of stuff that mentally and physically they just could not do. When they have a child that has that disability, they just want their child to be normal. It’s hard to say. You can only be so normal with what you have, and they had a lot of unrealistic expectations, a lot. It was a lot of pressure from that point of view... If my friend had not brought the job up to me, I honestly ... Like I said, I was looking for jobs at the Department of Defence, so wherever they would have offered me a job I would have taken it. As far as for international school, it really was never in my mind to look at international schools or to check them out.

(Robin, US American, male, 45-year-old)¹¹⁴

Compared to the relatively rigid public education system in the US, the international school system in China allows teachers more freedom and flexibility in the classroom. In Leo’s case, since he had already been unhappy with the education system in the US, he jumped on the first opportunity to get out of the system when his wife suggested to leave the US. In Robin’s case, he was suffering from being a teacher of special education and desperately needed a change. Although going to China was not part of the plan for Leo or Robin, the push factors of continuing to teach in the US were so strong that they were willing to go out of their comfort zone and embrace the unknown. Leaving the old system in the US behind, both Leo and Robin enjoyed the new possibilities and space in their teaching career overseas.

2.1.2. Pull factor: Lifestyle in China

Higher socio-economic status in China

Most teachers may not be teaching in China because they intentionally applied to work in China, but rather because China happened to be where their job offers led them to when they applied for international school jobs in job fairs. However, their subsequent stay was a conscious choice

¹¹⁴ My interview was conducted in the sports stadium of the Excellence International school during Robin’s lunch break on 15 June 2016.

after experiencing the perks of working in China as an expatriate professional. International school teachers are considered professionals on overseas assignments and thus get remuneration packages as expats. Unlike self-initiated migrants who have to navigate the Chinese bureaucratic system and build a life in Shenzhen on their own, international school teachers are well taken care of by their schools. A teacher in the Shenzhen International School described feeling like a celebrity when she arrived in China from the US.

The school rolled out red carpets for us. They sent staff to pick us up at the airport, and the staff waved at us with our names. Then we were taken to phone shops and get our SIM cards. They gave us apartments with amenities, bed sheets and everything... We live a luxury life in China. We can afford to hire *aryi* (domestic helpers) to do our housework. Our kids' tuition fees are being paid for. Teachers in America are the middle class, but at the bottom of the middle class; In China, they are the middle class at the upper level.

(Chloe, US American, female, 44-year-old)¹¹⁵

From the school's perspective, it is in the school's interest to provide as much assistance and benefits to its employees as possible. For example, the school organized very thoughtful orientation events for new teachers every semester. When I talked to the organizer of the orientation event, I told her I was very impressed with the orientation because the week-long orientation took care of every aspect of teachers' lives, from accommodation and visa application to transportation guide and grocery shopping. She said, "We tried to help them settle the best we could because we do not want them to spend too much energy on a survival level. We want them to be able to focus on teaching more."

International school teachers enjoy a higher living standard by moving to China. A middle-aged male teacher who moved to China after working in the US for ten years said, "you want to know why we came to work in China? Because in the US, teachers are at the bottom of the social hierarchy among professionals. In America, people with the same educational qualification are earning much more than we do." A young female teacher, who was abroad for the first time, was amazed by how international school teachers were treated in China. "Teachers' social status in the US is pretty low, but now I've moved to China, I realize my

¹¹⁵ My conversation with Chloe took place on 14 July 2016 on the pre-school campus of the Excellence International school. The quote was a construction from memory right after our conversation.

status as a teacher is elevated. We get a good salary, live in nice apartments, and get all kinds of benefits.”

Sociologist Daniel Rossides (1997) divides the class system of the United States into five classes: the upper class, the upper-middle class, the lower-middle class, the working class, and the lower class. Elementary school teachers, who are less affluent professionals, fall into the lower-middle class. As many certified teachers in the US experience, by moving to teach in China, they also move up in terms of their social class, which is reflected by their remuneration and standard of living.

Remuneration package and lifestyle

Since teachers are sent to work in China in the form of overseas assignments, they enjoy institutionalized relocation arrangements and the benefits of overseas employees. For example, in the Shenzhen International School, “foreign hire”¹¹⁶ teachers are not only paid a decent salary, but their visa fees, tax in China, flight tickets home, and utility bills are all paid by their employer. Moreover, the benefits they can enjoy include high-end accommodation, medical insurance, and, most importantly, their children’s costly tuition fees in the international schools they teach in.

Teachers’ salaries in China are lower than what they are paid in the US. In the US, the average annual income of a teacher nationwide is 48,000 USD. However, teachers’ salary varies in different states and cities. In big cities such as Washington, while the average annual income is 56,000 USD, the lowest annual income is 42,000 USD and the highest is 72,000 USD. In China, international school teachers make between 180,000 to 480,000 RMB (25,000 USD to 67,000 USD) a year, and this varies based on location, school, experience, degree, position, etc. The average monthly salary for most teachers in China is 240,000-300,000 RMB (33,000-50,000 USD). In the Shenzhen International School, a teacher with two years’ teaching experience is paid 240,000 RMB (33,000 USD) every year, and the highest salary can be 460,000 RMB (63,000 USD).¹¹⁷ In order to increase employees’ loyalty, the school raises teachers’ salaries annually for each extra year teachers stay with the school until their annual salary reaches the ceiling.

¹¹⁶ Foreign hires refer to employees who are moving to another country to work for their company under a contract and under the employment conditions of their home countries.

¹¹⁷ Salary information is provided by teachers working in the Shenzhen International school.

Teachers from the US reported that although their actual salary in China is slightly lower than what they were paid in the US, they were able to save up more money and enjoy a better lifestyle in China, because of the employee benefits they received and a lower expense in China. For example, in the US, a car is a necessity, but in Shenzhen, not only is public transportation convenient, but most teachers are either allocated accommodation that is near their school campus or the school would send a coach to pick them up and drive them home on workdays for free. Many teachers envisioned buying a house in their home country with the money they saved from working in China.

To reduce the turnover of teachers as much as possible, apart from offering a good retirement program for employees who have served in the school for more than 12 years, the Shenzhen International School also has a family-friendly policy to retain teachers. According to the school administration, teachers get the best contract terms when a teacher and his/her spouse are both teachers. The school preferred to hire teaching couples, and the spouse of a teacher who was already working for Shenzhen International School would be given preference in a job application among all the qualified job applicants if he/she had the right qualifications. From the school's perspective, it is less expensive to hire teaching couples as they can share the same accommodation. Moreover, it also reduces staff turnover because teachers are more likely to stay when their partners are also working in the same school, and more so when their children are also attending the same school.

Teachers who have children tend to stay longer in the same place to provide a stable environment for their children. The Shenzhen International School did not only have an excellent and flexible maternity-leave policy, but also offered insurance benefits for employees' entire family regardless of their family size. Teachers' children could attend the school for free on all levels, from pre-school to high school. It was common to see teaching couples with more than two children in Shenzhen International School because the school welcomed that. Many teachers in the Shenzhen International School had been raising their children in Shenzhen. They considered the city an ideal place to raise children, because it was safe with good living standards, and Hong Kong's world-class medical service was close by. In Shenzhen, teachers could afford to hire caretakers to help take care of their children where they would have to do it all by themselves back in their home countries. Wanting their children to learn Chinese was also a motive for teachers to raise their children in Shenzhen, as they believed having Chinese language skills would benefit their children in the future.

Teachers in the Shenzhen International School generally found greater financial stability by teaching English overseas than staying in their home countries. Haley taught science in the Shenzhen International School. When I went to observe her class during the summer school period, she was teaching a group of 9-year-old children to make parachutes that could carry eggs through the air without breaking them. The kids were very excited when it was time for the test. Everybody ran to the staircase on the third floor and took turn flying their parachutes down to the ground floor. After the class, I got to talk to Haley. She told me it was her first year teaching abroad, and that her husband was still in the US with their two daughters. Haley said she missed her family very much, and her husband was working toward the family's reunion. The plan was that her husband would come to teach English in Shenzhen as soon as he completed his bachelor's degree in the US. When he came, he would bring their daughters. Haley said her husband had been a businessman, but since his business had not gone well, he was trying to find another way to make a living and thought teaching English in China would be a way out.

Tom had been working in the Shenzhen International School since 2011. He said although the actual salary he got was not exceptionally high, he enjoyed a much better lifestyle in China than when he was in the US because of all the benefits he got as an employee on an overseas assignment. Below was our conversation.

Lai Pik: May I know how much you get paid?

Tom: This school does not pay that much. I would say without the benefits it's only like \$35,000 a year. That's like the salary, so I do get some other benefits, like I get travels paid for. That's only once a year though, a round trip once a year. I get a baggage allowance and I get a moving allowance and I get electrical, what do you call it, power allowance.

Lai Pik: Okay, electricity bill. Do they pay for the bill?

Tom: Allowance, yeah. I get an allowance for that. I get all these allowances, which add up to more than the \$35,000, plus because I'm living overseas, I also get a tax break from the U.S. The school pays my Chinese tax, so I still get 35,000.

Lai Pik: You don't have to pay the Chinese tax by yourself.

Tom: The school pays it for me.

Lai Pik: Okay.

Tom: Most schools they give you this huge figure, "Hey, you're getting this much money," but then they skim 25% off automatically, then after you reach a certain salary level, they start taking off 30%. It all adds up. It doesn't seem like I'm really

making that much money, but on the other hand, I have a comfortable life. I've got a good insurance. I live down by the water, view of the ocean. I mean, where else could I have that kind of lifestyle? I could never do that in the US, even if I was making on paper a lot more money. Another good thing is you have good public transportation. Most places in the US don't. You must have a car in the United States or a motorcycle or something, right?

Lai Pik: That's true.

Tom: Yeah.

Lai Pik: In terms of lifestyle, you think you have a better lifestyle here in China?

Tom: By far, yeah. That's the attraction. And you get to live in a foreign land and be close to all these countries and travel around.

(Tom, White, US American, male, 58-year-old)¹¹⁸

Wanderlust and traveling

Studies have shown that, wanderlust, or a great desire to travel and see the world, is one of the most important factors for international migrants who are certified teachers in their home countries when it comes to seeking teacher employment abroad. Research has also shown that, as motivation for teaching abroad, wanderlust ranks particularly high among less experienced teachers (Joslin, 2002; Cox, 2012). Indeed, less experienced teachers (working as teachers for less than five years), especially those from the US and Canada, said they chose to work in Shenzhen for its location and the opportunities to travel. A teacher said when he and his wife were working in the US, they could not afford to travel abroad because the US is big. However, when they started working in Shenzhen, they could easily travel to other Asian countries at a cheap cost as Asian countries are much smaller.

Brian is from Canada and had taught in South Korea for 4.5 years before moving to teach in Shenzhen. He said he initially only planned to travel for one year when he left Canada. However, he decided to stay teaching abroad after working in South Korea for monetary reward and lifestyle. He said when he was working in Canada, he was "working to live," but teaching in Asia allowed him more free time to experience different things in life. Apart from economic reasons and lifestyle, another reason he preferred to teach in Asia than in Canada was that it was easier to travel. "In Canada, you can either travel to the US or other parts of Canada, but in Asia, you can travel to other countries easily because countries are smaller."

¹¹⁸ My interview with Tom was conducted in his classroom in an international school in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on 14 June 2016.

With practical aspects considered for example lifestyle, weather, safety, and living standard, China seemed to be an ideal destination for foreigners who sought adventure with the promise of economic opportunities. Anthony talked about why he went to China, and what he said resonated with the opinions of many other foreign ELTs.

(Coming to China) seems like a good self-education opportunity, and you can have a pretty decent standard of living here. I don't really care if I own a house back in the United States. I feel very fortunate that I can step away from that and have the opportunity. It's really about the adventure, and gaining experience, I guess, mostly.

(Brian, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)¹¹⁹

Global mobility with financial stability

Ian is from the UK and he had worked in a local school through a job agency when he first went to Shenzhen before he got his job at the Shenzhen International School. While he was working through the agency, he did an online PGDE course with a British university and became a certified teacher in the UK. As soon as he got his qualifications, he applied for an ESL teaching position in the Shenzhen International School and received an offer. After changing job from working for a job agency to the Shenzhen International School, Ian was very happy that he had finally found the stability he had been yearning for.

I want stability in my life a lot. And I found ESL offers me stability. Even working in my hometown didn't give me stability, but what I have now is in a crazy sort of way, stability. So I've got a career. I am in a track with my current school. I didn't have that before. It was hard to find stability. All jobs were just on contracts or six months. Even any jobs in England were like that. But when I came to China, I had a one-year contract with my former employer, which offered some stability. And now, I am in a two-year contract with my current employer, and they will keep me if I want to keep working for them. So I feel I have a lot more stability. And that means a lot to me because I couldn't find it anywhere. And I've done a master's degree toward stability. That's what I want. Stability. Safety. I didn't really have that before. And as a traveler, a migrant worker, you don't have that. You are below stability. But I feel I've got more stability now. That makes me feel a lot better. Even now I live in China and I live this crazy life. I've got some stability.

¹¹⁹ My interview with Brian was conducted in his classroom on 23 September on the Excellence international school main campus.

While EFL teachers working at local Chinese institutions find a certain amount of financial stability from abundant ELT job opportunities, they often feel “stuck in China” because they do not get the same kinds of opportunities in many other countries. On the contrary, those who worked in the Shenzhen International School enjoyed more mobility by having the option of teaching in Ace International School’s branch schools in other countries while staying employed by the same company. Since the school had school branches in more than 30 countries on five continents around the world, teachers could apply to be transferred to schools in other countries if they wanted a change of environment. Having worked for a job agency before getting his job in the Ace International School, Ian was grateful for the stability that he could take with him while having the freedom to move around the world.

I mean, all the other stuff for me, doesn’t matter. Because I can take what I’ve got now and go to any country. Our school has many schools all around the world. I could go to Europe, South America... maybe some other countries, but this doesn’t matter. Because I’ve got my focus on what I am doing. I focus on Jiu-jitsu [a form of Brazilian martial art], my career, my wife, my family. I keep these no matter where I am. I still got these essential things in my life. So that’s why. If I am still working at the job agency where I was working at before, it’s a different kind of life and I have nothing. I wouldn’t be able to leave China.

(Ian, White, British, male, 40-year-old)¹²⁰

2.2. Working at international schools

Censorship

Because Chinese children consist of a significant number of the student population at international schools for children of foreign personnel, the Chinese government imposes censorship on these schools, even for those that are foreign-owned. Although China has been opened to the world for a few decades, ideologically, the Chinese authority is still highly cautious of “Western influence” in the country’s education system. For example, in 2016, in a meeting with leaders from universities across the country, Yuan Guiren, the then Education Minister of the People’s Republic of China, instructed that higher education institutions should be careful with the use of original Western textbooks and must not allow teaching materials

¹²⁰ My interview with Ian was conducted in the Emily’s Café in Shekou, Nanshan District of Shenzhen on October 3, 2017.

which spread Western values into classrooms (*Sina News*, 2015). In 2017, the Chinese government restricted the publication of foreign picture books for children in Mainland China, with the intention of reducing foreign influence and enhancing the Communist Party's ideology control among young children (Leng, 2017b).

Since international schools adopt Western curriculums, the teaching materials are very different from those of traditional Chinese schools. This is what prompts the Chinese authority's concern about their "Western influence." For private international schools that are open to Chinese students, laws were modified to regulate such schools. In November 2016, the amendments to the *Non-State Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China* were approved. In Chapter One, *the General Provisions*, one article is added, and it emphasizes that private schools are social institutions of the Chinese Communist Party and should follow the Party's rule (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2016). For international schools for expat children, schools' textbooks are under the Chinese government's supervision and control. According to the law, teaching materials and names of students have to be submitted to the local education bureau for supervision and check-up (State Education Commission, 1995).

Distinguishing memorization and plagiarism

The Shenzhen International Schools organized a three-day teacher training program every semester, and all the teachers were required to attend the training. One workshop titled "Cultural perspective on plagiarism" helped teachers understand plagiarism in relation to the Confucian education system. The workshop aimed to raise awareness of the educational approach in that educational system. Memorization is a significant part of Chinese education, and copying from the masters is an act of showing respect. The trainer said, "there is a huge cultural divide on how to do well in a test, and Chinese students focus a lot on 'memorizing.'" Since the practice of referencing and quoting is not that common in the Chinese education system in the non-university context, teachers need to educate students about this before accusing them of plagiarism. The trainer suggested teachers conduct creative classes with more performance-based activities to reduce the chances of plagiarism occurring. For example, in a biology class, a teacher could encourage students to use new biology vocabularies to create a story.

Chinese and South Korean parents tend to push their children to get good grades in school. When talking about students' plagiarism behaviors, a teacher said, "Although it is so easy to

spot because what is written is so out of character, parents do not necessarily understand. It would help to have a student handbook because parents are not always our friends. They care about the results, not the process.” A teacher asked why the Chinese *gaokao* (university entrance exam) was so important for Chinese students and parents. The trainer explained that it was because high school students in China were fighting to get into the best universities, and so *gaokao* was stressful for them. International school teachers did not understand that because in the Western context, university studies, rather than high-school studies, was considered to be the most stressful time of one’s student life.

Teaching “international thinking”

Becoming “international” is not only a vision Chinese leaders have for the city of Shenzhen, it is also shared by most middle-class people in Shenzhen on a personal level. As the stories of Sofia and Fang (Naly) from chapter 3 show, while being international has become part of what defines a “high *suzhi*” person in the Chinese global city context, being international is marked by English speaking skills and intercultural competency. Therefore, not only are Chinese middle-class adults striving to improve their English language skills and seek intercultural experience, but they also opt for educational choices that will make their children globally competitive.

While sending their children to study in Western countries remains a popular educational choice for middle-class Chinese, international schools in China are also becoming increasingly popular for those who want to provide a Western education for their children at an early age.

Cawo, who taught at the pre-school and lower-elementary campus of the Shenzhen International School, told me that she was most bewildered by an often-made request from Chinese parents when she first started teaching in China – teaching their children “international thinking.” Below was is a transcript of our conversation.

Cawo: The parents always said to me when I first came to China, “I want my child to have an international thinking.” I was like, “that’s a wrong sentence. What do you mean? You want your child to have international thinking? What is that?” I asked a lot of my friends, and they are like “yeah, that doesn’t sound right, what does that mean?”

Lai Pik: What friends? Chinese friends?

Cawo: No, no. Foreign. It's an English word, so I went to ask a British person, and the British person was like, "ask an Australian..."

Lai Pik: How does that sound wrong to you?

Cawo: Because you cannot have an international thinking. What is an International thinking? You are thinking all the time. How do you get international thinking? I didn't understand. So I was just like *ting bu dong* (I don't understand).

Lai Pik: How old are these kids?

Cawo: From two to seven years old. For the two-year-olds, they are just learning how to separate from their mothers. For the older kids, the six-to-seven-year-olds, the ones that go to primary school, "I want them to have an international thinking." And I am like, "I don't know what that is! What is that?"

Lai Pik: Did they explain to you?

Cawo: No. I would ask them what that means. And they would look at me like I am the most stupid person on the planet. Because my job is to teach the kids how to think international, but I don't know what that is... It's like somebody telling me, "I want you to teach my kids think in rainbow colors." And I was like *ting bu dong* (I don't understand). So now I slowly understand they wanted their kids to get the Chinese thinking and basically also the foreign thinking. But foreign is very huge, foreign can mean Kazakhstan, foreign can mean Australia, foreign can mean Spain, foreign can mean Costa Rica. But international thinking... it's impossible. So I was like, "why the hell do they want their kids to think international? They are seven. They should be thinking like their countrymen. And then I realize they need us to prepare them so they can move abroad. Most of the parents who ask me, "can you help my kid think international?", nine out of ten times they are already looking to moving abroad.

Lai Pik: That was why they sent their children to an international school in the first place.

Cawo: But they want their children to get our thinking, mine, and the other foreigners', which is strange. You cannot teach a child to think internationally. You can just treat him differently. He may notice how people in his family treat him and how strangers like me treat him; that's it. He's not gonna be sitting there, "oh, Americans really do things differently." I can assure you, most of the boys are not thinking at all. So I understand they are wanting their children to adopt both methods of thinking. That takes time. And he should leave China. If he doesn't, he will not pick it up. So I don't know how to teach international thinking. *Dui Bu qi* (I am sorry).

(Cawo, African American, female, 27-year-old)¹²¹

¹²¹ My interview with Cawo took place on August 8, 2017 in a Starbucks café in Shekou, Nanshan District, Shenzhen.

Everything that is “international” is considered to be more prestigious in Chinese society for example, “international city,” “international talent,” “international language,” and “international thinking.” Although it is not specified, in Chinese society, “international” and “foreign” are by default Western, rather than African or anything else. In Cawo’s narrative, when parents requested her to teach their children “international thinking,” what they were really asking was for her to teach their children Western thinking, which was often characterized by independent and critical thinking. The reason parents pressed foreign teachers to teach their children “international thinking” was so their children would be more prepared to study in a Western country.

