

Representing ‘Native Speakers’ on English Language Teaching (ELT) Websites in China

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Abstract

The ‘native speaker’ has been haunting the ELT profession for a long time. As I describe in my literature review, many recent debates about this term have revolved around problematic political meanings and effects derived from Chomsky’s construct of the ‘ideal monolingual native speaker.’ It persists in our field and continues to exert materialized impacts on both ‘non-native’ and ‘native’ professionals. My study is contributing to a group of critical scholarship which dismantle the stability of the ‘native speaker.’ Drawing on the theoretical framework of poststructuralism, particularly through the perspective of representation (Hall, 1997), my study examined the ways in which ‘native speakers’ were represented on a purposeful sample of ELT websites in contemporary China, where English education has been a significant part of the country’s modernization project. Through a critical discourse analysis of 8 ELT websites filtered from a corpus of 34 websites, I have worked to deconstruct the formation process of the category of ‘native speakers’ and reveal the power relations at work. I have looked at the “languages,” such as texts, images, linguistic uses, videos and physicality, being employed by these websites, which indicated to the audience who a ‘native speaker’ is and what they looked like. My analysis suggested that overall, the ELT websites saturated the term ‘native speaker’ with a hegemonic representation of young, gorgeous White English teachers of European and North American origins who speak in either British or American accent. These ‘native speakers’ were perceived to embody a certain way of thinking and performing the English language and represented a posh and fancy global world outside China. I showed that, at times, White male bodies were exploited as commodities to sell to students and projected with a hint of Occidental romanticism. I argue that Whiteness and accent are complexly entangled issues which have significant implications for understanding the native speaker construct in contemporary China, and that beyond this the websites are articulating the cultural hegemony of the English language. My analysis also shed light on a group of Filipino ‘non-native speaking’ English teachers represented as legitimate ELT professionals, which countered the White dominance and challenged the absolute authority of ‘native speakers’ as the ideal of English language teaching. My study calls for critical attention to the craze for standard accent in ELT and the British/American cultural hegemony behind this craze, as well as to the connection between Whiteness and the English language.

Key words: native speakers, English language teaching (ELT), Whiteness, representation, China, deconstruction.

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List of Abbreviations

CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
TEFL	Teaching English as Foreign Language
TEM-8	Test for English Majors-Band 8
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
VOA	Voice of America
WE	World Englishes

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The ‘native speaker’ has been haunting the ELT profession for a long time since its first written record in the 1930’s (Davies, 1991). Many recent debates about this term have revolved around the problematic political meanings and effects derived from Noah Chomsky’s (1965) construct of the ‘ideal monolingual native speaker’ (p. 3). As I show in my literature review, despite the problematics of the definition of this term, ‘native speaker’ persists in our field and continues to exert materialized impacts on English language teaching (ELT) professionals (Medgyes, 2014; Paikeday, 1985; Kubota, 2019). It is therefore significant to understand how this term has acquired meanings and how the category of “native speakers” has been constructed in practices. My study is focused on the discursive formation process of the discourse about ‘native speakers’ through the work of representation (Hall, 2013).

In this chapter, I begin with a statement of the problem of my study, I then explain the motivation for my interest in this research topic. This is followed by a statement of purpose as well as the overarching research question and sub questions guiding this study. I also explain the key elements related to how I approached to answering my research questions, including the theoretical framework, methodology and method. I conclude this chapter by outlining the chapters of this thesis.

Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed through this study is the representations (Hall, 2013) of ‘native speakers’ on ELT websites in China. Specifically, drawing on the method and methodology of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), my study analyzed the discursive construction process of the category of the ‘native speaker,’ a term with problematic politics (as I will explain below and with greater detail in the literature review chapter), throughout the representations on a group of purposefully selected ELT websites in the context of contemporary China.

The native speaker construct in the ELT profession has been problematized for decades (Kubota, 2019; Selvi, 2018). Bloomfield (1933) was the first known written invention of the term ‘native speaker’ (Davies, 1991), however, the debates and critical movements about the ‘native speaker’ in ELT have been largely revolved around Noam Chomsky’s (1965) conception of an ‘idealized native speaker’ (p. 3). There have been many critiques against its legitimacy and

the nuanced politics spawn from the privileged ‘native speaker’¹ and the monolingual speech community it is associated with (Braine, 2013; Cook, 1999; Davies, 2003). Nevertheless, in practices, the ‘native speaker’ is naturalized and taken for granted and have caused negative consequences to the learner and the teachers of both ‘non-native’ and ‘native speaker’ categories, particularly racially minoritized ELT professionals.