Teaching ESL (English as a Second Language)

Since the Shenzhen International School had a large population of students who speak English as a second language, the school had an ESL program. Betty, the coordinator of the ESL program, told me that their school especially attracted more students who spoke English as a second language because English proficiency was not part of the school’s student enrolment requirement, which was required by the other international schools of the same kind in Shenzhen. Due to a large number of ESL students, the school had its own ESL program that was specifically designed to raise the English level of students whose English proficiency was not advanced enough to join regular English classes. A team of ESL teachers in the school specialized in teaching English to students of lower English level. They would communicate with regular English teachers before deciding if a student’s English was good enough to switch to a regular English class.

Many teachers in Shenzhen, mostly from the US, told me that they had left the US because the working conditions for teachers in the US public school system were getting worse. For ESL teachers, besides a deteriorating working environment, the type of students ESL teachers had to handle in the US was also more challenging than international school students in China. While students who learn English as a second language in the US public schools are most likely from underprivileged immigrant or refugee backgrounds, students who could afford to go to international schools in China are from a privileged background.

Comparing teaching students in a public school in the US with teaching students in an international school in China, Brian and Robin both found teaching in China much easier. Besides smaller class sizes, the students’ family and cultural background also made teaching

children in Shenzhen International School less difficult. Brian was a certified ESL teacher in the US, and before he got his job in Shenzhen, he had been teaching refugee children in the US. He compared his experiences of teaching in the US and China.

I was teaching ESL in the United States, and that was in an elementary school, and it was mostly Somali students. Many were coming from refugee camps in Kenya, or in Somalia, in that area. Very different, in terms of the amount to support, financial resources, those things from the families, compared to the students that are here. Very different. For one, students here, they have, like I said, they're paying tuition, they have different financial resources. There's a lot of respect [for teachers]. The parents here want to be more involved with the students' education, and want to be aware, and made aware, which, is a good thing, right? Any time you can get that communication... Back in the United States, I think, maybe it was the culture; I don't want to make generalizations, but my impression, for at least for the Somali families, was they're like, "You're the teacher, teach my child.", but, they didn't really see it as ... they didn't really understand where I would want them to be involved in helping at home, or something. They were kind of like, "You guys are doing the education thing. The parents of my Somalian students also did not speak English... We had to have Somali staff members who could help translate. That was a difficult part of my job. Some students at the school could speak more English, and their families, of course, then, often could as well; but, since I was an ESL teacher, I was focusing on students with the most need. Those families often did not speak at all. I always had to use a translator. It was interesting, just trying to communicate with the parents.

(James, White, US American, male, 34-year-old)¹²²

Robin had just renewed his two-year contract with Shenzhen when I talked to him in 2016. It was Robin's third year working in Shenzhen as an ESL teacher for middle school students. He said he was happy with how things turned out for him in China. Robin's students were mostly Chinese and South Korean. He said it was much easier to teach Asian students than American students of the same age, because there were seemingly less attitude problems and rebellious behaviors among Asian students. Robin said while he had to spend a lot of energy on classroom management when he was teaching in the US, what he mainly had to do as an ESL teacher in China was to reinforce the need to speak English among his students.

¹²² My interview with James was conducted on September 21, 2016 in his school in the Shekou area of the Nanshan District in Shenzhen.

In middle school, it's more like you give them the tools to be successful. In the long run, it falls back on them, especially if they're trying to exit out of the IE program. They have to know that they can't speak [South] Korean or Chinese every day, and then be able to write sentences in English. Their favorite thing is Chinglish or Koreanlish. I'm like, "Well, that's not how you write. If you speak that, that's how you write, and that's not the proper way to write."

(Robin, US American, male, 52-year-old)¹²³

Because of the relatively large number of South Korean students in the Shenzhen International School, the school hired two Korean teachers to teach Korean students English. Asked what he thought about non-native English speakers teaching English, Tom, who was an experienced ESL teacher, commented,

There's an upside and downside to that. I would say the upside is that they can help the Korean students the fastest and help them most, but the downside is that if they stay with those teachers without going to a native English speaker then they end up speaking like Konglish [English spoken in Korean grammar]. When they're talking I go like, "why are you talking like that? Why do you leave out all the definite and indefinite articles and why do you speak always in the present tense?" and stuff like that. I mean, I think that's a minor discrepancy maybe I have but then I love those two teachers to death because they are so efficient in teaching the grammar, the written grammar. It's great written grammar, but then the students can't talk to me properly. It bothers me, but then that's a hard thing to learn anyway, but the most natural way to learn is through speaking. You learn to speak before you learn to write usually, but then sometimes you don't have to do it that way.

(Tom, White, US American, male, 58-year-old)¹²⁴

Conclusion

Teaching the English language at international schools is considered the top job among the foreign EFL teacher community in China. Since international school teachers are employed in China in the form of overseas assignments, they are offered expatriate remuneration packages, financial stability, and global mobility. However, international school jobs are becoming more

¹²³ My interview was conducted in the sports stadium on the Excellence international school main campus in Shekou during Robin's lunch break on 15 June.

¹²⁴ My interview with Tom was conducted in his classroom in an international school in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on 14 June 2016.

competitive, as more certified teachers want to leave their home countries to teach abroad. For US nationals, dissatisfaction with being a teacher in the public education system drove them to leave in search of better opportunities. Since the vibrant international school market in China offers teachers plenty of jobs that allow them a higher living standard and a more desirable lifestyle, China has become a hot spot for international school teachers in recent years.

Changing student demography at international schools for children of foreign personnel means international school teachers are teaching more Chinese students than expatriate children. Teachers at international schools need to understand some characteristics that are typical of the Confucian education system; for example, emphasis on memorization and academic results. Compared to being an ESL teacher in the public school system in the US and international schools in China, ESL teachers in China teach students from a more privileged background and with fewer behavioral problems because of the family background of students at international schools and a generally more respectful attitude toward teachers in Asia.

Foreign teachers working at international schools represent a small number of privileged teachers in the ELT industry in China; however, the majority of foreign ELTs in China are self-initiated international migrants who have to make their own living arrangements regarding employment, housing, and family life. Self-initiated foreign ELTs face more insecure employment situations and adverse job conditions.

Chapter 8 The less privileged: Foreign ELTs working in Chinese schools

Introduction

International migration is increasingly driven by the “enhanced mobility of labor” rather than “powerful countries and transnational corporations,” and thus, the new army of international migrants are increasingly people from a more ordinary background, rather than traditional elites (Cohen 2006, p.193). The same trend is observed among foreign ELTs, as teachers who are corporate-transferred employees (such as international school teachers) are only the minority. The vast majority of foreign ELTs in China are self-initiated migrants working at local schools and teaching centers. Below is a table (illustration 41) that compares some of the differences between the more privileged international school teachers and the less privileged self-initiated teachers.

	International school teachers	Self-initiated teachers
Qualifications	Bachelor’s or master’s degree holders; registered teachers in home countries	Mostly bachelor’s degree holders; Non-registered teachers in home countries; mostly do not have any teaching certificates;
Job application methods	International job fairs for international school teaching jobs	Applying directly to individual employers; through job agencies
Migration process	Facilitated by employers in their visa application and residence registration process	Self-initiated with little help from employers in visa application and residence registration process; assisted by visa agencies with fee payment
Remuneration	Employers pay for their visa application, accommodation, bill payment, healthcare, family relocation, children’s education, flight tickets home	Look and pay for their own visa application, accommodation, bill payment, healthcare, family relocation, children’s education; reimbursement of flight tickets home varies
Motivations	lifestyle; economic	economic; lifestyle

Illustration 41: A table comparing differences between corporate-transferred teachers and self-initiated teachers. Source: The table is derived from the findings from the author’s fieldwork.

This chapter focuses on self-initiated migrant teachers and compares them with the more privileged international school teachers in the last chapter. Most self-initiated foreign ELTs hold at least a university degree, and thus according to Lindley (2012) can be defined as “skilled migrants.” However, they are faced with a more precarious employment situation compared to international school teachers described in the last chapter. Not only is their remuneration package less substantial, but their migration process is also less facilitated by their employers. Moreover, they are more likely to be exploited by their employers and recruitment agencies.

My findings suggest that education and professional qualifications are more emphasized in the hiring process of more privileged teaching positions such as those at foreign-owned universities and international schools. In contrast, the recruitment of teachers in most local teaching centers and recruitment agencies puts more emphasis on superficial qualifications such as ethnicity, gender and nationality of a candidate. The chapter argues that, since the archetypal figure of “foreign ELT” is a White English-speaking male, international migrants falling outside of the identity category combination are in a more disadvantaged position in the EFL market in Shenzhen. That said, the employability of teachers in advantaged positions is also influenced by other factors such as age, charisma, and social network.

Theoretical framework

The first section of the chapter is informed by expatriate literature focusing on East Asia, as well as the concept of critical cosmopolitanism discussed in the previous chapter. Besides this, the second section of the chapter seeks to understand the positionality of self-initiated foreign ELTs in China using intersectionality as an analytical lens. Given that the less-privileged teachers discussed in this chapter are of a similar level of education and professional qualifications, the chapter looks into how different identity categories, in particular ethnicity, nationality, and gender, intersect to produce advantages and disadvantages for self-initiated foreign ELTs in the Chinese context.

Expatriate literature

The term “expatriates” is often imagined to refer to White western men on overseas assignments. However, expatriate studies in recent years has challenged this notion of the privileged status of Westerners. As Farrer (2018) observes, expatriate communities in Asia are internally stratified, and the number of self-initiated young unmarried migrants has

outnumbered organizational expatriates. Moreover, “as self-initiated expatriates become the norm in East Asia, problems of privilege are giving way to problems of discrimination in life activities in which expatriates must make their own arrangements, such as schooling, employment, housing and access to leisure facilities” (Farrer, 2018, p.205). Self-initiated foreign teachers discussed in this chapter are among the self-initiated expatriates who are losing privileges as Westerners in China and must make various life arrangements by themselves.

Intersectionality

The intersectionality theory originated in feminist theories of power and difference to address the triple oppression of Black women in terms of ethnicity, class, and gender. Furthermore, intersectionality has been taken up and expanded as a useful analytical tool in migration studies in Europe (Crenshaw, 2000; McCall 2005; Cho, et al., 2013). Bastia (2014) suggests that intersectionality is particularly useful in redressing some key shortcomings in the migration literature, such as demonstrating the importance of intra-group differences, and understanding that the intersection of different identity categories generates not only disadvantages but also privileges.

Crenshaw (2000 cited in Lutz, 2014, p.3) conceptualizes intersectionality as the interaction between social structure (the macro level) and subjective experiences (the micro level). As the same set of personal qualities can be received differently in different social contexts, Lutz (2014) points out that it is crucial to combine intersectionality with context-specific meanings of ethnicity, race, and gender, etc. Incorporating Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of capital conversion into intersectionality analysis, Plüss and Chan (2012) argue that there are two types of intersectionality – positive and negative intersectionality. While positive intersectionality occurs when migrants succeed in converting their various forms of capital to their advantage in their host societies, negative intersectionality occurs when migrants fail to do so. Plüss and Chan (2012) further argue that whether the capital migrants possess work to their advantage or not depends mostly on specific social contexts. However, migrants nevertheless have a certain amount of agency to construct a new capital desired by locals in the host society, and the strategies they use to achieve this could range from manipulating to lying.

Before applying the intersectionality analysis framework in the Chinese context, it is worth noting that the categories of ethnicity, race, and nationality are collapsed together in the Chinese terms “*waiguoren*” or “*laowai*” (foreigner), which connote non-Chinese (ethnicity),

Whiteness (race) and non-PRC (nationality). While the term “foreigner” in the Chinese context is used to refer to Whites, non-White international migrants are called by other terms (Farrer, 2014a). In the Chinese language, foreign English teachers are referred to as “*waijiao*,” an acronym of “*wai*guo (foreign) *jiao*shi (teacher).” Also, because English is the only compulsory foreign language subject in the public education system as well as the most popular foreign language among Chinese learners in China, “*waijiao*” by default refers to a White foreigner who teaches the English language.

In the Chinese context, White male native English speakers in general enjoy positive intersectionality to the highest degree, as their ethnic, linguistic, and gender capital all work to their advantage in the EFL market in China. However, some other personal qualities, such as age, personality, and appearance, could also contribute to improving or depreciating one’s employment situations. The chapter argues that preference for White teachers in Chinese society is a result of racial hierarchy, colonial history, and the prevalent association between White people and the English language. While nationality bias across schools and teaching centers of different levels is increasingly shaped by legal requirements for work visas for foreign ELTs, gender bias is constructed according to market demand that partly stems from the sexualizing gaze of Chinese female consumers.

1. Motivations

Self-initiated foreign ELTs discussed in this chapter include those who teach at local universities, schools, and teaching centers, among whom university lecturers are perceived to be more qualified and respected. However, many English lecturers I talked to in Shenzhen found their remuneration packages rather unattractive. These lecturers were often offered work contracts with 20-hour weekly teaching hours and a monthly salary of 10,000 RMB (1,470 USD / 1,300 EUR). Other benefits included flight tickets and basic accommodation (a minimally renovated en-suite room in a student dormitory). Teachers teaching at local schools and teaching centers are positioned below local university lecturers and at the bottom of the foreign EFL teacher hierarchy. Most teachers in this category are not professional teachers, and their teaching quality varies. Their monthly salary ranges from 5,000 to 30,000 RMB (700 – 4,300 USD / 640 – 3,900 EUR), depending on how many part-time jobs they take up. Their salary also depends on whether their jobs are found through job agencies, which charge

teachers monthly commission fees and lead to a huge decrease in the actual income teachers receive.

Foreign ELTs in Shenzhen fall between economic and lifestyle migrants, although the line between the two can be blurry both in terms of migration motivations and quality of life. However, in the migration narrative of foreign ELTs, while the more privileged ones often prioritize lifestyle before economic interest during their migration decision-making process, economic considerations are more important for less privileged teachers. Self-initiated foreign ELTs are usually in a less stable employment situation when they decide to teach abroad. While teachers from small towns often leave their home countries because there is not enough work for them, teachers from bigger cities often decide to move to China after they are laid off and are in search of a different way of living. Most self-initiated foreign ELTs from Western countries came to China with student debts, and they usually first pay off their student debts with the money they save up in the first few years of working in China before they have other life plans.

By analyzing migration motivations of self-initiated teachers, the chapter argues that economic incentive stands out as the most prominent migration motivation in this group of teachers. While the pursuit of a better lifestyle is also observed in the migration narratives of self-initiated foreign ELTs, it is often intertwined with the need to improve employment chances and conditions. When job opportunities in China are better than what they have in their home countries, moving for jobs only appears to be a logical action to take.

1.1. Ian: “I am essentially a migrant.”

Ian was a 40-year-old Briton who had started teaching English in Shenzhen since 2012. At the time of our interview¹²⁵, Ian had recently climbed his way up from teaching English in a Chinese middle school to teaching in an international school. Sitting in a well-decorated café enjoying his Sunday brunch, Ian seemed content. He described himself as being in a “much better place now” than when he was in his previous job teaching English in a local school through an agency, and more so than when he was in the UK.

Upon graduating with a major in business studies from university, Ian got a job in the marketing field in a company in his hometown. A few years into his job, as a friend brought up an EFL

¹²⁵ My interview with Ian was conducted in Emily’s Café in Shekou on 3 October 2017.

job opportunity in South Korea to him, Ian quit his job and went to teach English in South Korea for a change. What Ian did not expect was that when he went back to the UK after two years in South Korea and asked to go back to his old job, his old company would not hire him again, because the company had been restructured, and his previous position was eliminated. Ian said he did try to start over in his home country after returning from South Korea, but it did not work out. He did not have any luck in finding another office job. According to Ian, “it was hard to get an office job because all the foreigners were taking the jobs.” Consequentially, Ian had no other choice but to take up warehouse jobs. He described what it was like trying to look for a job in the small town he came from.

It’s not a lot there. It’s not a lot of history there. It’s not a lot of jobs there. So if I go back, I will probably go live there because that’s where my family are, and I gotta try to find something that I really want to do, but there are not a lot of jobs available. Most people in the town do warehouse work for a living, and that’s not the kind of job I want to do. When I was there, I was striving to find a job, getting zero-hour contracts. Do you know what a zero-hour contract is? It’s like if they need you to work for one hour, then you work one hour and then you go home. You only get money when you work. Like Uber. So I was trying to do that, going to work, getting some money... terrible money! That’s why I couldn’t see myself going back. And I was living with my mum. London has more opportunities, but it is too expensive. So there are not many options for me but to stay abroad. I am essentially a migrant. I mean, a migrant is someone who is trapped to stay in a place in order to make money.

Ian could not see himself going back to England because it was difficult for him to find a stable, decent job. Ian felt he was forced to work overseas in order to earn a living, and in that sense, he considered himself a migrant. He further elaborated on how he distinguished between an expat and a migrant.

My understanding of an “expat” is more of a rich foreigner living in a foreign country; I mean, I have had jobs, but a full-time taxi driver here is making more money than me. So in that sense I am a migrant. Also, it depends on what kind of job options you have. I will give you an example. I had a friend who had an excellent career as a cameraman, and then he moved into teaching. He could go back to his photography career and still make good money anytime. I think he will consider himself as an expat, but I will still think of myself as a migrant.

Ian drew a line between an expat and a migrant based on one's financial situation and job options. He identified himself as a migrant because he was economically marginalized before moving to teach English in China, and teaching English was almost the only trade he could work in. Ian got his first English teaching job in a Chinese middle school through a job agency when he first arrived Shenzhen in 2012, and said the salary the job offered was not ideal for him, but that he stayed with the agency to avoid job scams. Ian's agency helped him with the application of a work visa and also offered him a room in a hotel. He had to stay in the hotel room for an entire year. Although it was not the most ideal living situation, he took it because he would rather stay in the hotel than having to deal with the scams he had heard about associated with some Chinese landlords.

There are a lot of job scams, and you have to be careful in China with jobs. So I was scared to leave the agency, even it was a bad deal for me. So I stayed with the agency and taught in a middle school for 10 hours a week. The middle school let you come and go, you just do your hours. But with a primary school, you will have to be there all day. So, I had this deal where I was just going in and teaching 10 hours and leaving. And sometimes I go all the way there to teach for one hour. That's my whole day of work with the school. So (laughing) ... it wasn't a bad deal really, yeah. But the school itself, the kids were really badly behaved. I had one kid spat on my head once. I had kids swear at me in Chinese and English. It was just quite a rough place like that.

(Ian, White, British, male, 40-year-old)

After teaching in the Chinese middle school for four years, Ian got frustrated by the many constraints of teaching English in a public school. For example, the huge number and mixed levels of students made it difficult for him, or any EFL teachers, to teach effectively. Also, because being an EFL teacher in a local school is a dead-end job, Ian felt like his life was not going anywhere. Fortunately, Ian was able to improve his employment situation by the end of his fourth year in China when he completed a long-distance master's degree. Upon getting his degree, Ian applied for an ESL teaching position in an international school and was hired in 2016.

Ian now taught students from a very different background in a different school system than before. Since the international school put students in small classes and streamed students according to their level, he was able to teach much more effectively and was more passionate about his work. Also, his current students were from a more prestigious background and thus

were, in general, more well-behaved. Ian enjoyed the remuneration package of a corporate-transferred employee, and he could have his job until he retired if he wanted. Compared to when he was struggling to find work in the UK, or when he was teaching in a local Chinese school in Shenzhen, he could not be happier about his current employment conditions and the financial stability he had.

1.2. Paul: “I came to China to teach for the lifestyle!”

Paul was a US American in his late 30s and had been in China for three years at the time we met. He graduated from college with a German major and worked as a salesperson in the US before he went to China in 2013. Paul lost his salesman job because online sales replaced in-store sales, and many salesperson positions in his company were eliminated as a result. After being laid off, Paul decided to teach English in China and applied for an English teaching position in Shenzhen with a global chain English teaching center. Paul had already studied Chinese by himself for ten years at the time, and according to him, the idea of teaching in China was always at the back of his mind. When his company in the US laid him off, he thought it was time to go.

Paul could not stress enough that he went to China to teach for the lifestyle. He avoided teaching children because “it was always a lot of drama.” He had only been teaching adult students and said his job was very relaxing because it only involved sitting down and talking. In order to continue to enjoy the stress-free lifestyle he was having as a teacher, Paul even turned down his manager’s offer of a promotion. Ironically, he did not work particularly hard. He did not even have any English teaching certificates. According to Paul, all he did was not quit his job.

The management tried to move me upward by telling me the benefits I can enjoy if I become a senior manager, like how much more salary I can get. Because I stay the longest time with the teaching center among all the teachers. Most teachers stay for one year, some a few months, and they just leave. I didn’t do anything; all I have done was to not quit. I am not very eager to become a senior manager because I know that means more pressure. If I wanted to do it, I would have done that two years ago! They have evaluations twice a year, and they would tell me to complete a TEFL course to certify myself. They suggest that I should spend one day of my two day-offs each week to go to classes and get a certificate. I think it’s ridiculous! I have already been teaching for three years. I don’t need to be certified! And they cannot do anything with me. Because I have my strength that other certified

teachers don't have. For example, I can speak very good Chinese and the students like me. There are certified teachers, but the students don't like them.

Paul was happy with his life the way it was. Asking about his future plans, Paul said without thinking, "I stayed on my last job for as long as they kept me, and I am going to stay on this job for as long as I can too."

Nowadays, I live a stable life. I get up and go to work. Then I come home to have dinner with my girlfriend. I don't hang out much with my colleagues these days because they drink a lot. I don't want to speak English all the time, and I don't come here to drink three days a week. I don't want to speak English after work. If I do, that means I will be speaking English all day long. My girlfriend is a Chinese, so I speak Chinese at home.

(Paul, White, US American, male, late 30s)

Paul turned down the opportunity to be promoted at work because he did not want the extra work and responsibilities that would come with the promotion. For teachers such as Paul, teaching English in China is a lifestyle choice as it entails minimal job responsibilities. For teachers who work only part-time, it also means having more time for themselves to pursue other things in life. For example, those who are sports enthusiasts spend most of their free time in the gym or engaging in different sports. Those who are passionate about programming dedicate most of their free time to developing mobile applications. Those who are interested in learning the Chinese language have plenty of time to go to Chinese classes and study Chinese. Those who are business-minded are busy networking and looking to establishing their own trading businesses or teaching centers.

1.3. Zac: The part-time teacher/preacher/import-export agent

Zac was one of the part-time teachers who enjoyed the lifestyle of a part-time teacher and had many things going on in his life. Zac did not have any work contracts signed in China and took up short-term teaching jobs. Sometimes he would apply for a job advertisement that was posted in the morning and went in teaching in the afternoon. Zac said he enjoyed this "no-string-attached" kind of job arrangements as it allowed him a lot of freedom and flexibility. The Chinese mobile phone application WeChat plays an essential role in the employment of foreign

ELTs like Zac, as various WeChat groups serve as platforms for small agencies to post job advertisements to recruit part-time teachers. Zac had been getting teaching jobs through such WeChat groups and working part-time in this way for almost a decade.

In 2008, when the economic recession hit the US severely and the job situations of Zac's entire family were affected, the whole family decided to move to China to teach English. For Zac and his family, apart from job opportunities, what was also appealing about moving to China was that they could preach. After they moved to Shenzhen, they all worked as English teachers. While Zac and his sister worked part-time in different teaching centers, their mother gave private English classes to business people, and their father taught full-time in a teaching company.

When the family was not teaching, they dedicated most of their time to preach. They not only had regular meetings with other preachers who shared the same faith, but they also actively approached and met up with non-believers to study the Bible. Zac's sister said that for her, preaching was her primary mission in life, and teaching English was only a way for her to sustain herself so she could continue to preach. Since Zac and his sister prioritized preaching over teaching, it was vital for them to have more free time, and working as part-time teachers allowed them to do that. Both Zac and his sister got their jobs through various WeChat groups for part-time foreign ELTs. Zac explained to me how the system worked.

Somebody posts a job, and if you are free, then you take it. Some jobs are posted a few days before the jobs start, some are posted on the same day when a teacher is absent. If you will be away for a month, let them know you'll be gone.

Zac's salary as a part-time teacher was not stable and depended on the seasons. While he could make about 10,000 to 12,000 RMB (1,400 – 1,700 USD / 1,300 – 1,500 EUR) a month in good seasons, he made only 5,000 to 6,000 RMB (700 – 850 USD / 600 – 750 EUR) a month in bad seasons. However, Zac did not seem to mind the unstable income associated with being a part-time English teacher. The fact that it was “a very accommodating job” was more important to him because it allowed him flexibility in managing his time, as well as the time to engage in other activities and jobs.

I worked full-time for many years in the US. Now in China, I work part-time. No more than 15 hours a week. I don't want to go back to the full-time-job mode. Being an English teacher, you don't feel stuck. You have a lot of free time, and

your schedule is flexible. For example, I wanted to travel to Europe last month, so I just left a message in the WeChat group, telling them I wouldn't be around for a month. And when I came back, I let them know I was back, and I started taking classes again. Then I have another part-time job, looking for manufacturers in China for US companies. I don't need to teach full-time.

Zac was enjoying working as a part-time teacher/preacher/import-export agent. However, his life in China was not all roses. Just like most self-initiated foreigners living in China, Zac had to look for accommodation and jobs on his own, which sometimes put him in situations where he had to deal with notorious Chinese landlords and employers.

Many expats only see their landlord when they rent the place. Then they will never get to see the landlord again. The initial contract is usually for one year, and when they stay longer than that, they don't get the contract extended or renewed on paper because it is difficult to reach their landlords. They (landlords) don't leave their mobile phone numbers because they don't want you to find them. So very often, expats stay in a flat for two or three years, and when they move out, the landlord won't return the deposit because they are not protected by the rental contract. When things like that happen, you don't know who to go to as an expat. If you go to the police, they will tell you to go somewhere else, and when you go to that somewhere else, then you will be told to go somewhere else.

Zac had worked in various English teaching centers over the years, and he was particularly wary of small teaching centers.

If you are leaving, the small tutoring centers never pay you in full, always just half. What can you do? Go to the police and tell them that you are working under the table and your employers don't pay you? "Where is your license? Where is your work visa?" Nobody's gonna do that. I doubt even if helps at all if expats take it to the police. The Chinese look after their own people first.

(Zac, US American, male, late 30s)¹²⁶

The stories of Ian, Eric, and Zac illustrate that the migration motivations of self-initiated foreign ELTs are a combination of economic incentives and lifestyle pursuits. Ian left the UK

¹²⁶ My interview with Zac was conducted in a café in the Garden City Mall in the Nanshan District on 9 September 2016.

to teach English in China because he could not find a decent stable job. Eric left the US to teach in China after he was laid off. He also deliberately chose to remain in an entry-level teaching position for a more relaxing lifestyle. Zac chose to teach English part-time and without a work visa on purpose, so he could have a more flexible schedule, dedicate more time to preaching, and exploring other ways of making money. All in all, China presents ample EFL job opportunities for self-initiated teachers who are economically marginalized and enables them to pursue a better life in different ways. While some teachers maximize their income by taking up as many English teaching jobs as possible and invest in buying houses, some are just content with teaching English and pursuing their hobbies. Some of the more ambitious teachers would choose to “branch out” and start their own businesses.

2. Precarious working conditions

opportunities the EFL industry in China presents to foreigners also come with various challenges, including unsatisfactory employment conditions and precarious work arrangements. Compared to corporate-transferred teachers working at international schools, self-initiated foreign ELTs, either working with or without work visas, often work under unfavorable conditions. For those who are “legally” employed, since their residence permits are tied to their work visas, which can be canceled anytime by their employers, their rights to employment and residence in China are highly dependent on their employers. For those who work on a tourist/business/student visa and are directly employed by employers, they are not protected by the Chinese labor law and are more subject to unprofessional and unfair treatments by their employers. For those who do not have work visas and rely on recruitment agencies to find work, they often have to face more uncertainties and are prone to being exploited by recruitment agencies. As Anderson (2010) observes, immigration controls undermine labor protections as they contribute to produce “precarious workers” through constructing institutionalized uncertainty and giving more power to employers and labor users to control migrant workers.

2.1. Employers

2.1.1. Work visa canceled

Paulo was a Brazilian American in his late 30s. He was born in Brazil to a Brazilian mother and a US father, and immigrated to the US when he was 13. Paulo dropped out of high school,

but managed to complete a bachelor's degree in Linguistics in 2006 with the hope of improving his financial situation. However, getting a degree did not change anything: he still had to work three part-time jobs to pay his bills.

I was working three part-time jobs at the same time. I worked for an agent as an interpreter (Spanish-English; Spanish-Portuguese) and was sent to law firms and hospitals. I also worked in a restaurant, cleaning tables. I worked in hotels carrying luggage. I was working at minimum wage. I worked to pay for the bills. My life was all about working and paying. It's a loop, and I had no time to socialize with other people, so I decided to leave. I sold my car with 500 bucks. I packed, and I left.

Paulo easily found an English teaching job in China by applying for a job advertised on the internet. After working in China for one year, Paulo paid off his student loan in the US. However, Paulo decided not to renew his contract since the school he taught in was very disorganized, and the accommodation he was given was far from satisfactory. I met Paulo months later after he had quit his first job. A series of mishaps had happened to him in the previous few months and he was feeling frustrated. One of the most unpleasant events was that he had accidentally overstayed in China because his employer had canceled his work visa without informing him.

When I was crossing the border from Hong Kong to Shenzhen, I was stopped by the border staff. They told me my visa was expired. They fined me 5,000 RMB (677 EUR / 750 USD), and I had to fly back to the US immediately to get a new visa. I did not know I overstayed! Because on my passport, the visa said I had one more month before it expired. Later I found out, the day I told my employer I was not going to renew my contract, he called the police and canceled my visa immediately. He did not even tell me. He stabbed me at the back!

(Paulo, Brazilian American, male, late 30s)¹²⁷

Paulo paid the fine for overstaying, flew back to the US, and because he wanted to go back to China, he applied for a tourist visa in a Chinese embassy in the US. After apologizing for overstaying and promising not to do it again, Paulo was granted his tourist visa and was able

¹²⁷ My interview with Paulo was conducted on 21 June 2017 in the D Street Café in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen.

to go back to Shenzhen. In order to keep on staying in Shenzhen, Paulo crossed the border from Shenzhen to Hong Kong to do visa runs every 60 days. However, because Paulo had a record of overstaying in China, he got very anxious whenever he crossed the border.

2.1.2. No contract

Amy had been working in a kindergarten in Shenzhen on a business visa for seven years. She had two part-time jobs in two Chinese kindergartens. While working as an English teacher for one of her jobs, she worked as an educator who promoted Waldorf education for the other job. Since she was working on a business visa, her work contract would not have been legally effective even if she was offered one. Also, seeing that there is a lack of respect for work contracts between Chinese employers and foreign English teachers, Amy chose not to have a contract in the first place.

Nobody has ever given me a contract. I never need a contract because my assumption was if I have a contract, they will break it anyway. So, I didn't want one (laughing), and so I didn't ask them for one.

Amy was confident of her value to her employer, so she trusted her employer would respect what they had verbally agreed on regarding her work conditions. Amy not only taught English in the kindergarten, but was also a passionate educator who promoted Waldorf education.¹²⁸ “It's based on need,” Amy said, “You know, they need me... even if I am completely irresponsible, it's a fact that the image I provided for the school is important.” However, Amy was also aware that her employment situation was highly uncertain. Although she was offered a very pleasant apartment in a high-end residential community as part of her work remuneration, she did not feel at home.

Because this apartment is connected to a work situation that I don't always feel positive about. Then it can also in a way disturb my sense of home. And then you realize... in a way I can say I am the White clown of the school. As long as they have uncertainties about their enrolment, it may become expensive to keep my

¹²⁸ Waldorf education, also known as Steiner education, is based on the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy. Its pedagogy strives to develop pupils' intellectual, artistic, and practical skills in an integrated and holistic manner. The cultivation of pupils' imagination and creativity is a central focus (quoted from Wikipedia).

house and all of that or whatever. So in a way, I am entering into a quite deeply negative thing.

(Amy, White, US American, 54-year-old)¹²⁹

Amy was a very passionate Waldorf educator who wanted to promote the Waldorf education philosophy among Chinese parents and teachers. Amy's role was to help teachers and parents to look at the way they were raised and unlearn practices that were not helpful for the children. However, although Amy was very driven and did everything she could, the education philosophy was not very successfully adopted among the teachers and parents she worked with. "They need to have the consciousness to change, but it has been difficult to help them develop that consciousness."

Amy had lived for years in Shenzhen with unsettling feelings caused by the "no-contract" work arrangements. As she became frustrated with her educator job and as police crackdown on the illegal employment of foreigners in Shenzhen became more intensified, she decided to quit her job and leave China two months after our interview. She eventually found an educator job in Hong Kong and found it a much suitable place to promote the Waldorf education philosophy.

2.2. Recruitment agencies

While Amy's non-legally-binding work arrangements prevented her from feeling at home in her own apartment where she had lived for seven years, teachers who are sent to schools to work through recruitment agencies live with constant changes. Omario is from the US. After losing his job as a sales manager in New York, Omario found an English teaching job in a northern Chinese city through the internet before going to China. Omario said it was easy for him to find a job in that small town as foreign teachers were scarce there. However, the nightlife was "uneventful," and most of the time he was bored. Also, it was difficult for him to find a girlfriend there because people in that small town were still very conservative about dating foreigners. Omario decided to move to the most cosmopolitan city in China: Shanghai. However, he only stayed there for two weeks.

¹²⁹ My interview with Amy was conducted in a Costa Coffee café near the Coastal City Shopping mall in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen on 17 September 2017.

In Shanghai, people put their wall up. It's like in New York. I applied for ten jobs, and four jobs said they only wanted white people. Two said no after knowing I was Black. I got a job eventually, but I didn't like the environment, so I stayed for two weeks and left...

Omario decided to go to Shenzhen because the EFL job market was less saturated than Shanghai, and it was close to Hong Kong, where he would really like to live and work but gave up due to the high living cost. After working for one year in a Suburban area in Shenzhen in 2016, Omario found a job in the city center in 2017. When I texted Omario to ask if he would like to meet up in the middle of September 2017, he said he was on his way to view an apartment in the Nanshan District and said I was welcome to join him.

I recalled that when I had last seen Omario three months previously in June, he had told me he had just moved out from his apartment in the Bao'an District and was staying in a hotel in the Fu'tian district. At that time, he had been fired by his previous employer because he had broken his leg and could not go to work for more than a month. Omario was unprepared for the loss of his job, as it was not written on his contract that a teacher would be fired if he was absent from work for more than a month. Moreover, on the same day he was told he was fired, he was asked to move out immediately. Omario said his employer even sent people to watch him pack and make sure he would move out on that day. Being forced to move out in a rush, Omario said he had to leave a lot of his belongings behind because he could not fit everything into his luggage. Omario stayed in a cheap hotel nearby for a few days. Luckily, according to Omario, "It's very easy to get jobs in China. Jobs in China are ten in a dime." Omario soon found a job through a job agency. The job agency then gave him a room in a shared flat to stay for a few days. However, because of the company's change in accommodation arrangements, he had to move out of the shared flat and to another hotel. A week later, he was eventually offered a room in a shared apartment in the Futian District.

I went with Omario to the apartment viewing in the Nanshan District and asked him why he was moving again. He told me that he lost his old accommodation in Futian, which was offered by the job agency he was working for, because he had just stopped working for the job agency. I asked him why he had quit. He said the school he was working for said his foreign ELT position was no longer necessary, and he was laid off, so the agency offered him another job. While his old job only required him to be in the school when he had a class to teach, his new job required him to be in the school from 8 am to 5 pm. Omario did not like the new job arrangement, so he took another job offer that only required him to be in the school when there

were classes. However, since the job Omario preferred was offered by another job agency, he had to move out as he switched to work through another job agency.

Omario's latest job was in the Nanshan District, so he was trying to rent a room in a shared apartment in the same District. After the apartment viewing I accompanied him on, Omario decided to rent the room. Although he had to share the flat with two other flatmates, Omario enjoyed living in the Nanshan District as it was more cosmopolitan and eventful. However, the happy time did not last for long. As not long after he started working in the new school, he accidentally discovered that he had only received half of the payment of what his school had paid him from his job agency. Omario became furious and said he was going to confront his agent.

A high level of job uncertainty and exploitation are some of the common problems faced by foreign teachers working through recruitment agencies. As Omario changed his workplace and thus his place of residence frequently, he joked that he was living out of a suitcase. He said that because he got moved around so much, he did not even bother to unpack his luggage anymore. Also, he said he had more than ten bank accounts because each of his previous employers would ask him to open a bank account in the bank that was the same as the school's in order to avoid transaction fees. For teachers working for recruitment agencies, change is the only constant, and exploitation is part of the deal one has to endure.

3. Hiring practices: The intersections of gender, nationality, and race

Emma is from Eastern Europe and finished her Ph.D. degree in Education in Italy. Not being able to find any university jobs upon graduation, Emma found an English teaching job in China through the internet in 2016. Emma had moved on to her second teaching job when I met her in 2017. For both of her jobs, applying for a work visa was a complicated issue as she was not from a native English-speaking country. However, with the help of a visa agency, she was able to obtain a work visa for both of her jobs. Despite having visa issues and a challenging first year in China, Emma was still grateful for the opportunities China offered her. At the time of our interview, apart from teaching oral English in a local primary school once a week, Emma's main job duty was to teach Chinese children drama in English. Emma was pleased with her job and planned to start her own English drama school in Europe one day after saving up enough money in China. Emma said she was really grateful for the opportunities China had given her.

Lai Pik: What opportunities have China given you so far?

Emma: The opportunity to experiment. Economically I am super relaxed. And the fact that we can get jobs tomorrow. Ok, it's not teaching at university, but still, I do what I like to do. I like teaching. It doesn't matter, adults or children. To create something on my own... because that also requires different skills. But I am still practicing, and I learnt a lot from this company. From the way they organize things. That's why I am really grateful to China because I have the opportunity to accumulate capital to start my own company. That's why I can't regret my stuff last year.

Lai Pik: So you are happy with the financial reward? Is it much better than...

Emma: I wouldn't have done it in my home country.

Lai Pik: What about in Italy?

Emma: In Italy I think maybe the same. But in Italy as a foreign English teacher, I don't have the same opportunities I have in China. Because in Italy, they would employ a native speaker, then an Italian English teacher, then a foreigner.

Lai Pik: So you would be the third.

Emma: Yes, despite the fact that I was speaking English much better than Italians. But in China, I was after native English speakers, so...

(Emma, White, East European, female, 34-year-old)¹³⁰

Emma was aware of her advantage as a White foreigner in the ELT market in China. However, from her experience, she was not only in a relatively disadvantaged position when compared to a White native English speaker, but as a woman, she was also considered not as ideal as a male teacher. She said that although companies that delivered quality education could look beyond superficial qualities and hire teachers based on merit, there were a lot of companies that only cared about earning more money and they would focus more on the superficial qualities rather than qualifications.

Emma: If you look at the job advertisements in English teaching job groups in WeChat, you can find many advertisements that say males only, which I don't really believe. It's a bad way of marketing or trying to sell your product, which is education. They say male foreigners can be sold the best, so you can sell your school with male face the best.

Lai Pik: Is it what they say?

¹³⁰ My interview with Emma was conducted in the Ban Xian café in Baishizhou in Shenzhen on 23 October 2017.

Emma: They say so, but I don't really believe it. I think it's a stupid excuse.

Lai Pik: So who said that?

Emma: My former company, but I think when it's about money, this is the excuse. But the company that focuses on quality and really wants to do education, they don't hire people according to that. So there are different levels of these language schools, which I know it's a huge market here and there's such a demand that you can nearly do anything. So there are different levels of language schools.

Lai Pik: So what would you say are the different levels?

Emma: I think when you are the owner of a company, and you are reasoning according to this, that "oh I just need a foreigner," "Oh I just need a native-speaker who has a nice face," then you are doing something wrong. Because you don't focus on what you need to do in a good way, but how to earn more money in the short term. It has nothing to do with education. Why don't you open a fashion company then?

Lai Pik: Why is it more effective to use male teachers?

Emma: They say it has a good effect on mothers. I don't know really.

(Emma, White, East European, female, 34-year-old)¹³¹

Analysis

Although Emma had an advantage in the EFL employment market as a White woman, another of her identity categories – gender did not give her an extra edge. She was aware that some employers would prefer male teachers over female teachers. According to her previous employer, who had expressed this preference, it was because the young mothers of students liked male teachers. Self-initiated foreign ELTs in the local ELT market in Shenzhen were predominantly males, most of whom were White. Some male (especially blonde) teachers I met openly and proudly admitted that they were popular with young female adult students because of their looks. Employment practices of foreign ELTs have shown that the ELT industry in China is not only an extremely racialized market, but also a highly gendered market (Lan, 2011; Stanley, 2013; Farrer, 2014a). Appleby (2013) describes the global ELT industry as "a site for the production of racialized, sexualized, and gendered professional identities" and argues that foreign young male EFL teachers in Japan are hired for the purpose of attracting more young female students.