In workplace setting and hiring practices, non-native speaker professionals find their credentials questioned, their accents denied and that they are marginalized in TESOL (Briane, 2013). First, administrators and employers in the ELT profession tend to list ‘native speakers’ as the prior condition for recruitment without offering a clear definition of this term (for example, Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob, 2003; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Kiczowski, 2020), I shall substantiate this point in greater detail in my literature review chapter. Beyond this, the privileged status of the ‘native speaker’ is intersectioned with race. That is, the ELT market tends to hold only the White ‘native speaker’ as the ideal English teacher (Amin, 1997, 2000, 2001; Amin & Kubota, 2004; Curtis & Romney, 2006; Doan, 2016; Faez, 2011; S. Jenkins, 2017; Kubota, 2019; Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009; Ramjattan, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019; Romney, 2010; Ruecker, 2011; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010, 2018; Shuck, 2001, 2004, 2006). Consequently, an equation has formed in the ELT profession, namely (non)native speaker = (non)standard English speaker = (non) White (Kubota & Lin, 2009). Racially minoritized English teachers struggle with daily attacks which is imbued with subtle negative messages because of their marginalized ethnoracial backgrounds and construct them as flawed English teachers (Ramjattan, 2019).

Meanwhile, ‘non-native speaker’ English teachers have reported suffering from emotional anxiety and imposter syndrome, that because one is not a ‘native speaker,’ one is less qualified to teach English regardless of their professional qualifications (Bernat, 2008; Curtis & Romney, 2006; Houghton et al., 2018; Perry, 2023). For instance, Perry (2023) collected data from both interviews with 7 ‘non-native speaker’ English teachers and online sources such as blogs and videos posted by self-identified ‘non-native speaker’ ELT professionals, and the results suggested that the native/non-native dichotomy has to a great extent resulted in non-

¹ I use quotation marks for such terms as ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ to indicate its problematic nature. This will be fully elaborated in the literature review section.

native speaker teachers' low self-appreciation and the self-perception that they would need to acquire more qualifications to build enough credibility to teach a language that is not theirs.

Furthermore, empirical studies have indicated that the impact of accent has particular implications in the whole dynamic of the 'native/non-native speaker' politics. These studies reported stereotypes about the foreign accent of international teaching assistants identified as 'non-native English speakers' in the Global North which negatively impacted their perceived intelligibility and even resulted in harsh evaluations of their professional performance by students (see, for example, Fitch & Morgan, 2003; Kubota et al., 2021; Ramjattan, 2022; Wang, 2019). The 3 Asian participant international teaching assistants in Wang's (2019) study considered monotone English and accented English as stereotypical and unacceptable for their professional identities, hence they would buy in the privilege attributed to the 'native speaker' and strive for 'native sounding' accents to remedy their (self-)perceived deficiency. Elsewhere, Ramjattan (2022) has demonstrated the effort which 14 international teaching assistants in a university in Ontario, Canada, strategically engaged to ensure effective communications in their professional roles. Ramjattan has shown, these teaching assistants' identity construction was interrelated to the issue of accent, and the 'native speaker' model had a particular impact in this process. For instance, a Chinese female teaching assistant, Tao, actively eliminated her Chinese accent to sound 'native' and 'less Chinese' as an attempt to distance herself from the linguistic stereotypes of Asian English speakers as revealed by Wang (2019). As we shall see in this thesis, my analysis also suggested the significance of accent in the learning and teaching of English language and it has specific manifestations in the context of ELT in contemporary China.

Another line of negative impact of the native speaker construct manifests in the learners' attitudes about the two binary categories. On the one hand, Students may prefer 'native speaker' accent as the ideal learning target (Fang, 2016). On the other, students would question racially minoritized English teachers due to their physical appearance which mismatches what a 'native speaker' should look like as being widely but blindly perceived (Ramjattan, 2014, 2019).

In my study, as we shall see, the consequences of the native speaker construct include but not limit to, Chinese English teachers would need higher requirements in order to be recruited by ELT organizations in China, and that from the perspective of students, they are indoctrinated with false promises such as that that if one masters a certain type of standard English, one could have the opportunity to have tea with the Queen. Additionally, some recent scholarship have also

addressed the negative impact on ‘native speaker’ professionals by this construct. They have argued that although ‘native speaker’ teachers enjoy privileges brought with innate physical attributes and birth right, they do not escape from status marginalization either, depending on local contexts (Ahn & Delesclegs, 2020; Rivers, 2018; Rudolph et al., 2015). It seems that the ‘non-native/native speaker’ binary is a double-edged sword.