¹³¹ My interview with Emma was conducted in the Banxian Café in Baishizhou in Shenzhen on October 23, 2017.

In the Chinese context, Emma's foreignness conflates her European identity and her Whiteness. Moreover, Emma's foreignness, rather than her Ph.D. degree, was the main reason she was able to get employment easily in the EFL market in China. In the middle-lower sector of the ELT industry, foreignness, rather than merit, is the overriding factor in the employment of foreign ELTs. Stanley (2013, p.11) argues that the most relevant form of "capital" for international migrants who work as English teachers in China is their "foreignness," "specifically their "Westernness," rather than their "nativeness" in English. Farrer's research on expatriate communities in China also shows that "race and nationality are never absent in the consideration of what constitutes a "skill," and "Whiteness," in particular, can be considered a component of what the skilled migrant brings to a job in Asia." (Farrer, 2014a, p.398).

Various academic research on foreign ELTs in Chinese societies shows that ethnicity is closely tied to an international migrant's desirability in the ELT market (Farrer, 2013; Lan, 2011; Stanley, 2013; Leonard, 2016). While the popular but false perception that only White people speak native English gives an advantage to White teachers in the ELT market in China, prejudices about certain ethnicities also turn some foreign teachers into targets of discrimination. For example, the stereotypical association of South Asians with terrorism after the 911 attack in the US affects how foreign teachers of South Asian ethnicities are perceived.

Daniel was involved in his primary school's recruitment of foreign English teachers, and he said he once came across a Pakistani teacher during a job interview who was very capable and experienced. Daniel was very impressed by the Pakistani teacher and highly recommended the candidate to his school principal. The school principal asked to see the teacher's photo, but on seeing it said, "no, it's not possible. He looks like a terrorist." Compared to being White, one's teaching skills, English fluency, pronunciation, and accent do not matter as much, especially in teaching small children. It is prejudiced for employers to turn a good teacher away based on the color of his skin and his "terrorist-like" facial features. However, such prejudice keeps being reinforced by market demand. As Daniel told me,

Because parents wouldn't like colored teachers, the principal will choose teachers according to the parents' preference just to avoid complaints or *mafan* (troubles).

(Daniel, White American, male, early 30s)¹³²

¹³² The quote was extracted from a conversation with Daniel during our conversation on 21 August 2017.

3.1. White, male and English-speaking

Although non-native English speakers can still find jobs in the face of restrictive regulations in the ELT market, the types of teaching jobs and the amount of income one can get as a non-native English speaker are limited. For example, not being a native English speaker, Emma was teaching English to children in Shenzhen despite having a Ph.D. degree. On the other hand, there are teaching jobs for which only native English speakers are considered to be “good” enough.

Charles was a middle-aged US American who was serious-looking, and he was particularly popular with students who were successful middle-aged businesspeople. Being a native English speaker and specializing in teaching business English to VIP¹³³ students in a teaching center, Charles knew his edge in the ELT market. He did not feel threatened by either non-native English speakers or young native English speakers.

There are only that many native speakers around, and not many are willing to teach kids. The demand for kids’ English teachers is so high that non-native speakers get jobs too. But there is a limit to what they can earn and who they can teach. They can never teach a well-traveled businessman like I do. As a middle-aged man, I have my advantages. At the teaching center I teach at, the VIP middle-aged guys do not want young teachers to teach them. Because when you are an advanced student, you want to have someone with life experience to teach you. When you ask them about how life is in the US or Europe, you want someone who is not just going to tell you about parties and beer. And I look good in a suit. I know my market.

(Charles, White, US American, male, late 40s)

As a White American male, Charles ticked the boxes of ethnicity, gender, and nationality of an ideal foreign ELT in China and thus often received a better salary than those who don’t tick all the boxes. What’s more, his look as a tall, middle-aged, business-looking man also helps him build authority and makes him a successful teacher popular with Chinese business people. It shows that apart from being White male native-English speakers, looks and aura also determine

¹³³ In a lot of franchise English training centers in China, as a sales strategy, English training courses are differentiated as regular courses and VIP courses with different services and prices. While regular courses offer classes to students in a group, VIP courses are one-to-one classes that are tailor-made to cater to each VIP student’s individual learning needs and pace. For example, *Wall Street English*, one of the most successful English training center franchises in China, offers VIP and VVIP English courses, and the fees for these courses are hundreds of thousands of Chinese RMB.

one's employability as a foreign ELT. Although Charles knew he was very competitive as a foreign ELT in Shenzhen, he was also aware that there were better jobs that he could not get. Charles told me about Matt, an American English teacher he knew and whom he described as "a sleek, smooth and charismatic man." Although Matt did not have any teaching experience, he was offered a private teaching job by a wealthy Chinese businessman by coincidence. Charles sounded envious yet admiring as he told me about Matt's job offer.

So the businessman offered Matt a two-year contract. All Matt has to do is to teach the businessman English two hours a day, five days a week. He is also offered a BMW series 7 (a luxury car) for him to drive. He is treated to go to the golf course with the businessman, and gets all sorts of benefits and vouchers. This guy, Matt, grew up with money, but he has no money. When his grandma dies, he is going to inherit a lot of money. He is the kind of guy who has a lot of confidence, and he makes you feel good being around him... He makes you become part of the confidence. I am not that guy. I am a bit more uptight and serious. So guys like him are limited. And when money is irrelevant to the rich Chinese, they can offer these guys very good deals.

(Charles, White, US American, male, late 40s)¹³⁴

What stood out in Charles's narrative of Matt was Matt's charisma as someone who came from a rich family. As Charles put it, since Matt "grew up with the money," he developed the confidence and charisma of a rich person. As a charismatic man from an upper-middle-class background, Matt made the perfect role model for a wealthy Chinese person (possibly a newly rich) who wanted to learn the Western upper-middle-class manners. Thus, the unusually luxurious job benefits the Chinese businessman offered Matt were not only for Matt to teach him English, but more importantly, for him to teach the businessman the way of being a sophisticated, cultured person in the Western standard.

In contrast to Matt, Owen lacked confidence and charisma and thus was not a popular teacher in his university despite his White male Australian identity. Owen migrated with his parents from Russia to Australia when he was a teenager. After Owen finished his Master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language) in Australia, he left Australia to teach for a half year in South Korea before teaching at a university in Shenzhen. Owen identified himself as Russian and recognized that his English sounded formal because he never

¹³⁴ My interview with Charles was conducted in the BAIA burger restaurant near Coco Park shopping complex in the Futian District of Shenzhen on 5 October 2017.

used slang. Owen spoke English at a much slower pace than a native English speaker. He also spoke with a slight Russian accent. He said he constantly had students and people whom he met for the first time asking him where he was ACTUALLY from, with doubts regarding his Australian origin. He said that, with some people, he would tell them he was Russian to save them the trouble of guessing, but he never told his students, for the sake of keeping his job.

Although being doubted constantly as to whether his mother tongue was English, Owen would always be considered by his Chinese employer as a native English speaker because he held an Australian passport. Also, with a Master's degree in TESOL, he was well qualified to teach English at a university level in China as a foreign teacher. Owen said because spoken English was his weakness, he chose to teach English writing. However, he was still not very popular with his students because, according to him, his classes were boring.

Owen's case shows how different attributes of a foreigner combined together to shape his employment situation in China. As a White male who held a passport from an English-speaking country and a Master's degree in TESOL, Owen was well-qualified as a foreign EFL teacher. However, not being able to speak English at a native level and not being very confident, Owen worried about losing his job all the time. He said he had been rated as the second-worst lecturer among the 40 English lecturers in his department the previous year in an end-of-semester teacher evaluation by students, so he was worried the university might not renew his contract that year.

In general, however, White male native-English speakers are well sought after in the ELT business in China. It is no wonder that some teachers would choose to lie about their nationality and pretend to be a native English speaker in order to bargain for better employment conditions. Max is from the US and taught English in a kindergarten during his first two years in China. When Max was about to leave his job, his employer asked him to find a new teacher to replace him. Max recommended a friend who was from France and taught him to lie about his nationality in order to get better pay. Max thought his employer neither cared nor could identify whether a foreigner was a native English speaker.

(Teaching English in the kindergarten) is the easiest of the easy business. You open up a kindergarten. Lots of kids, lots of babies. You are teaching ABC and super basic stuff. And you get a foreigner, pay him dirt. But that's okay, because they don't need to be doing much. They just need to be foreign. They are not there to teach. They are there to bring in customers. They are there to be faces... A friend of mine... His name's Pierre. This guy (laughing hysterically) ... his English is

terrible. He has the strongest French accent. S-T-R-O-N-G-E-S-T French accent. But I got him a job. I said, yeah Pierre, just tell them you are British. Just tell them you have a strong British accent. They won't know. Honestly, they have no idea. They will say, yeah, you are British, you come from a small village and that's how they speak (laughing)... (the employers have) NO IDEA. Honestly, it's like they don't know, or they don't care. 'Cause (Because) you are there to be White.

Enjoying the privilege as a White male foreigner in China, Max tried not to think too much about his White privilege and just approached the whole “race” matter pragmatically.

China is a very racist place. Just so happens to work for White people, in White people's favor. I'm not saying it's a good thing. Not saying it's a bad thing. I'm sure it's kind of bad. But it's a thing. And ok, those are the cards that I'm dealt and I'm gonna use that to my advantage. 'Cause, I can.

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)¹³⁵

Cohen (1977, p. 22-23) points out in his studies of expatriates, “contrary to most other types of migrants, the expatriates often actually gain status by their move abroad, rather than lose it” and so “it follows that ordinary people, who do not stand out at home, suddenly come to entertain a status in the host society, owing to the color of their skin, or to their role...”. Upon moving to China, White foreigners become superior to other foreign teachers in a local Chinese EFL setting. Moreover, a further preference of White foreigners based on nationality, make the status of White foreigners from the UK, the US, Canada, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, more elevated. Such preferences for certain nationalities give teachers incentives to “manipulate” their identity in order to “become” a desirable foreign ELT in China.

3.2. Being Black in China

While a huge demand and severe shortage of foreign teachers means there is still space for non-White and non-native English-speaking foreigners to find jobs in the ELT market in China, it usually means non-White foreigners are more likely to face exploitation in one way or another, or they have to work harder to prove themselves or fight for themselves in order to get reasonable treatment. Being at the bottom of the racial hierarchy and not from a native English-

¹³⁵ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on 1 June 2016.

speaking country, some Black Africans would find ways to construct their identities in order to be more valued in the ELT employment market. For example, African teachers often claim, or are asked by their employers and recruitment agencies to claim, that they are African Americans. Although the focus of the dissertation is on foreign ELTs who are Westerners, the case of Mary, who is an African female teacher, serves as a case of comparison. As a Black woman of African descent, the intersection of Mary's race, gender, and nationality constituted a form of negative intersectionality (Plüss & Chan, 2012), and Mary was in the most disadvantaged position in the EFL market in China.

I met Mary through Ms. Yang, who was the owner of a Chinese nursery in the Bao'an District in Shenzhen. Mary visited Ms. Yang's nursery once a week to teach three 20-minute classes in a row. On the day Mary was supposed to teach, Ms. Yang invited me to meet Mary in her nursery. I arrived at the nursery before 9 am and had some time to talk to Mary before the class started. She introduced herself as being born to a South African father and a US American mother. She also stressed that she was "born and raised in the US." Ms. Yang had already told me that Mary was from Kenya. Ms. Yang told me she had accidentally found out about Mary's nationality when Mary asked her for help to book a flight on a Chinese website and gave Ms. Yang her passport. I nodded at Mary's introduction as I was aware that recruitment agencies often instructed teachers who were not from English-speaking countries to "take up" the US citizen identity when they were sent to teach at schools and nurseries.

I observed Mary's classes and invited her for a cup of tea afterwards, and she gladly accepted. We had a long friendly conversation, which led to a few subsequent hangouts in the months that followed. As we spent more time together, and Mary became less guarded in my presence, some tell-tale signs revealed her African identity. For example, when her boyfriend called her on the phone, she no longer talked in English, which was what she had done during our first meeting when her boyfriend called. She would switch to talking in a language I did not understand. Also, she started to ask me questions such as where to get yam and chapati, which were common staple food in some African countries, and in our later meet-ups, she would use "where I am from," or "in my home country," instead of addressing the "US" directly.

Mary said she had only been in Shenzhen for a few months at the time I met her. When she first arrived in Shenzhen, she found three part-time English teaching jobs through a job agency. After staying in Shenzhen for some time, Mary managed to get two more part-time teaching jobs through her friends. At the time we met, Mary was working on five different part-time English teaching jobs in various districts in Shenzhen. Mary told me that there was a huge

salary difference between what she was paid from the three jobs she got through her job agency and the two jobs she got from her friends.

We have to pay the agency fees every month. The nurseries and schools pay the agency and the agency then pay us. Some of the big schools in Nanshan (the most affluent district in Shenzhen) offer a very good salary to foreign English teachers. It can be up to 18,000RMB. But the agency takes away half of the money. So for the three jobs I get through the agency, I only get 9,000RMB a month. For the ones I find by myself, I get a much better pay because the nurseries pay directly to me. I told the two nurseries not to tell the agency though, because the agency wouldn't like me doing this.

Mary only received half of the full salary her employers paid her with the three jobs she got from her recruitment agency, but with the two jobs in which she was directly employed, she was paid much better. As a Black woman from an African country, Mary was exploited. She was most probably also asked by her recruitment agency to lie about her nationality, which was a common lie forced upon non-native English-speaking foreigners by recruitment agencies in order to ask for higher payment from employers. I asked Mary if her agency provided her with a work visa and accommodation, given that she was charged such a heavy amount of monthly agency fees. Mary said she was given a room in a flat she shared with three other women in the Huaqiangbei sub-district in the Futian District. However, the agency did not care about work visas, and she was staying in Shenzhen on a student visa she had applied for herself. Asked if she was worried that she would get caught by the police without a work visa, Mary said the police rarely checked, and if they did, the schools always knew beforehand. Mary did not think it was fair for her job agency to take away so much of her salary each month.

I don't think they (recruitment agents) are happy. Look, they just keep looking for more teachers to suck more money from. They never sit down and feel at peace. For me, the worst crime in the world is to oppress people. It's people's sweat money. How can they sleep at night?

(Mary, African, female, 26-year-old)¹³⁶

¹³⁶ My conversations and hangouts with Mary took place from July to October in 2017.

Analysis

As a Black woman from an African country, Mary did not have any advantages in the EFL market in terms of her ethnicity, gender, or nationality, and was exploited in a structurally unequal employment mechanism. Not being White and not coming from a native English-speaking country, she did not have any bargaining power when dealing with her recruitment agency. She was angry about how her recruitment agency treated her. However, she did not feel she had any power to do anything. Another Black teacher, Omario, who was from the US, however, felt angry upon discovering his salary deduction and was determined to confront his agent.

I don't only blame the employer, but also the recruitment agent. I am going to make a big deal out of it. Why does a White guy from Africa earn more money than a Black guy from the US? The Black guys from Africa never say anything because they are from Africa and they feel they don't have any bargaining power to say anything. But I am an American. I am going to fight!

(Omario, African American, male, 30-year-old)¹³⁷

The fact that he is from the US gave Omario more power to confront his agent and negotiate his salary. Although it might not be possible to have his full salary, Omario was more likely to convince his agent to take away less salary from him. In contrast, Mary was in a relatively passive position because a structural inequality on the basis of race was prevalent in the EFL industry in China. Luckily, after staying in Shenzhen for some time, Mary had managed to get two other English teaching jobs through her personal network, and since for these jobs she was hired directly by her employers, she was able to get much better payment. By developing and making use of her personal network, Mary gradually became less dependent on recruitment agencies and gained more financial control over the salary she deserved.

The strategy used by African teachers to get rid of the control and exploitation of recruitment agencies is similar to African migrants in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The research by Ngeh and Pelican (2018) on African migrants in the UAE labor market shows that, although African migrants are often faced with structural constraints when they first enter the UAE labor market and thus end up in low-paid jobs, they are able to gradually improve their situations by making use of their intersecting positionalities flexibly as they gain entry into the system and

¹³⁷ The quote was taken from part of my conversation with Omario at the Bionic bar in the Baishizhou area in the Nanshan District.

regularize their stay. In China, African teachers are usually sent to work as English language teachers in nurseries and schools through recruiting agencies when they first arrive, and the agencies always say they are from the US because, in that way, they can charge schools more. Although the teachers are sent to work through recruiting agencies at the beginning, when they stay in China for long enough and build up their social networks, they tend to rely on those networks to find work. “One African would call another to ask if he needs work because he knows someone who is looking for teachers,” as Mary said.

Conclusion

Compared to international school teachers whose employment is in the form of overseas assignments, the migration process of self-initiated foreign ELTs is less assisted, and their remuneration packages are also less attractive. Studies have shown that it is a changing trend that self-initiated expatriates have outnumbered corporate-transferred expatriates in Asia. Moreover, self-initiated expatriates are increasingly losing privileges and have to make various life arrangements in terms of accommodation and employment on their own (Farrer, 2018). The ethnography of self-initiated teachers in this chapter contributes to shedding light on this migration trend.

Through analyzing self-initiated foreign ELTs’ motivations and employment conditions, this chapter argues that while economic incentive stands out as the most prominent migration motive, lifestyle also factors in the decision-making process of self-initiated foreign ELTs. Although these teachers gain more job opportunities in the ELT industry by moving to China, they are simultaneously facing precarious employment situations. Because of immigration regulations, legitimate Chinese employers have the power to terminate teachers’ work visas and thus their residence permits, and because of law enforcement deficiency, illegitimate recruitment agencies often have the power to exploit teachers.

Using the analytical framework of intersectionality, the chapter shows how different personal qualities have an impact on foreign ELTs’ employment in Shenzhen. By moving to China, any foreigners can capitalize on their ethnicity in the EFL industry. However, foreignness alone often guarantees foreigners an entrance ticket to the ELT market in China. Other personal qualities, such as nationality and gender, and even age and charisma, also play a role in determining the kind of teaching jobs and remuneration packages they can get. While most

White foreigners from English-speaking countries are able to enjoy the kind of lifestyle they would not have otherwise been able to imagine back home through moving to China, foreign teachers of other skin colors and nationalities are also able to find employment opportunities for themselves.

At international schools, given a similar level of education and teaching credentials, Black teachers get the same pay as White teachers. However, in the Chinese hiring system, foreign ELTs are valued differently according to the combination of their identity categories, which includes their race, gender, and nationality. Despite the ease with which most foreigners to enter the ELT market in China, teachers of South-east Asian and African origins face more structural inequalities than people of White skin. Also, while men are usually preferred over women, foreigners who hold a passport from a native-English-speaking country are preferred over foreigners who do not.

Case studies in the chapter have demonstrated that White male foreigners from English-speaking countries in general enjoy a superior status, especially when they embody an aura of confidence and charisma. Moreover, Black teachers are in a disadvantaged position in the EFL market, as they are often exploited by recruitment agencies. African Americans tend to think they have more bargaining power than Black teachers from African countries. However, recruitment agents, who measure teachers by their skin color more than anything, are unlikely to give better treatments to African descents from the US. However, as shown in Mary's story, although situated in a disadvantaged position, Black teachers can get better jobs through their personal networks as they stay longer. As social networks function to provide employment resources, Black teachers become less dependent on recruitment agencies and thus are less subject to exploitation.

Chapter 9 Foreign ELTs' cosmopolitan emplacement in Shenzhen

Introduction

Shenzhen is China's biggest migrant city for domestic migrants. As Clark (1998) observed, since domestic migrants of different native place, class, language, and household registration status far outnumbered permanent population in Shenzhen, and people experienced the city differently, Shenzhen did not have just one identity but many identities. Clark's (1998) statement remains true today. As the number of migrants increases, migrants are becoming more diverse in terms of their place of origin, and their native language and ethnicity. Although Mandarin is the main language spoken in Shenzhen in the public sphere, people in Shenzhen are from different parts of China and speak different hometown dialects. At the same time, indigenous dialects¹³⁸ are still actively used among indigenous residents. In terms of ethnicity, Shenzhen has also grown from a city of homogeneous Han Chinese to the most concentrated city for non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities in China. Today, Shenzhen is home to more than 1 million non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities (Shenzhen History Office, 2017). Moreover, social classes of migrants in Shenzhen are also becoming more stratified.

Positioning itself as a global city, Shenzhen's growing economy and rising status have not only continued to attract domestic migrants, but it is also becoming a popular migration destination for international migrants. Shenzhen is especially popular for international migrants who are looking for EFL employment. As a newly emerged cosmopolitan Chinese city, Shenzhen offers a cosmopolitan lifestyle comparable to that of traditionally cosmopolitan Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. At the same time, it also offers more EFL job opportunities as the EFL market in Shenzhen is less saturated than the ones in Shanghai and Beijing. Moreover, since the majority of Shenzhen's population are migrants or second-generation migrants from elsewhere in China, the distinction between locals and non-locals is not salient and thus makes

¹³⁸ There are three indigenous dialects in Shenzhen, including Bao'an Cantonese (spoken in western and southern Shenzhen, and different from the Cantonese spoken in Guangzhou and Hong Kong), Longgang Hakka (spoken in northern and eastern Shenzhen), and Dapeng dialect (a mix of Cantonese and Hakka, spoken in south-eastern Shenzhen).

Shenzhen a more open and welcoming place for newcomers, compared to other Chinese cities where the mentality of localism is more prominent. Lastly, as the only Chinese city that borders Hong Kong, Shenzhen is an attractive job location for those who enjoy visiting Hong Kong for leisure activities or need to exit Mainland China to do visa runs regularly.

Although Shenzhen has become one of the most expensive Chinese cities to live in, thanks to its cheap housing in urban villages (*chengzhongcun*), there is still geographical and economic space for migrants of different social groups to find their place in the city. Migrants of different social positions find ways to belong to their local community and the city of Shenzhen through economic and place-making activities, or what Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2018, p.21) term “emplacement” practices. Çağlar and Glick-Schiller (2018, p.21) argue that “emplacement” is more accurate than terms such as “integration” or “assimilation” in describing migrants’ experiences in a city, as “the concept of emplacement both invokes a sense of place-making and allows us to focus on a set of experiences shared by people who are generally differentiated by scholars and policy makers as either migrant or native.” In other words, “emplacement” is a more inclusive term that allows us to see not only the different but also the shared experiences of non-Chinese migrants and Chinese locals/migrants.

This chapter aims to link the discussion of cosmopolitan emplacement practices of foreign ELTs with the cosmopolitan attitudes and practices of the Chinese middle class (chapter 4) who share cosmopolitan space such as the Shekou area (chapter 3). Through the analytical lens of critical cosmopolitanism, the chapter looks at corporate-transferred international school teachers and self-initiated teachers as belonging to two different social groups, and argues that they have very different cosmopolitan emplacement practices. The chapter also discusses the relationships and shared interests between foreign residents and Chinese residents of similar social positions in various aspects of their lives. For example, international school teachers who are granted accommodation in high-end gated residential compounds in Shekou might have more in common with middle-class Chinese who live in the same kind of housing than with self-initiated international migrants who are renting a room in a shared apartment in suburban Shenzhen. Self-initiated non-Chinese migrants might have more shared social activities, and network with Chinese migrants/locals more than with corporate-transferred international migrants who tend to live in an expat bubble.

Theoretical framework

Critical cosmopolitanism

Critical cosmopolitanism transcends the lens of methodological nationalism and offers a way to understand the diverse experiences of international migrants by focusing on their social positionality, which can be different from that of other international migrants and similar to that of Chinese migrants/locals. While the nationality of international migrants is often emphasized in a transnational setting, other identity categories such as class, race, and gender also often intersect to create shared understandings as well as differences among people of different backgrounds. Glick-Schiller and Irving (2014) challenge contemporary conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism that are characterized by an openness to otherness. The authors point out that, since cosmopolitans are differently positioned and situated, there are multiple emplacements and belongings. Using critical cosmopolitanism as a counter-hegemonic methodological approach, Glick-Schiller and Irving (2014) advocate to focus on cosmopolitans' specific social positions in the social processes that shape or disenable moments of shared understandings and relationality within specific social and cultural contexts. Thus, Glick-Schiller calls for a critical cosmopolitanism that is built on the analysis of differently situated and empowered social relations.

The chapter looks into the migration experiences of foreign ELTs in relation to their social positionalities and argues that, when the term cosmopolitanism is applied to elite migrants, it has different connotations than when it is applied to less privileged migrants or to parts of the Chinese population. Thus, the concept could be usefully applied to different groups of foreign ELTs, but also to the Chinese middle class. Based on ethnography, the chapter distinguishes between cosmopolitan emplacement practices of international school teachers (the more privileged) and self-initiated migrant teachers (the less privileged). On the other hand, international migrants are part of the urban landscape in which interaction between different social groups take place, and Chinese migrants/locals of similar social positions and interests often encounter and form relationships. Thus one could not understand cosmopolitan emplacement practices of international migrants without looking at social processes that foster mutual recognition and relationality both with and beyond the expatriate community. For example, a US American from Philadelphia might feel mutually understood when talking to a fellow US American from the same state about a special dish from the state. However, the same US American, whose children are attending a local Chinese school, would feel more related to other Chinese parents as a parent.

Urban Citizenship

Farrer (2010a) looks into different ways for long-term Westerners to foster a sense of belonging in Shanghai by analyzing their “narratives of emplacement.” Farrer (2014b) further understands cosmopolitan emplacement of international migrants in Shanghai through the concept of “urban citizenship,” which he defines as bottom-up cultural practices that involve urban place-making practices. Such place-making practices include leisure and consumption activities as well as activities that create affective bonds to a place and local people. Farrer (2014b) finds the concept of urban citizenship particularly relevant to international migrants in Chinese cities for two reasons. Firstly, international migrants still constitute a relatively small population and often concentrate in a few global cities in China. Thus, they hardly have any influence on a national level, and it will be more productive to understand their experiences on a city level. Secondly, although it is extremely difficult for international migrants to achieve full political, cultural, and social citizenship without being ethnically Chinese, foreign residents in cities such as Shanghai enjoy social and cultural involvement at a local and community level. Thus, Farrer argues that international migrants practice “urban citizenship” by having the right to the city and engaging in place-making activities.

As pointed out by Farrer and discussed in detail in chapter 6, foreigners are not seen by Chinese policymakers as potential Chinese citizens, and the chances for foreign ELTs (as B-class foreigners) to be granted green cards are slim. Thus, it does not speak to reality if one considers the belonging of foreign ELTs as to the nation, which is heavily defined by Han Chinese ethnicity. On the contrary, as it is part of urbanites’ everyday lives to interact with the urban space of Shenzhen and engage with other city dwellers, urban citizenship is manifested in all urbanites, including international migrants, albeit with different levels of intensity. International migrants develop multiple emplacements and belongings, depending on their place-making activities, which are largely influenced by their social positionalities. Place-making activities are not only practices through which different social groups experience a sense of place in Shenzhen, but also social relations formed in the process, because in a geographical sense, places are “a constellation of social relations,” rather than bounded and static entities (Massey, 1994, p.154). Compared to someone who is merely in Shenzhen for economic and lifestyle reasons, someone who works and makes friends with people is grounded in the city. Also, someone who builds a home in Shenzhen is more likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging to the city.

1. Social positionalities and interaction with the urban space

Although both international school teachers and self-initiated migrant teachers in Shenzhen are living life as cosmopolitans, the latter group usually has much more varied experiences with the urban space. Job stability and accommodation arrangements of international school teachers keep them within the Shekou area, as that is where their workplace, home, and social circle are. On the contrary, because of the unstable nature of their employment, self-initiated teachers move around Shenzhen more. Also, since self-initiated teachers are mostly single, they have fewer family responsibilities and more leisure time to socialize with different people through various social activities in the city. In a way, international school teachers can be seen as living in a comfort zone or an expat bubble in Shekou. In contrast, self-initiated teachers often live outside of Shekou, work in multiple places, and engage in social activities across different areas in Shenzhen.

1.1. Shekou and international school teachers

As described in chapter 1, among different areas in Shenzhen, Shekou is a particularly popular residential area for well-off foreign and Chinese residents. Shekou not only houses many high-end residential clusters, it is also a consumption space that sells a cosmopolitan lifestyle to Shenzhen residents as well as tourists. Western bars, restaurants, and clubs in Shekou are an attraction for Westerners and affluent Chinese. Driven by consumerism, urban Chinese residents increasingly embrace a cosmopolitan space and lifestyle that used to be more exclusive to Westerners. For example, various Western festivals such as Oktoberfest and Halloween parties are celebrated in bars and breweries by foreigners and Chinese alike in Shekou. As Farrer (2018, p.206) pointed out, cosmopolitan communities are not only important for international migrants themselves, but also for middle-class Chinese consumers, as these “urban cosmopolitan canopies” provide a space for migrants and locals alike to pursue hybrid lifestyles.

Since Shekou offers a cosmopolitan lifestyle, and a quietness that is lacking in most hectic urban space, it is the most popular residential area for Western foreign residents in Shenzhen. As the most foreigner-concentrated area in Shenzhen, Shekou can be considered as an ethnic enclave. However, as Pieke (2014) points out, the transnational nature of foreign migrants in the contemporary Chinese context differs from a more conventional understanding of ethnic enclaves, as unlike foreign migrants in traditional immigration countries, most foreign migrants

in China are not permanent residents. In Shekou, there are international migrants who have become long-term settlers despite not having permanent residence cards. There are also international migrants who are transnationally or translocally mobile, and usually stay in Shenzhen for only a few years before they move to other countries or Chinese cities. However, despite the relatively mobile nature of international migrants in Shekou, the number of foreign residents in the area has not decreased.

Because Shekou seems to have everything to offer, apart from occasionally visiting Hong Kong, most foreign residents in Shekou do not feel the need to go to other areas in Shenzhen. International school teachers not only work and live in Shekou, but also tend to spend their leisure time there, mostly with their colleagues of similar age, family situation, and interests. For example, single teachers often socialize with each other during their leisure time in bars and restaurants in the Sea World Plaza, and some of the more health-conscious teachers would work out together after work or go for a hike on the Nanshan Mountain during the weekend. Teachers who have small children often spend time with other teachers who have kids of a similar age.

Tom was 58 years old and had been working in the Shenzhen International School in Shekou for almost a decade. He lived in a high-end residential compound with his wife and 17-year-old son. Below is a map (see illustration 42) that I asked him to draw to show the places he frequented in Shenzhen. As shown in the map, it turned out Tom's daily activities were all confined to Shekou. Tom lived in the Coastal Apartments on Wanghai Street,¹³⁹ and went shopping in the Silver Palette grocery store next to his apartment. Tom also drew a hotpot restaurant and a sushi restaurant on the left side of his apartment. Tom and his family frequented these two restaurants often. While Tom was very used to Chinese food after living in China for almost two decades, his Japanese wife enjoyed Japanese food. During the weekend, Tom would meet his colleagues at the McDonalds across from his apartment before hiking to the Nanshan Mountain. They usually walked past their school and started their hike from the left side of the mountain, and went down to the right side, at the bottom of which is the Garden City Mall. Tom liked to browse sports clothes in the Decathlon sports shop or go to Walmart to buy groceries.

¹³⁹ The official name of the street on which Tom lived on was Wanghai Road. Also, he named the residential compound he lived in "Coastal Apartments" for privacy reasons when I told him I would like to include the map he drew in my dissertation.

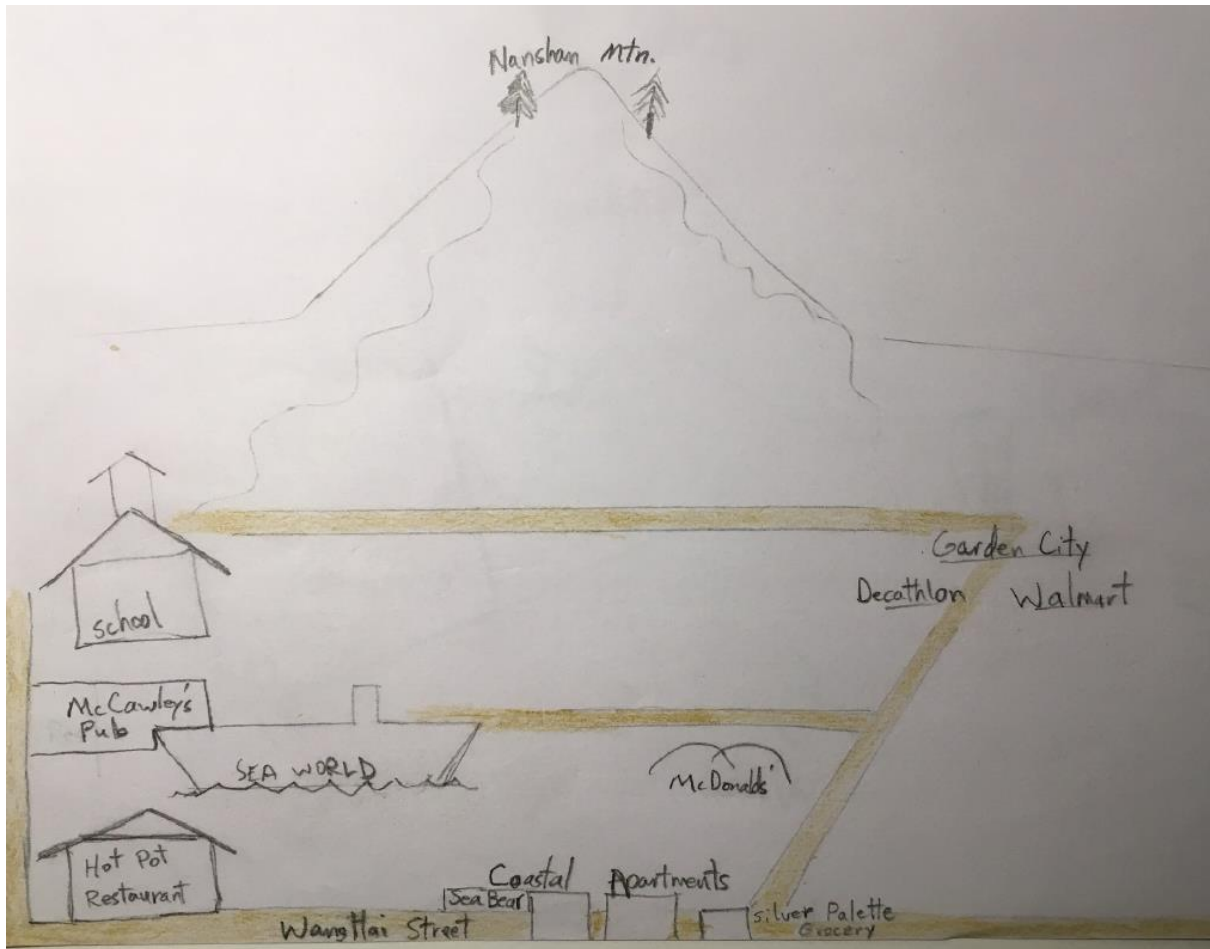


Illustration 42: A map showing Tom's frequently visited places in Shenzhen.

Source: An interviewee

On the map, Tom also drew his and his colleagues' favorite pub, the McCawley Pub, which was not far from his school and at the edge of the Sea World Plaza. However, unlike his colleagues who went to McCawley's every Wednesday for trivia nights,¹⁴⁰ Tom only visited occasionally. Tom was very content with his life in Shekou. He lived in a luxurious apartment with his family there, and his workplace was only one street away from home. Tom said he could not have asked for more because he had a stable job, an apartment with a sea view, a mountain nearby on which to go for a hike, and some restaurants he liked. Apart from his wife and son, Tom mainly socialized with other teachers who have no or fewer family responsibilities in his school.

International school teachers with small children have their own social circles. They tend to focus on their own family lives most of the time, and when they socialize, they socialize with

¹⁴⁰ Trivia nights are quizzes held in a pub.

other teachers with small children. Alice worked in the Shenzhen International School in Shekou. When she described to me her life in Shenzhen, it was like this: every morning during the weekday, she would leave home and walk to the school with her husband (who also taught in the same school) and her two children (who attended the same school). In between classes, she would occasionally bump into her children in the hallway. After school, the family would walk home together, prepare dinner, and spend the evening together. Every Sunday morning, the family would gather with other teachers, who are also Christians, at a colleague's apartment, to attend a home church. At the same time, their children and other teachers' children would attend Sunday school classes organized in a separate room in the same apartment. Everybody would then gather together to share the food they had brought, and have a small party. I later interviewed a few teachers who have children and working in the same school, and their narratives of their lives in Shenzhen were almost the same as Alice's, although some include their Chinese *aryi* (domestic helpers).

Most international school teachers move to Shenzhen with their spouses and children, so their lives outside of work mostly centered on family life, or socializing with other teacher families. Teachers who do not have children have more social lives. However, it is largely confined within the expat community. The only Chinese people they are in contact with daily are their Chinese students, who account for the majority of international school students in Shenzhen. Besides Chinese students, international school teachers also have to communicate with Chinese parents, and sometimes with their Chinese *aryi* (domestic helpers), mostly through the translation function of WeChat. Outside of school, not knowing Chinese, most international school teachers do not always understand what is going on around them. Because of limited understanding of their host society, a teacher described that he felt he was always “missing out on something,” while another teacher described her experiences in Shenzhen as “seeing things without color.”

1.2. Self-initiated migrant teachers: Shekou and beyond

The cosmopolitan practices of international school teachers and self-initiated teachers are different. While most international school teachers mainly work and socialize in Shekou with their colleagues, self-initiated teachers engage with a bigger scope of urban space and people in Shenzhen. Because of their less stable employment situation, self-initiated migrant teachers often have to take up multiple jobs at the same time or change jobs frequently, which results in

the necessity for them to travel to different districts in Shenzhen. Also, because of a less stable and confined social network resulting from changing job situations, foreign teachers often have more opportunities and incentives to join and build new social circles. Lastly, given that most self-initiated migrant teachers are single and have fewer family responsibilities, they often have more time to socialize.

Emma's everyday life involves traveling to places in and around Shenzhen. Apart from working as a drama and English teacher in several different areas in Shenzhen, Emma also spent her leisure time engaging in a wide range of activities that took place across various districts in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Emma lived in an urban village (*chengzhongcun*) in Baishizhou, which was an old city area in the Nanshan District. In contrast with Shekou, where foreigners concentrated, Baishizhou was is a very local area that provides cheap accommodation to working-class Chinese residents. Emma said she was happy to be living in Baishizhou because that gave her a chance to experience the local way of life.

I found this place in Baishizhou. And I am happy I am living here because wherever I go, I always want to experience the authentic way of life. Shekou is like a town on an Italian or French beach.

(Emma, White, Eastern European, female, 34-year-old)

I asked Emma to draw a mental map (see illustration 43) to show me her interaction with the Shenzhen city. Emma explained to me, at the bottom left corner of the map was Shekou, where she took regular yoga classes and occasionally went dancing in the clubs on the Sea World Plaza. Next to Shekou was Houhai, where Emma taught a weekly spoken English class in a local Chinese middle school. Above Houhai was Baishizhou, where Emma lived, cycled around, and did paintings. On the right side of Houhai was Shenzhen Bay, where Emma taught drama in English in the Shenzhen Bay Sports Center and went cycling near the sea. Above Shenzhen Bay was a Walmart supermarket, where Emma did her grocery and found her favorite cashew nuts. Above the Walmart supermarket was the OCT¹⁴¹ area, where Emma often went for a run, did yoga by herself, and drew in a green hidden spot she had discovered. Emma also organized a weekly “Zen” sketching group with her three Chinese friends in OCT. I asked her some questions about the sketching group.

¹⁴¹ OCT stands for Overseas Chinese Town, or Huaqiaocheng in Chinese. It is a hipster cluster in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen. It is a popular among young people for its trendy restaurants, bars, cafés and galleries.

I have been doing a teacher training at a university in Hong Kong. Also, a friend of mine lives in Hong Kong. I go to Hong Kong every second week and we would go to salsa parties together. She could be my mum at her age, but she's super open and smiling. We went for Salsa several times together in Hong Kong... Actually last year I also went for counselling [in Hong Kong] because I was so confused after what happened with my first employer. I wanted some help to clear my mind.

(Emma, White, Eastern European, female, 34-year-old) ¹⁴²

Apart from traveling to different places and engaging with different people for work purposes, Emma also consciously made an effort to meet and socialize with people who shared similar interests. She said while she had felt more detached from Shenzhen and felt like a “tourist” before she started her sketching group with other people, but she felt more like part of the local community now. Emma said she was only planning to stay in Shenzhen for five years at most to save up enough money and open her own school in her home country. However, she said she would like to make the most of her stay in Shenzhen while she was there by exploring the city and engaging in different activities.

Socio-cultural and economic activities of self-initiated international migrants

In Shenzhen, if one is willing, there are many opportunities for cross-cultural contact. In terms of workplace encounters, self-initiated international migrants often have more direct contact with Chinese customers. For example, while Western chefs and Russian entertainers enrich the culinary and leisure experiences of urban Chinese consumers, foreign ELTs play an important role in Chinese people's cosmopolitan striving by teaching the language and cultures from the West. As Farrer (2018, p.205) observed, the expatriate geographies “have evolved into the cosmopolitan canopies of Asian global cities, in which young expatriates find diverse roles supporting the cosmopolitan lifestyles of increasingly affluent Asian urbanities.”

Apart from workplace contact, self-initiated migrants are also often more sociable and entrepreneurial, as they are more active in seeking out social activities and business opportunities. During my fieldwork, I often encountered self-initiated migrants mingling with Chinese people in bars, expat parties, and various social events. While teaching English was one of the most common occupations for self-initiated international migrants, many were also starting their own businesses in trading or consulting. Among the teachers I interviewed, while

¹⁴² My interview with Emma was conducted in the Banxian Café in Baishizhou in Shenzhen on October 23, 2017.

a few of them already had their businesses on the side of teaching English, there were more who were in the process of planning to start their businesses.

Social activities

Sports

In the Nanshan district in Shenzhen, there were various leisure sports groups whose founders and participants were of diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, in Nanshan district, there were squash groups, badminton groups, football groups, and an Ultimate Frisbee group. These groups usually started as a small leisure sports group and expanded over time as participants brought their friends to the games. Newcomers usually signed up for their first participation through their friends who were already in a WeChat group created for the purpose of organizing sports games. When newcomers went to the games, they would be added to the WeChat group, so the next time they could sign up for a spot by themselves or bring their own friends. These sports games often took place weekly and had limited spots, so participants needed to sign up beforehand in WeChat groups to secure a seat. After each game, participants would split the rental fees of sports venues, which were usually in public sports stadiums or private clubhouses.

Book Exchange Club

Apart from various sports meetups, there are other cultural activities that one could meet people from diverse backgrounds. One of the cultural activities I went to was the Book Exchange Club. The club borrowed its venue from a community center inside a residential compound in the Futian District every Sunday afternoon to hold the book exchange activity. When I attended the event for the first time in August 2016, I was told that the club had been founded by a few international migrants in Shenzhen, and the organizers had been changed a few times as they left Shenzhen. One of the current organizers was an American Chinese woman who had recently moved to Shenzhen from the US, and her role was to check out books for visitors. Another organizer was also from the US and worked as a teacher in a local school. His role was to host book discussions.

The Book Exchange Club had a vast collection of donated English books for people to borrow. Every Sunday afternoon, books were laid out on several long tables around a room for people to browse, read, and borrow. While I was browsing the books, I came across a Russian student, Arina, who was also flipping through books, and we started a conversation. She told me that

she was doing her bachelor's degree in Finland and was on her way to her exchange studies in Beijing. She was stopping by in Shenzhen for two weeks for some modeling work to finance her studies. We talked for a while, and she told me that it was easy for a White girl to get modeling jobs in China, but she did not like it. She usually avoided telling people that she was doing modeling jobs because she did not like to be associated with stereotypical labels of models such as "shallow," "vain," and "materialistic."

After Arina went to check out a few books and left, I picked up a book *Shock Doctrine* and sat down on one of the chairs that were arranged in a circle and started reading while waiting for the book discussion later. A man came in and sat next to me, so we exchanged greetings and started to chat. He introduced himself as John from South Africa, and was doing his consulting business in Shenzhen. His job was to advise people who wanted to do business in Asia (Vietnam, Thai, Philippine, China, etc.). He told me that he had been in Shenzhen for three years and he found it a very friendly city. He said he chose Shenzhen because it was a good city for internet business. Compared to opening an offshore company in Hong Kong or London, he said China was cheaper. He said he chose Shenzhen mainly for two reasons: Economy and security.

While I was chatting to John, a man came into the circle of chairs and sat down on one of them. He was the host of the book discussion activity. His name was Marshall, and he was from the US and was teaching in a local school. He suggested since the new school year was starting soon, we could talk about the two books that influenced us the most. Marshall started with *Catcher in the Rye*, and another book, before everyone in the circle took their turns to share the two most influential books for them. The circle was full by then, and there were about 15 people. Sitting in the circle were people of Chinese and non-Chinese ethnicity, with or without experiences of living abroad, some of them transients and some of them planning to settle in Shenzhen.

Economic activities

Starting business

Some foreign ELTs manage to quit teaching by starting their own businesses. Those who become entrepreneurs are usually married to a Chinese woman. As it is notoriously difficult for foreigners to attain business licenses in China, foreigners often make their partners the

license holders while they run the actual business. Some teachers start their own English teaching centers or trading businesses, while some others open Western bars and restaurants.

In Shenzhen, the most famous Western restaurant in Shekou was owned and run by an Italian family. Also, breweries and sports bars opened by US Americans, Britons, and New Zealanders were frequented by expats. A popular business practice in the food and beverage industry in Shenzhen is that – international migrants would open restaurants/bars and hire foreign chefs to maximize the authenticity of their cuisines, while hiring local waiters/waitresses who can speak English to lower labor costs. Compared to Chinese entrepreneurs, the advantage international migrants have in starting a business in the food and beverage sector is that they have the networks to hire professional chefs and brewers from their countries of origin. Also, in terms of management style, foreign chefs and brewers are more likely to share the same values with business owners from their own culture than with a local Chinese businessman, thus makes it easier for business operations on the ground.

As Shenzhen attracts more professionals, the city's demography is increasingly made up of international elites, Chinese returnees, and educated domestic white-collar workers who enjoy a cosmopolitan lifestyle. As the population of Western residents and cosmopolitan middle-class Chinese continue to grow, it translates into rising demand for authentic Western restaurants and bars, and thus abundant business opportunities in the food and beverage sector. There are already bars and restaurants opened by foreigners in Shenzhen, and they are expected to increase as Shenzhen sees a growing number of ready consumers of a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Analysis

Global Chinese cities are the sites that serve as contact zones between Westerners and Chinese (Farrer, 2011). However, not all Westerners are mixing with the Chinese. Foreigners' positionality, which is reflected in their employment arrangements, influences whether they have the need and desire to engage with local people. As shown above, most international school teachers tend to restrict their everyday activities within the international school community in the Shekou area. International school teachers have relatively higher job security and a stable work environment, and their daily necessities are taken care of by their employers. As a result, they often have less need and incentives to interact with people who are not within their work circle. The fact that both their places of work and residence both in Shekou reduces the need for international school teachers to travel to other areas in Shenzhen. Outside of work,

they also tend to socialize with their colleagues in Shekou. Teachers who were parents claimed that they chose to do so to create stability for their children. Other teachers said they were aware that they lived in an expat bubble and occasionally felt they might be missing out on what was happening in the wider community. However, they generally considered the benefits of their lifestyle outweighed the disadvantages, and were mostly content with their life.

Since self-initiated migrant teachers are often faced with a less stable job environment, they often have to work in different places with different people. Also, since they often have limited or no assistance from their employers in terms of making life arrangements such as renewing visas and finding accommodation, they usually have to rely on local contacts to navigate the Chinese system. Self-initiated foreign ELTs also tend to have more diverse needs and plans apart from working and earning a living. I encountered teachers who asked me for help of various kinds, including applying for a business license, converting their driving license in China, apartment viewing, and online shopping. Because of the language barrier or lack of understanding of the Chinese bureaucratic system, getting things done become very difficult without the help of a Chinese person. Also, in some situations, it requires not only a knowledge of the Chinese language but also *guanxi* (connections) to get things done. For example, in a case study in the following section, the foreign teacher would not have been able to find a school for his son if he did not know a Chinese person who had the power to help him. Although self-initiated migrant teachers might not have consciously seen building a local social network as a way to survive, local contacts and connections proved to be of help in times of need. As observed during my fieldwork, self-initiated migrant teachers who had more local contacts and friends were often interested in the Chinese language and culture, if not also speaking the language. In this light, creating connections and ties to local people can be seen as both a pragmatic strategy as well as a cultural orientation of self-initiated migrants.

2. Family making and education for children

As a cosmopolitan city, Shenzhen is a site for intercultural encounters, some of which lead to intercultural marriages. The number of intermarriages between Chinese and foreigners in global Chinese cities has been on the rise, and more mixed couples have chosen to stay in China after their marriages (Farrer, 2008). For these couples, they encounter less problems in their children's education in China as they can send their children to a local Chinese public school when the Chinese partner has a *hukou* (residence registration of a Chinese national) in

Shenzhen. However, as observed during my fieldwork, intercultural marriages were not only limited to those between Chinese and non-Chinese, but also included marriages between international migrants. For these couples, because of the lack of a *hukou*, they are of a lower priority in accessing the local public education. In Shenzhen, because of scarce education resources and limited school seats, it is highly challenging for foreigners' children to be granted a seat in a Chinese public school when many Chinese nationals without Shenzhen *hukou* cannot obtain a seat in the public school system. Thus, this section focuses on the education strategies of international families that do not involve Chinese parents.

Compared to international school teachers, it is rarer to find self-initiated migrant teachers who have children in Shenzhen. One of the reasons is that those who are with a non-Chinese partner and have children would find education for their children such a big obstacle that they will leave China for their children's schooling elsewhere when their children reach school age. Education for the children of self-initiated international migrants remains a conundrum in Shenzhen, if not almost impossible. While sending their children to an international school is the easiest option, the school fees cost about 200,000 RMB (26,000 Euro/28,000 USD) per school year, which is unaffordable for most self-initiated migrant teachers. On the other hand, while no law says foreign children are not allowed to go to local schools, priority is given to Chinese people with Shenzhen *hukou* or people who own a property in a school area because of limited school seats in Shenzhen. In contrast, while international schools are too expensive for self-initiated migrant teachers, international school teachers can send their children to the international schools they teach at for free, as part of their remuneration package.

2.1. International school teachers

International school teachers often send their children to international schools because their employers pay for it. For example, teachers from the US often send their children to a international school, so their children could grow up as much as possible in their home culture while away from home. While it is an educational preference, it is also seen by international migrants as a way to create stability for their children. However, a noticeable trend in recent years is that parents who send their children to international schools are increasingly choosing the Chinese language as the second language for their children to learn at international schools.

Raising children in China: creating stability

Alice and George were from the US, and they both taught in the Shenzhen International school. The couple had three children – one adopted in China, one adopted in Ethiopia, and one of their own. The couple decided to move to Shenzhen from the US because they wanted to take their first adopted son, who was a Chinese boy born in China, to live in China for some time. After living in Shenzhen for two years, the family moved to Slovakia, during which they had their own child. After two years in Slovakia, the couple decided to move back to Shenzhen. According to Alice, there were a lot of advantages to moving back to Shenzhen.

My husband would get a better position if we moved back to Shenzhen. Also, the salary is good, and we can have the lifestyle we want and save more money.

It was the sixth year for the family in Shenzhen since they had moved back from Slovakia. While Alice and her husband worked in the same international school, all of their three children were school-age and went to the same international school the couple taught in for free. The couple tried their best to raise their three children, with a little help from a Chinese *aryi* (domestic helper). Alice considered it essential to create a stable home environment for their children by sticking to the US culture at home.

I just want to make my life and the life of my family as normal as possible. Every day, we go to school together, and we go home together. We cook American dishes at home. When there is so much going on around, that's just what we need to do to get on day-to-day. It's just life. Especially for kids, moving around and changing environment can be a big shock for them. Things in China were very different for the kids when we moved here, and everybody was already touching his hair (referring to the second son, who was adopted in Ethiopia and had curly hair). We don't even travel much during the holiday. I just want to create a stable home environment for them to feel safe. They will struggle more if I introduce too much into their lives. Religious belief is an important part of our life. I think, as an expat, your religious identity either becomes stronger or weaker. For us, religion is a way to maintain our identity when we are abroad, and it is also important for raising our kids because we feel we have huge responsibilities to educate them about certain things, for example, moral values.

(Alice, White, US American, female, 38-year-old)¹⁴³

¹⁴³ My interview with Alice took place in her school on 10 October 2016.

Alice saw having a strict routine, sticking to the US American culture, and introducing Christian values to her children as crucial in raising her children. For her, that justified why she confined her and her family's life in Shekou and was not interested in interacting too much with people from non-US American cultures. Another teacher, who was also a teacher in the Shenzhen International School, shared Alice's child-raising approach. She said she was aware that she was living in an expat bubble, but she felt she needed to do it for the sake of her daughter.

I am aware that I am a foreigner living in a bubble in Shenzhen. I am aware that I am not learning much Chinese. Though compared to a lot of teachers here, at least I have been making small progress. I am aware of all that. If I were not a single parent raising a kid, I would not have chosen to live like this. But kids need stability. It's much easier to be a single mother here than in the US. In the US, I needed to take my daughter to a childcare center before I went into work at 7:30 am. After work, I needed to pick her up with my car before I went home to make dinner.

(Helen, White, US American, female, 66-year-old)¹⁴⁴

International school teachers who are parents tend to choose to live in an expat bubble in Shekou for the sake of creating a stable environment for their children. Despite wanting their children to have a Western education, parents who send their children to international schools are becoming eager for their children to learn Chinese, as they believe the Chinese language knowledge will make their children more globally competitive. Ms. Zeng, a Chinese language teacher who had been teaching in an international school in Shenzhen for eight years, said parents' attitudes toward learning Chinese were very different from five or six years ago. Previously, parents did not care about learning Chinese at all, and now foreign parents wanted their kids to learn Chinese, and Chinese classes were very popular.

2.2. Self-initiated migrant teachers

Studying international migrants who send their children to local Chinese schools in Shanghai, Farrer and Greenspan (2015, p.142) term this localizing educational strategy "educational cosmopolitanism." They argue that non-Chinese parents who send their children to local Chinese schools practice grounded cosmopolitanism, which in the Chinese context, is a

¹⁴⁴ My interview with Helen was conducted in her school during the new teacher orientation event in August 2017.

Sinocentric cosmopolitanism that “aims to give non-Chinese children access to the cosmopolitan cultural capital they will need to engage with a future ‘global China’.” In Shenzhen, however, sending children to the local school is still not a readily available option non-Chinese parents have. At the time of my fieldwork (2016-2017), it was extremely difficult, and it was almost unheard of for non-Chinese parents to send their children to local schools.

Public education services are underdeveloped in Shenzhen due to a lack of land for educational purposes. Land in Shenzhen is often reserved for property developers or hi-tech projects by district governments because such land uses generate more substantial financial revenue, which has a direct impact on the political future of officials who support the projects (He, 2019). Given the limited seats in public schools, priority is given to children with parents who have a Shenzhen *hukou* or own a housing property in Shenzhen. For non-Chinese parents who do not have Shenzhen *hukou*, the only way to secure a school seat is to buy a flat near a desired school, as homeowners are granted a school seat automatically in the area where they own a housing property. However, housing prices in Shenzhen are among the highest in the world, and it is not easy to become a homeowner, especially for self-initiated migrant teachers whose salary is almost at the bottom at the expat community and not much higher than the local wage.

International schools remain the most popular and common educational choice for international migrants who could afford the tuition fees for their children, or who have their children’s tuition fees paid for by their employers. However, international school tuition fees are too for self-initiated international migrants who have to self-finance their children’s education. While Chinese public schools are free, they are difficult to get into. Thus, many self-initiated migrants who have school-age children are forced to leave China by the time their children are old enough to go to school. As a result, not many self-initiated foreign ELTs share Peter’s struggles but eventual success in terms of finding a school for his children in Shenzhen. Most people facing Peter’s educational conundrum regarding his children would have left China and found education resources elsewhere. At the time of my fieldwork, Peter was the only foreigner I met who, without being married to a Chinese wife and without owning any housing property in Shenzhen, had managed to get a school seat for his son.

Peter was in his late 40s and had been working and living in Shenzhen for more than 12 years when I interviewed him in the summer of 2016. Peter had left his home country, the US, in his late 20s, and did not consider it an option for him to return to live there. Peter graduated with an MA degree in English and Literature at a US university in 1997 and was offered a teaching job at the same university. During the two years Peter was teaching in the university, he

received a monthly salary of 1600 USD and no housing benefit. In 1999, at the age of 28, he decided to travel abroad for one year, since he had never been abroad, and he thought the time to travel was “now or never.” He easily got a teaching job in a small town in Japan and was offered a three-year contract. During those few years, Peter was paid 2,000 USD a month and was given free accommodation and a car for his personal use. Peter saved up easily and paid off his student loan (21,000 USD) within his first year in Japan. In his following two years in Japan, Peter used the money and leisure time he had to travel around.

Seeing the advantages of teaching EFL in Japan, Peter decided to continue teaching overseas. After his job contract in Japan ended, Peter taught in a private school in Taiwan for one year and at a university in Thailand for another year before going back to Japan and working as a manager in an English language school for one year. In 2004, his best friend started to do his Ph.D. in Hong Kong and suggested Peter get a job nearby so that they could meet up over the weekends. Peter liked the idea and soon began job hunting in the Southern China area. After posting his resume on a recruitment website, he soon received many offers from universities in cities near Hong Kong. In the end, Peter accepted a job offer from a university in Shenzhen and moved to the city.

A few years after working in Shenzhen, Peter met his wife Aurora, who was from the Philippines. The couple had two sons and had been raising their children in the Nanshan District of Shenzhen. When I interviewed Peter and Aurora for the first time in 2016, their older son was five years old, and his younger son was three. As part of his employee benefits, Peter was able to send both of his sons to a nursery that had been opened specifically for the children of university teaching staff. Peter said that since his sons grew up in a very local Chinese neighborhood and went to a Chinese nursery with Chinese children, they were able to speak fluent Chinese. Peter also told me that his sons, especially the older one, very much identified with the Chinese culture. To give me an example, he told me that he and Aurora once took their sons to a restaurant full of flags from different countries, and when asked which flag was the flag of their country, his older son pointed at the Chinese flag.

However, as Peter’s older son approached the school age, finding a primary school for him became the couple’s biggest headache. Peter said that his and Aurora’s combined annual income was about 300,000 RMB (39,000 Euro/42,000 USD) in total, and they had rent and bills to pay, so it was not possible for the couple to reserve 200,000 RMB (26,000 Euro/28,000 USD) each year for their son’s school fees. That left the couple with no other option but to send their son to a local Chinese school if the family were to continue to stay in Shenzhen. After

asking around and doing research on online EFL teacher forums, Peter found out that it was highly unlikely that a child of non-Chinese parents could get in a local school in Shenzhen. He told me that most foreigners in his situation would leave Shenzhen to look for schools for their children elsewhere.

I have asked around. All the foreigners, unless they can send their children to international schools for free, the only option they have is to go back home. We can't go to America. If nothing works out, we will have to go to the Philippines, where my wife is from. I hope we won't have to do that.

(Peter, White, US American, male, 48-year-old)¹⁴⁵

Peter and Aurora had started to think about their sons' schooling since their older son turned four years old. The couple did not stop looking for ways to get their son into a public school. They asked every one they came across for help. For two years, it was still unclear if his son would be able to find a local school, and the couple became very frustrated with the process. It was not until when their older son turned six that a Chinese parent whose child was a classmate of Peter's son offered to help. With the parent's help, the couple finally managed to find a school for their older son in 2017. In 2019, following his older brother, Peter's younger son also went to the same primary school. With their children's education problems solved, Peter and Aurora were relieved and planned to stay in Shenzhen in the foreseeable future. Peter and Aurora planned for their sons to continue their education in the Chinese education system.

Peter and Aurora were extremely lucky to have found a local public Chinese school for their two children. His success in securing local school seats for his sons did not come easily, and Peter and his wife were at one point at the edge of giving up after two years of relentless yet fruitless search and inquiries. However, through the father of his son's classmate in the nursery, Peter finally managed to gain access to the local public education system for his sons, who would receive nine years of public-school education for free.

3. Multiple emplacements and belongings

I remember bumping into Peter, Aurora, and their three-year-old younger son during the summer of 2017. I saw the family first and said hi to Peter, who was in an orange shirt and

¹⁴⁵ My interview with Peter was conducted on 8 September 2016 in a café in the Nanshan district in Shenzhen.

standing outside a local snack shop. Peter's son was sitting in his pushchair, sucking a lollipop. I greeted them both. Peter greeted me back with a big smile and said that the shop owner had given his son a lollipop for free. Aurora was chatting away with the shop owner, and Peter had to call her name to catch her attention. Aurora turned around, and when she saw me, she gave me a big smile and said hi.

I had not seen the family for almost one year since I last visited them at their home in the summer of 2016. I squatted down to talk to the couple's son. He had grown a lot since the previous year. He could say simple words now, and when he finished the lollipop, he said, "gone!" Peter said they were walking around and waiting to pick up his older son from school. Peter said his younger son wanted to go to school too, so I asked the child, "do you want to go to school?" "Yes!" his big round eyes grew bigger and his curly hair bounced up and down as he nodded his head.

When Aurora finished her chat with the shop owner and came out of the shop, she told me that they were taking a walk with their younger son to keep him from watching too much TV. She said, "but he runs to places he shouldn't run to, the bikes and stuff." I remember when I had visited the family last time, the little boy was still a toddler and was always in the arms of his mother. "So he can walk properly now?" I asked. "Oh yes, he can walk and run properly, but he does not listen to me." Aurora laughed. The school day was coming to an end, and it was time for the couple to pick up their older son. When we parted, I watched the family walking away in the afternoon sun along the street, with the pushchair in front, the couple strolling behind.

Apart from having a happy family life in Shenzhen, Peter also enjoyed his work. He had been teaching in the same university and living in the same neighborhood for more than a decade. Peter was very attached to Shenzhen, especially the community he had been living in. He always said Shenzhen was his home. Peter was passionate about his job, and he got along well with his students. He told me proudly that he was elected as the most popular teacher in his department for the past few years.

Because of more intense interaction with the urban space and Chinese residents, self-initiated migrant teachers such as Peter are more likely to feel a sense of belonging to Shenzhen than international school teachers. Moreover, from my observation during my fieldwork, teachers who feel at home in Shenzhen are usually interested in the Chinese language and culture, if not also in speaking the language. While Peter was interested in Chinese culture and spoke basic

Chinese, Max was an expert in the Chinese language and culture. Max had lived in China for seven years at the time of our interview, with the first two years in the northern Chinese city of Xi'an and the following five years in Shenzhen. Max said that in Shenzhen, he felt less like an outsider than when he had been living in Xi'an. Since most residents in Shenzhen, like himself, were not native to the place. Max said, "since '*wo shi wailaide, ni yeshi wailaide* (I am not from here, neither are you),' the playing field was a lot more even." After five years of living in Shenzhen, Max said he felt so at home in China that he had no desire to return to his home country at all.

At this point, I would say, China feels more like home to me than America does. I remember the last time I went home, I almost broke my mum's heart. I remember I could just see her face. We were driving to my hometown. She was sitting in the seat next to me. I was looking around coz 'cause I haven't been home for a year. I was like, "mum, I really miss home." I had been back to the states for a couple of weeks at that point. My mum said, "Oh, Max, you made me so happy! Oh, you can move back home any time you want. You always have a home here!" "Mum you do understand, I mean China, right?" That's the exact moment her heart just dropped (laughing). But honestly, it's true.

Max said he had chosen to teach English in Xi'an during his first two years in China because there were very few foreigners in the city and this forced him to speak Chinese. Max must have put in some hard work in learning the Chinese language, since at the time I met him, he was speaking sophisticated Chinese with a Northern accent and could hold a deep conversation in Chinese without any problem. He knew a lot about Chinese history and traditions too. He felt that being able to speak Chinese was part of the reason he was having a good time in China. According to him, the fact that he took the time to learn Chinese showed his respect for the Chinese culture, thus Chinese people reciprocated by treating him well. He compared himself with most long-term expats in Shekou who did not speak a word of Chinese.

You see Adam (Max's colleague from the UK and taught in the same local Chinese school as Max), he's been here for 18 years now. Speaks no Chinese (laughing). He's the typical guy who lives in Shekou (laughing)... who lives in the "colony." But I cannot imagine not learning Chinese. Especially in America, we always say if you come to America, you learn English. You go to another man's house, you follow his rules. *Ruxiang Suisu* (when in Rome, do as the Romans do). So learn Chinese. Have respect for the place that you are in. Learn the way they do things.

Learn something yourself. It might broaden your own horizons. That's what I enjoy about this place. It gives me opportunities to do so. To learn how different people do things. I like that.

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)¹⁴⁶

As Max pointed out, not every self-initiated migrant is willing and prepared to take the time to learn the Chinese language and culture. Adam, whom I had also interviewed, can be considered a typical example of “Shekou expat” who did not show much interest in learning about the Chinese language and traditions. Adam had lived in Shenzhen (and specifically Shekou) for almost two decades. He was married to a local Chinese woman with an eight-year-old son who went to a local Chinese school. However, Adam did not seem to integrate into his immediate surroundings. For example, when talking about the Chinese tradition of *yum cha*,¹⁴⁷ which was popular in Shenzhen, Adam frowned and said, “I do not understand why people get up so early every morning and have the same dishes every day.” During his leisure time, Adam mainly socialized with other expats in Shekou and showed little interest in socializing with Chinese people. His social circle mostly involved White men who had similar backgrounds. When I went along with Adam to one of the parties he was invited to, the participants were mainly older White men and their Chinese wives or girlfriends. While the men sat together at one table, the Chinese wives/girlfriends sat at another table.

Adam said he stayed in Shenzhen because of his job and the lifestyle he could enjoy in Shenzhen. He was teaching in a local middle school, and as a foreigner, he was given fewer teaching hours with a good salary. Moreover, he was appointed as the supervisor of local teachers, even if his educational qualifications were lower than those who were under him. Otherwise, Adam described himself as having to tolerate life in China.

I would feel fed up once in a while, and then I will try to get away... or I would go home (the UK) and then be reminded of the reasons I left home, and when I came back to China, everything would become more tolerable.

(Adam, White, British, male, late 40s)¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on 1 June 2016.

¹⁴⁷ *Yum cha* refers to going for *dim sum*. It is a Cantonese tradition of brunch involving Chinese tea and dim sum. *Yum cha* is popular in Cantonese-speaking regions, including Guangdong, Guangxi, Hong Kong and Macau.

¹⁴⁸ My interview with Adam was conducted in the Artisans Restaurant in the Costal City Shopping Mall on 22 May 2016.

Kevin, another self-initiated “Shekou expat” from the US, was also not emotionally attached to Shenzhen but only stayed in the city for the job opportunities and lifestyle the city could offer. Kevin was an African-American man in his late 40s and had a degree in engineering. After working in the IT sector in the US and Europe for 15 years, Kevin was sent to work in Shanghai by his US-based company. Kevin lost his job after working in Shanghai for one and a half years. After that, he decided to stay in Shanghai and start his own clothing trading business. Kevin later moved to Shenzhen because of his then girlfriend, but they soon broke up. Kevin then met another Chinese woman who worked as a salesperson in an electronics trading company. Kevin’s clothing business was not working out, so he switched to electronics instead and started a company with his girlfriend.

At the time of our interview, Kevin had been in Shenzhen for five-and-a-half years. He was teaching English part-time during the day and working on his trading business in the evening. Kevin showed me his company’s Facebook page on his iPad – “B & K Electronics” – and showcased various products his company offered. He said he had built an e-commerce portal where his customers could order products. His girlfriend helped him communicate with the factory. His clients were mostly from the US, Europe, and some in Africa. Kevin said he had registered his business license in the US and had an office with seven employees in Shenzhen. As for teaching, Kevin said he taught 35 hours and seven days a week. He found teaching easy and a stable source of income, so he would like to keep doing it. To illustrate how teaching English was a “no-brainer” for him, he told me about his class earlier on that day.

I had a new VIP¹⁴⁹ student this morning. We got along very well, and the lesson was very easy. He wanted to look at Trump and Hilary’s debate on YouTube, so we watched it together.

Kevin was certain that he would not return to the US. He said, “I like America, and I will visit when I need to, but I am not going back. What do I do in America? I am 45.” Kevin wanted to stay in China for the money and lifestyle, and he had no intention of learning the Chinese language or culture. Because his girlfriend, who was also his business partner, helped him with

¹⁴⁹ In a lot of franchise English training centers in China, as a sales strategy, English training courses are differentiated into regular courses and VIP courses with different services and prices. While regular courses offer classes to students in a group, VIP courses are one-to-one classes that are tailor-made to cater to each VIP student’s individual learning needs and pace. For example, *Wall Street English*, one of the most successful English training center franchises in China, offers VIP and VVIP English courses, and the fees for these courses are hundreds of thousands of Chinese RMB.

everything that required Chinese skills, he did not feel the need to learn Chinese or make Chinese friends. In fact, he consciously chose not to learn Chinese, as he did not see it as beneficial for his business.

If I speak Chinese, then people will start to talk to me, and I will have to spend hours talking about stuff unrelated to business before we can deal. I like to keep things simple and fast. I only want to talk about price and quantity. I am not interested in hearing people's stories.

(Kevin, African-American, US American, male, late 40s)¹⁵⁰

Despite having stayed in Shenzhen for a significant amount of time and having Chinese partners, Adam and Paul did not seem to be interested in having much interaction with people outside of the expat community in Shekou. On the contrary, Max saw everyone, foreign or not, as fundamentally the same, and had made friends with Chinese and non-Chinese in Shenzhen. Max said he wished Chinese people would treat him as an ordinary person without differentiating him as a foreigner by pointing out his “*laowai*” (foreigner) identity on the street. He also wished Chinese people would not compliment his Chinese language proficiency and would just talk to him the way they would with any Chinese-looking person. Max saw “nationality” as an identity label constructed by the state for political purpose and thought national identity hindered people from seeing each other as they were in everyday life.

I feel at this age, countries are outdated. People are the same everywhere you go. And you travel enough to know the same thing. German people are the same. British people are the same. Chinese people are the same. Normal everyday people. *Women laobaixing* (we ordinary people), we are all the same. The only difference is the government. The only difference is the states. Governments separate. Governments seek to control. Yeah, fine, ok. But I am not that. You are not that. Just normal people. So what does it matter?

(Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old)¹⁵¹

With his outstanding Chinese language skills and deep understanding of the Chinese culture and society, as well as his open attitude, eloquent speaking skills, and excellent interpersonal skills, Max made a wide network of friends, many of whom were Chinese. Through Max's

¹⁵⁰ The lunch meeting with Kevin took place on 5 August 2016 in the Nanshan District in Shenzhen.

¹⁵¹ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on 1 June 2016.

Chinese connections, he won the trust of a Chinese businessman and became his business partner in an e-cigarette manufacturing and exporting business. At the time of our interview, Max was in the process of talking to a few European companies about exporting e-cigarettes to Europe.

Conclusion

This chapter explores various ways international migrants interact with the urban space and cultivate cosmopolitan emplacement in Shekou and other parts of Shenzhen. In general, the everyday life of international school teachers tends to be confined to the Shekou area, where many middle-to-upper class Chinese people also reside and socialize. In contrast, self-initiated migrant teachers are more scattered around different districts in Shenzhen. They usually have to live in shared apartments or compromise on the locations and facilities of their accommodation. While some could afford to co-rent an apartment in high-end residential compounds in the downtown area of Shenzhen, some choose to rent a place in urban villages in downtown areas of Shenzhen or further away from the city center where rent is cheaper. Self-initiated teachers are often more mobile as they tend to work in multiple jobs in multiple locations, and also change jobs and accommodations more often. Mostly single, they are also usually more active in seeking to connect with people of international and local backgrounds through shared interests. Thus, they develop wider social networks in the process. In general, international school teachers who comfortably work in the same school and live in the same residential compound with their colleagues have more fixed surroundings and group identity.

While corporate-transferred teachers and self-initiated migrant teachers differ substantially in the cosmopolitan emplacement practices, foreign residents and Chinese residents in Shenzhen share more commonalities and cross paths more than one might imagine. Depending on their social positionalities, which are mainly constituted of class and *hukou* status in the Shenzhen context, there might be more commonalities than differences between foreign residents and Chinese residents. Affluent Chinese middle-class and corporate-transferred international school teachers in Shekou are of similar social positionality and thus have more similar experiences of living in Shenzhen with each other. For example, wealthy Chinese middle class and international school teachers not only share high-end housing and consumption space in Shekou, but they also send their children to expensive international schools. Because

international school teachers are given free accommodation in high-end residential areas, they can live in luxurious housing with wealthy middle-class Chinese.

Apart from the fact that both groups live in luxurious housing, international school teachers and middle-class Chinese parents both prefer to send their children to international schools with the plan for their children to study in Western countries in the future. It is a changing trend in East Asia that Asian students now predominate in the enrolment of international schools (Farrer, 2018) and Shenzhen is no exception. For example, in the Shenzhen International School, Chinese students holding Hong Kong passports and South Korean students accounted for the majority of the student population. Thus, the children of international school students often find themselves in school with Asian children from affluent backgrounds. While international migrants and rich Chinese families could afford to send their children to international schools, self-initiated migrants and less wealthy Chinese have to fight for local educational resources. In Shenzhen, because of limited education resources, domestic and international migrants without Shenzhen *hukou* are socially marginalized in accessing public education resources for their children.

Foreign ELTs' various cosmopolitan emplacement practices lead to multiple emplacements and belongings, or a different degree of urban citizenship (Farrer, 2014b). Some teachers see Shenzhen merely as a place to work and make money, and thus are not interested in interacting with the wider urban space and expanding their social circle. They mainly relate to the city through economic and consumption-based activities such as working, doing business, dining, and drinking. These teachers include international school teachers and also self-initiated migrant teachers who are typical "Shekou expats" (for example, Adam and Kevin). While international school teachers are given accommodation in Shekou by their employers, housing prices in Shekou are often too high for self-initiated migrants to afford. Thus, they usually live with their Chinese partners who have a housing property in the area (for example, in Adam's case), or they rent a room in a shared apartment (for example, in Kevin's case). Interestingly, in Adam's case, being married to a Chinese partner did not necessarily mean he was interested in the Chinese culture. On the contrary, although neither Emma (the Eastern European woman), nor Peter (the father of two sons) or Max (who was fluent in Chinese) was with a Chinese partner, they developed a deeper sense of belonging to Shenzhen through interacting with local people and the urban space, or raising a family. Emma felt less like a tourist, and more part of the community, after she founded a sketching group that brought Chinese and non-Chinese residents together. As a long-term resident, Peter not only got along well with his Chinese

students and neighbors, but had also made a loving family and raised his children in Shenzhen. Max made an effort to study the Chinese language and history, and thus with this valuable cultural capital, he was able to accumulate social capital, which eventually led to his business partnership with a Chinese businessman.

Conclusion

Not only are increasingly greater number of Westerners moving to China, but they also tend to move to the global(izing) cities of China. Foreign ELTs constitute a significant number of these Westerners in global(izing) Chinese cities. Thus, by studying foreign ELTs, this thesis has shed light on the livelihoods of non-elite foreigners in the country. The thesis has looked at the migration of foreign ELTs in relation to the political economy of the EFL industry in the global city context of Shenzhen. The research was conducted in Shenzhen from 2016 to 2017, when Chinese society, China's immigration policy, and the city of Shenzhen were undergoing rapid changes. Although the research findings were confined in time and space, I have attempted to capture the lived experiences of foreign ELTs and eventually contribute to the studies of middling international migrants in a time of change. Building on critical expatriate studies (Kunz, 2016; Farrer, 2018) and positioning foreign ELTs paradoxically as privileged migrants who nevertheless occupying a marginal social position in contemporary China, the dissertation set out to ask the following questions: what gave rise to the phenomenon of Westerners teaching English in Shenzhen? What were the lived experiences of foreign ELTs in the city? How did these middling migrants experience and deal with China's changing immigration policy? What were the opportunities for foreign ELTs who had (accidentally) become long-term settlers to obtain permanent residence and citizenship in the country?

Being aware of the stigmatized reputation of foreign ELTs in Chinese society and their marginal position in the expat community, the dissertation aimed to look beyond the common social construct of foreign ELTs as "loser foreigners" and investigate the diversity within this group. I started by gaining an understanding of foreign ELTs' positionality in the urban context of Shenzhen, before examining foreign ELTs' relationship to their host society (chapter 2) and the Chinese middle class (chapter 3). The dissertation then examined how visa, employment, and permanent residence policies contributed to shaping the "middling," "temporary," and "illegal" migrant statuses of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen (chapters 4, 5, and 6). Furthermore, the thesis studied foreign ELTs not as a homogeneous group of foreigners who were stereotypically labeled as "losers back home" doing the "McJobs" in China (Schofield, 2015), but as individuals with different qualifications and aspirations. The research examined foreign ELTs'

diverse migration motivations, employment situations, cosmopolitan emplacement practices by comparing two groups of foreign ELTs: Corporate-transferred and self-initiated (chapter 7, 8, 9).

Chapter 2 situated the migration of foreign ELTs within Shenzhen in terms of a multiscalar social field, which is a hierarchy of networks constituted of different actors, including individuals, institutions, and corporate entities in the political, economic, and social spheres (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018). The dissertation looked at foreign ELTs as one of the social actors that contributed to the remaking process of Shenzhen and contextualized their migration in the geopolitical context of the “rise of China” and the “international city” branding of Shenzhen. As illustrated in chapter 2, politically, Shenzhen enjoyed more political autonomy than other Chinese cities and served as China’s avant-garde city for China’s government policy introduction and reform. Economically, Shenzhen was part of the global and regional economic network that was linked through flows of capital, information, and labor. Socially, Shenzhen’s rapid transformation was inseparable from its migrant workers and urban villages. Within the broader political, economic, and social networks, the dissertation also examined the role of national and local governments, Shenzhen’s early leaders, investors from Hong Kong, and migrants as some of the most critical actors in the city-making process of Shenzhen. While the role of foreign ELTs was significant in Shenzhen’s internationalizing discourses and projects, Shenzhen also proved to be an attractive migration destination from foreign ELTs’ perspective.

Apart from urban and economic restructuring, the migration of foreign ELTs to Shenzhen was connected to the city’s rising Chinese middle class and their increasing consumption of English language education services. English language education policy in China was closely related to the level of China’s political and economic participation in the world (Ross, 1993) and the Chinese government had emphasized the utility of learning the English language for China’s economic development since its reform and opening (Pan, 2011; Guo, 2016). Specifically, English language education was promoted for the modernization of China from 1977 to 1990, and for international stature from 1991 onwards (Lam, 2002). As I argued in chapter 3, the pursuit of international prestige through English language education was observed not only in the Shenzhen government’s development plans but also in the decisions of individual Chinese residents in the city. Investigating the sales and marketing strategies commonly used by English language education businesses in Shenzhen, chapter 3 analysed how English language education was sold to Chinese consumers as life-changing cultural capital and a *suzhi*

improvement strategy. In the commercialization process, foreign ELTs were packaged as an indispensable part of an effective English language education product.

To bridge the gap between migration studies and policy studies, the dissertation specifically focuses on how state policy shaped foreign ELTs' positionality and migration experiences in Shenzhen. China's changing legal framework was one of the most important structural factors affecting the migration experiences of foreign ELTs. Starting in 2012, the Chinese government had launched a series of immigration policy reforms, and visa regulations for foreign ELTs had become more restricted. My analysis in chapter 4 and 5 explored the relationship between law and migrant status, and argued change of laws and visa regulations led to the construction of the "class" and "illegality" of foreign ELTs in the Chinese context. As demonstrated in these chapters, while being assigned a lower "class" status in China's work permit system placed foreign ELTs under more bureaucratic constraints in their work permit application processes, visa restrictions produced more migrant "illegality" as they pushed more teachers into illegal employment. My ethnography in chapter 5 showed that not only were "illegal" foreign ELTs made more vulnerable to the exploitation of employers and recruitment agencies, but the stigma of "illegal foreigners" led to more state control and surveillance of the foreign ELTs community as a whole. My ethnography in chapter 5 further showed that, despite a restrictive legal environment, there was still room for teachers to circumvent the law.

Foreign ELTs might be arriving as workers, but they stayed as people. While some stayed far longer than they had initially intended and were not sure of their plans, others wanted to start a family or retire in China. Chapter 6 proposed that the existing citizenship available to foreign workers in China is labor citizenship (Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014), in which one's social rights and pathway to permanent residency are based on one's perceived labor value by the Chinese state. At present, China's immigration policy is geared toward China's economic development and shows little intention of incorporating foreign workers as potential permanent residents or Chinese citizens (Liu & Ahl, 2018). Chapter 6 therefore argued that a pragmatic approach of "making the foreign serve China," which has been observed in China's foreign policy (Brady, 2003), is also reflected in China's immigration policy. The chapter analyzed that such an approach stemmed from a deep-rooted cultural and political imagination of Chinese identity that is defined in ethnic terms (Dikötter, 1994, 1997a, 1997b), as well as a wary attitude toward the West. Moreover, China's current immigration policy continues to strengthen the imagination of a Chinese identity that has been constructed based on certain biological features and in contrast to the foreign Other.

Foreign ELTs' responses to China's pragmatic immigration policy varied. On one hand, some expressed that they felt "foreigners were living on borrowed time in China" (Charles, White, US American, male, late 40s),¹⁵² and that they felt the Chinese government would replace them with Chinese people on their jobs one day. Feeling like an outsider to in the context of Chinese society, and feeling uncertain whether they would be allowed to continue to stay in China, some foreign ELTs lived in China with the mentality of transients. As one foreign ELT said, "I know I will never become Chinese no matter how long I stay, and I don't plan to stay in China for long. So like most foreigners here, I try to grab as much as possible, whatever that is, while I am here" (Felix, White, US American, male, 36-year-old).¹⁵³ The attitude of seeing China as a place for short-term benefits was not uncommon among foreign ELTs. In this sense, while China made the foreign serve China (Brady, 2003), my dissertation argues that the foreigners were also making China serve them.

On the other hand, despite restrictive visa regulations and the slim chance of obtaining permanent residence status on the basis of merit, some foreign ELTs saw Shenzhen as their home through long-term residence and engagement in various life-making activities. Chapter 9 presented an ethnography on different cosmopolitan emplacement narratives and practices of foreign ELTs by exploring migrants' interactions with the urban space and residents of Shenzhen, as well as migrants' various ways and levels of belonging to the city. The chapter argued that, the concept of "urban citizenship" in a socio-cultural sense (Farrer, 2014b) could be used to understand foreign ELTs' belongings to Shenzhen in the given policy environment. In this sense, the chapter demonstrated that citizenship was not merely a product of state policy, but also of bottom-up urban place-making practices through which migrants created affective bonds to a place.

Although foreign ELTs were often perceived as one homogeneous group, there were different strata of foreign ELTs. Using the analytical approach of critical cosmopolitanism (Glick Schiller & Irving, 2014), the dissertation looked into the internal hierarchy among foreign ELTs, as well as approached migrants and non-migrants as sharing commonalities in different identity categories and life situations. By comparing different migration motivations, employment experiences, place-making activities, and senses of belonging to the city between corporate-

¹⁵² My interview with Charles was conducted in the Baia restaurant near the coco Park in Shenzhen on 5th October 2017.

¹⁵³ The quote was taken from part of my conversation with Felix during my follow-up field trip in Shenzhen on 14th November 2018.

transferred and self-initiated foreign ELTs, the dissertation critically analyzed how different social positionalities contributed to intra-group differences of foreign ELTs. As shown in chapter 7 and 8, foreign ELTs of the same ethnicity and nationality might experience cosmopolitanism in starkly different ways. For example, corporate-transferred international school teachers enjoyed a much better remuneration package, job security, and global mobility. At the same time, self-initiated foreign ELTs often worked in an unstable job environment and were stuck in China. In contrast, the traditionally divided “foreigners” and “locals” might share similar experiences when their identity categories overlapped. For example, international parents in a more privileged social position might have more commonalities with the wealthy Chinese middle class in their residential areas, consumption behaviors, and educational choices for their children, than with self-initiated migrants.

The dissertation has contributed to the understanding of middling international migrants in global Chinese cities by contextualizing foreign ELTs’ lived experiences within China’s changing economic, socio-political, and legal environment. It placed the migration of foreign ELTs in a multiscalar social field that was shaped by multiple networks of power. Highlighting the constructed nature of law, the dissertation has made an ethnographic contribution to scholarly literature regarding the law’s function in producing migrant positionality and migrant “illegality.” Within the citizenship debate, the dissertation has investigated citizenship for foreigners in China on a legal and social level. It has that the existing citizenship is “labor citizenship” (Dauvergne & Marsden, 2014) from above, while it can be seen as “urban citizenship” (Farrer, 2014b) from below.

The empirical research also contributed to the examination of the implementation of China’s immigration policy reform. One of the emphases of the *EEAL* (2012) was to eliminate “*sanfei*” foreigners, which referred to feigners who enter, reside, and work in China illegally (People’s Daily Overseas Edition, 2012; Haugen, 2015). Labeled as “*sanfei*” foreigners, foreign ELTs faced more stringent visa regulations and intensified immigration control measures. The new “native-English-speaker-only” work visa requirement for foreign ELTs has disqualified non-native speakers from obtaining work visas. Although some teachers chose to leave China in the face of stricter visa rules, many more teachers, with the help of visa and recruitment agencies, found ways to circumvent the regulations and obtain work visas. Because of the implementation deficiency of frontline police and various interest parties on the ground, most “illegal” teachers were also able to avoid residence registrations. Thus, this dissertation has argued that the recent immigration policy reform was not only symbolic in terms of labor-rights

protection of international migrants (Ahl & Czoske, 2020), but was also symbolic in curbing migrant illegality. As one informant puts it, “it’s rhetoric, it’s propaganda... to show that we (the Chinese government) have the power to control these things” (Max, White, US American, male, 28-year-old).¹⁵⁴

The dissertation used multiscalar (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018) and critical cosmopolitanism (Glick Schiller & Irving, 2014) as analytical lenses. Both are methodologically grounded approaches that study migration beyond methodological nationalism. Rather than overemphasizing ethnicity, the two methods regard migrants and non-migrants as social actors in city-making processes. With the multiscalar approach (Çağlar & Glick-Schiller, 2018), the dissertation highlighted that the migration of foreign ELTs to Shenzhen was linked to the city’s multiscalar restructuring processes that reconstituted the lives of all residents and conditioned the growth of EFL market. Through these processes, not only were domestic migrants welcomed in the narrative that defined Shenzhen as diverse and welcoming – “once you are here, you are a Shenzhener” (*Laile, jiushi Shenzhenren*) but this narrative also extended to attracting international migrants. Although the profession of foreign ELTs faced stigmatization in Chinese society in recent years, foreign ELTs nevertheless played a role in the internationalization of the Shenzhen city.

There are applicable and inapplicable aspects of using the multiscalar approach in the Chinese context. In Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2018)’s book, *Migrants and City-making: Dispossession, Displacement and Urban Regeneration*, a multiscalar analysis was employed to understand the complex relationship between migrant incorporation and revival of disempowered cities. My dissertation has demonstrated that such an analytical approach could also be applied to analyse the interconnectedness between migrants and emerging global cities. However, what is different is that in Glick Schiller and Çağlar’s (2018) book, through their observations in Manchester (New Hampshire), Halle/Saale (Germany), and Mardin (Turkey), migrant emplacement encompassed more spheres of life than that of migrants in Shenzhen. For instance, the book traced the political emplacement of international migrants and analysed how these emplacement processes contributed to the city-making of the three cities studied in the book. In the context of Chinese society, however, because of the sensitive nature of the identity of

¹⁵⁴ My interview with Max was conducted in a restaurant near the Nanshan Book Mall in Shenzhen on 1 June 2016.

foreigners, there was limited public space for political emplacement for the majority of international migrants in Shenzhen.

Critical cosmopolitanism (Glick Schiller & Irving, 2014) encourages us to go beyond methodological nationalism and allows an understanding of migrant sociability and experiences beyond the limitations of a solely ethnic lens. As a counter-hegemonic methodology (Glick Schiller & Irving, 2014; see also Gilroy 2004; Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Rumford 2008; Spencer 2011), critical cosmopolitanism was useful in conceptualizing the lived experiences of foreign ELTs of different social positions. The critical lens served the dissertation's aims in rejecting a stereotypical and homogeneous narrative of foreign ELTs as "loser foreigners." As demonstrated through ethnography and analysis in the dissertation, foreign ELTs' experiences were structurally shaped with intra-group differences and individual varieties. Thus, by applying the critical cosmopolitanism approach to the analysis of stigmatized foreign ELTs, the dissertation was able to capture a range of diverse social positions from which migrants experienced Shenzhen. Even living in the same city and working in the same profession, the employment experiences and cosmopolitan emplacement practices of foreign ELTs in Shenzhen differed.

Moreover, one important factor that shapes migrant experiences and strategies is migrants' positionalities. Class is particularly an important identity category that could systematically shape migrants' experiences, as it indicates migrants' closeness to different networks of power and affects the resources they will have access to. While migrants situated in higher power positions are given more institutional support and financial security, migrants who are further away from the power networks are more likely to have to depend on themselves and their social networks to make ends meet. This is not to say that other identity markers such as nationality, race, and gender do not matter, as they all play a role in shaping migrants' experiences in different life situations, including visa applications, employment opportunity, and dating life. However, class has a dominant impact on migrants' livelihoods in their host societies.

Studying migration through the lens of critical cosmopolitanism also encourages us to see that the divide between "migrants" and "locals/natives" might not always be as meaningful as some migration scholars have made it to be. As demonstrated in the dissertation, while Chinese and non-Chinese were brought together by shared cultural, social, and economic interests, mutual support between natives and migrants could be motivated by a commonality based on shared aspirations for stability and family life.

Postscript

Change is the only constant for foreign ELTs in China. Since I finished my fieldwork in 2017, there have been a few changes in the EFL industry. In terms of business model, the EFL business trend has taken a digital shift and there has been an increasing preference for online English language education among Chinese learners in recent years (Wang, 2017), especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting closure of some English training centers in China, such as the 25 schools of *Disney English* (Disney English, 2020; Wang, 2020). In terms of law implementation, not only has the number of arrests of foreign ELTs in China surged (Cadell, 2019), but more regulations on the EFL industry, both offline and online, have also been imposed (Pan, 2019). On 12 July 2019, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education required all universities, schools, kindergartens, and training centers to conduct background checks on foreign ELTs and establish individual files for each teacher in preparation for government checks (Guangdong Provincial Department of Education, 2019). On the same day, the Ministry of Education and other five authoritative departments announced a series of measures to regulate online education, and online English language education platforms are required to display names, photos, educational qualifications, work experience, and teaching qualifications of foreign ELTs they have hired on their platforms (Ministry of Education of the PRC et al., 2019). On 21 July 2020, the Ministry of Education of the PRC released a consultation paper to request public comment regarding the measures on the employment and administration of foreign teachers,¹⁵⁵ and specifically emphasized sexual harassment and drug use as unacceptable behaviors¹⁵⁶ (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2020).

Shenzhen's ongoing attractiveness as an immigration destination for foreign ELTs remains to be seen. Although EFL job opportunities, lifestyle, and the opportunity to start one's own business in Shenzhen are attractive to some foreigners, it is still not certain how strictly and comprehensively the above-mentioned measures will be enforced in Shenzhen, and how it will affect foreign ELTs as a result. It is also difficult to predict whether the COVID-19 pandemic and continuous expansion of the online EFL business model might drive many EFL businesses out of the market and lead to a dramatic elimination of teaching positions for foreign ELTs in

¹⁵⁵ 教育部关于《外籍教师聘任和管理办法（征求意见稿）》公开征求意见的公告

¹⁵⁶ 外籍教师应当身心健康，品行良好，无犯罪记录，无传染性疾病和精神障碍史，无性骚扰、吸食注射毒品、长期服用依赖性精神药品等行为以及其他可能对学生安全和身心健康造成影响的疾病、行为。

Shenzhen. Moreover, Chinese society might not be ready to become a true immigration country where multiple ethnicities and (multi-)cultures co-exist. In early 2020, the Chinese authority attempted to revise regulations on the permanent residence of foreigners. However, when the revised regulation draft was released, it was met with a backlash among Chinese netizens and eventually had to be withdrawn (Mai, 2020). Although the draft only attempted to specify criteria regarding application eligibility and showed little sign of lowering the application threshold, nationalist sentiments among Chinese netizens were overwhelming (He & Liu, 2020). This, perhaps, is one of the signs that shows there is still a long way to go before permanent residency and citizenship for international migrants in China will become more accessible on a legislative level and more acceptable on a social level.

Biographical index of key informants

Tom A US American male in his late 50s; White; MA degree in English teaching. Tom had been teaching English as a second language (ESL) at international schools in China for 19 years. He was married to a Japanese woman and had a teenage son.

Ian A 40-year-old British male; White; MA degree in TESOL. Ian worked in the business and marketing sector in the UK after graduating with a bachelor's degree. A few years later, he quit his job to teach English in South Korea for two years. Upon his return to the UK, since it became difficult for him to find a job, he moved to Shenzhen to teach English. Ian spent his first two years in Shenzhen working at local schools through a recruitment agency, and the third year in an international school after getting his MA degree. Ian met his wife, who was a US American woman, during his second year in Shenzhen. Ian's wife had also taught English in Korea before moving to teach in Shenzhen.

Justin A 34-year-old US American male; White; single; BA degree in programming. Justin taught English in South Korea for two years before moving back to the US to work as a programmer. He then moved to Shenzhen to work as an education consultant in the Luohu District for one year before teaching English in a start-up English teaching center in the Bao'an District.

James A 34-year-old US American male; White; married. BA degree in Global Studies and German. James taught ESL for refugee children when he was working in the US. He was teaching ESL to non-native English-speaking children (mostly Chinese and South Korean) in an international school in Shenzhen at the time of our interview.

Max A 28-year-old US American male; White. Max dropped out of university during his second year there and moved to China, where he taught English in a local school in the northern Chinese city of Xi'an while studying Chinese. Two years later, Max decided to move to Shenzhen, where he taught English in a local middle school for seven years. Max spoke fluent Chinese and was starting his e-cigarette business with a Chinese business partner at the time of our interview.

Adam A British man in his 40s; White; MA degree. Adam was a colleague of Max and introduced Max to me. Adam migrated to Shenzhen in 1997 and taught English for one year before teaching English in Japan. Adam then moved back to Shenzhen and worked as a manager in a shipping company for a few years. In 2011, Adam went back to teaching again. Adam was married to a Chinese woman from Shenzhen and had a son.

Paul A US American male in his late 40s; White; BA degree in German Language. Paul had been working for Rosetta Stone selling language learning software until he was laid off. Paul then applied for a foreign ELT position in a renowned international English teaching center in Shenzhen. It was Paul's third year of teaching in Shenzhen at the time of our interview. Paul said he had been teaching in the same teaching center and had no ambition to move up, although there were opportunities. Paul said he enjoyed the lifestyle of a foreign ELT and did not want the responsibilities that would come with a management position. Paul was in a stable relationship with his Chinese girlfriend and was content with his life.

Felix A US American male in his late 30s; White; single; MA degree in Chinese History and Culture. Felix taught English at a university in Hangzhou for two years before teaching English at a university in Shenzhen. It was Felix's second year in Shenzhen when I interviewed him in 2016. Although he did not plan to stay in Shenzhen for long, he was still there on the same job when I last contacted him in 2019.

Don A US American man in his late 40s; White; single; MA degree in Marketing. Don taught in the same university in Shenzhen as Felix. In the summer of 2008, after losing his job in the US, Don went to Shenzhen to visit a friend. During his stay in Shenzhen, Don was asked to cover for a foreign ELT who fell ill. Don realized he enjoyed teaching as well as the attention he got as a foreigner in China, so he decided to stay for some more time in Shenzhen. Don quickly got an English teaching job at a university, and gradually took up more part-time teaching jobs to make more money. Unintentionally, Don ended up staying in Shenzhen for a decade, and was about to turn 49 in 2018, so he tried to plan for his retirement. However, neither the US nor China seemed to be a place for him to retire. While living expense was too high and job opportunities were lacking in the US, Don could not see himself retiring in China either, because he would lose his residence permit, which is tied to his work visa, once he reaches the retirement age of 60.

Bob A US American man in his early 40s; White; MA degree in English teaching. Bob was married to a Japanese woman, with no children. Before teaching in Shenzhen, Bob had taught English in a local school in Japan for three years and in a teaching center in Hong Kong for seven years. Bob had obtained a permanent residence card in Hong Kong after seven years of residence and was planning to apply to teach English at a university in Hong Kong. However, he was told he needed at least three years of teaching experience in a higher-education institution in order to be eligible to be considered for a teaching position at a university. Therefore, Bob decided to teach at a university in Shenzhen for three years in order to be qualified to apply for a university teaching job in Hong Kong. During his three years' employment in Shenzhen, Bob resided in Hong Kong and commuted daily from Hong Kong to Shenzhen for work. Once he completed three years of teaching in the university in Shenzhen, Bob left his job in Shenzhen, applied for an English lecturer position at a university in Hong Kong, and got the job successfully.

Charles A US American man in his late 40s; White; single; MA degree in English Writing. Charles had a small photography business. After his business failed in 2009, Charles left the US and went to Hong Kong to work in his friend's company. When his job in Hong Kong did not go well, he found an English teaching job at a university in Shenzhen.

Emma A 32-year-old East European woman with a Ph.D. degree in Education. White; Single. Since Emma did not have any luck finding a university teaching job in Europe upon finishing her Ph.D., she decided to apply for teaching jobs overseas. She got an English teaching job offer in a teaching center in Shenzhen in September 2016. At the time of our interview in October 2017, Emma had just left her first job and started her second job as a drama and English language teacher for children.

Sarah A 22-year-old Ukrainian woman. White; Single. BA degree. Sarah had taught English in Hangzhou for a half year before moving to teach in Shenzhen. When Sarah was teaching on a tourist visa in Hangzhou, she needed to take a flight to Hong Kong regularly to do visa runs. In order to save money on doing visa runs, Sarah moved to Shenzhen.

Paulo A Brazilian American man in his late 30s; Hispanic; single. Paulo was born in Brazil and moved to the US when he was 13-year-old. In the US, Paulo dropped out of high school, but managed to complete a bachelor's degree in Linguistics in 2006 with the hope of improving his financial situation. However, getting a degree did not change anything – he still had to work on three part-time jobs to pay for his bills. Apart from working for an agent as an interpreter (Spanish-English; Spanish-Portuguese), Paulo was also doing labor work in a restaurant and a hotel. Paulo felt like he spent all his time working just to make ends meet and had no social life, so he decided to move to China to teach English with the hope of improving his life. Paulo found an English teaching job at a university in Dongguan, a city borders Shenzhen to the South, in the summer of 2016. A year later, Paulo quit his job and moved to Shenzhen. In Shenzhen, on the one hand, no university would hire Paulo because he did not have an MA degree. On the other hand, Paulo refused to teach children because he was too proud. As a result, Paulo ended up unemployed for months and had to rely on his brother in the US to send him money to support him. Paulo eventually moved back to the US in the autumn of 2017.

Amy A US American woman in her mid-50s; White; Divorced with an adult son. Amy moved to China by herself after her divorce in 2004. She was a dedicated Waldorf educator who spent her first six years in China in the city of Chengdu before moving to Shenzhen. In Shenzhen, Amy had two jobs. Apart from working as a Waldorf educator in a kindergarten part-time, Amy also taught English in another kindergarten part-time. Amy was working on a business visa during her seven years in Shenzhen and did not have any work contract signed. Amy was frustrated with her employment situation and decided to leave China in late 2017.

Kevin An African-American man in his late 40s. Kevin had a degree in engineering. After working in the US and Europe in the IT sector for 15 years, Kevin was sent to work in Shanghai by his company based in the US. After working in Shanghai for one and a half years, Kevin lost his job. However, he decided to stay in China and start his own clothing trading business. Kevin later moved to Shenzhen because of his then girlfriend. In Shenzhen, Kevin broke up with his girlfriend and met another woman who worked as a salesperson in an electronics trading company. Kevin's clothing business was not working out, so he switched to electronics instead and started a company with his girlfriend. At the time of our interview, Kevin had been in Shenzhen for 5.5 years. He was teaching English part-time during the day and working on his trading business in the evening.

Omario An African-American man in his early 30s. Single. After losing his job as a sales manager in New York, Omario found an English teaching job in the city of Wuhan through the internet before going to China. Omario taught in Wuhan for one year, and since he missed living in a cosmopolitan city where nightlife was more eventful and people more open, Omario decided to move to Shenzhen. In Shenzhen, Omario started off by teaching in a private school in the Bao'an District for one year before moving to teach in the Nanshan District, which offered a better salary and a more cosmopolitan lifestyle. Since moving to the Nanshan District, Omario had been working at local schools through multiple job agencies, and changed jobs and place of residence frequently.

Zac An African-American male in his late 30s. Single. BA in Computer Studies. Zac studied Chinese in Taiwan for one year in 2007 and spoke fluent Chinese. When the economic recession hit the US severely in 2008 and the job situations of Zac's entire family were affected, the family decided to move to China to teach English. While Zac and his sister worked part-time in different teaching centers, their mother gave private English classes to businesspeople and their Dad taught full-time in a teaching company. Zac also worked as an import export agent apart from teaching English.

Mary A 25-year-old African woman. Single. Mary had worked as an English language teacher in Xiamen, where her boyfriend was studying at the university, before moving to work in Shenzhen. When we met in 2017, Mary was working five part-time English teaching jobs, from which three were introduced by a job agency and two from her social network.

Edison A 36-year-old Chinese man who was running his own English teaching center at the time of our interview. Before that, Edison worked for *EF*¹⁵⁷ as a top salesman in the position of course consultant.

¹⁵⁷ *EF (Education First)* is an international education company that specializes in language training.

Jay A 70-year-old US American male, White. Jay served as the director of a renowned international school in Shekou in 2016.

David A British male in his late 50s; White. David had been working in the field of education consultancy and ESL textbook publication in Shenzhen for a decade. He gave advice on opening private English / bilingual schools and nurseries. He also helped businesses recruit foreign ELTs.

Sofia A 23-year-old Chinese waitress working in expat bars in Shenzhen.

Fang A 44-year-old Chinese woman who spent 50,000RMB on enrolling in an English language course.

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