With all the consequences mentioned above in mind, the native speaker construct resides in a complex nexus of multiple elements such as language and race. The normalization of ‘native speakers’ as the model of ELT by administrators and recruiters would reinforce the inequity against ‘non-native speakers.’ Moreover, as Kubota (2022) alerts in a special issue dedicated to English language teaching and learning in Asian context, an uncritical acceptance of the hierarchy of English speakers based on physical features and ethnic backgrounds would lead to “Asian learners’ self-subordination to White speakers of English or the denigration of English speakers of color” (p. 5). To counter this construct, it is essential to understand how exactly the category of ‘native speaker’ has been created, neutralized, naturalized and circulating around the field of ELT, despite its problematic definition. Next, I deliberate my statement of interest in this study before an illustration of the purpose of my study.

Statement of Interest

My interest in this research topic stems from my lived experiences before and during my study as a Chinese international graduate student in a predominantly English-speaking country. As a second language learner of English for more than ten years since primary school, I had never realized the complexity and nuances in English language learning and teaching before I came to Canada. Nor had I realized that the context where I learned English was one that worships the notion of the ‘native speaker.’ I was reminded of one episode during my preparation for study abroad back in 2017.

When I was working together with an agency to prepare my application materials, I needed two letters of recommendations from my past instructors and professors. One of the letters came from a Singaporean English instructor whom I met during an internship as an English tutor to a group of Chinese-English bilingual middle school students in Shanghai. As he recognized my linguistic and teaching ability during that internship, he was willing to offer me the letter. However, when the agent saw the signature on the letter of that Singaporean instructor, she asked me, in a suspicious tone, “Is this person Chinese? Why does he have a Chinese family

name?” I replied, knowing that many Singaporean family names share similarity of Chinese names, “No, he is from Singapore, and their family names are just like that.” The agent was still hesitant, “This might not work since it sounds like a Chinese name. You know, the authority of Chinese may not weigh much. It is better an English name.” At this point, I could understand her words and her intention to bring a satisfactory result for my applications. In an ironic way, I had an unrecognized knowledge that White Westerners enjoy a greater privilege among foreigners in Chinese people’s perceptions. Nevertheless, there was something in my mind which told me, vaguely yet firmly, that Lim, the Singaporean instructor, is authorized enough as a ‘foreign’ teacher. Therefore, I insisted on using Lim’s recommendation letter for university applications.

In the later stage of my application where I heard back from the Canadian universities, I applied for; I did some online research about the different faculties which admitted me. In my search, I found out on a Q&A forum that one TESOL faculty in a Canadian university has been consisting of mostly Chinese students. I was filled with curiosity since I imagined a TESOL classroom to be made up with practicing English teachers or candidates from all around the globe, full of diversity. I went on to ask my agent who may have more experience and information on this. It turned out that she took this phenomenon completely for granted, “The TESOL program is of course opened for non-native speakers only, Lanqing. The Canadians are native speakers of English. They naturally are experts of English and don’t need to take TESOL courses.” That ‘native speakers’ do not need to learn TESOL to teach English had never occurred to me and this reply came as a little bit of shock, but I did not dig into it.

My graduate studies in Canada have exposed me to the problematics of the ‘native speaker’ construct. This realization has made me reflect on how ‘(non-)native speakers’ are represented in general and in popular representations and daily contexts in particular, both here in Canada and in my home country, China. Therefore, I ask, who and what is a ‘native speaker’? and how does this construct come into being? In thinking about these questions, I was reminded of my episodes with the study abroad agent. As mentioned previously, the study abroad agent is an epitome of educational organizations in China which naturalize the ‘native speaker’ category, particularly the assumption that the White ‘native speakers’ are innately capable of teaching English. Her speech would feed into and reproduce the discriminatory ideologies against non-native speakers and racialized non-White English teachers in the ELT profession.

Critical scholarship about native speaker discourse abounds worldwide, but the Asian context is in need of more attention due to its specificity (Kubota, 2022). My study will contribute to a newly developed and a growing body of work (Liu, 2018; Qin & Ibrahim, 2021; Shi & Lin, 2016) which critically investigates the ‘native speaker’ discourse in China’s context, and my analysis would expose some specificities of the ELT profession in China.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the study has threefold: first, it attempts to dismantle and deconstruct the native speaker category through a poststructural perspective, specifically employing the lens of representation; second, it intends to examine the complex power relations behind the native speaker construct through the manifestation of language use; third, it aims to contribute to a growing body of critical scholarship on this issue in China’s context, by looking at who the ‘native speaker’ is and how they are represented and talked about on the marketing websites of ELT organizations in China.

The principal research question guiding this study is: How is the ‘native speaker’ represented on a purposeful sample of ELT websites in China?

The following sub questions will guide this study:

- 1) What are the strategies that are used to represent the category of ‘native speaker’ on ELT websites in China?
- 2) What is the relationship, if any, between these strategies and power?
- 3) What do these representational strategies assume and at the same time create about the category of ‘native speaker’?
- 4) In and throughout these representational strategies, who is included, and concomitantly, who is excluded from the category of ‘native speaker’?
- 5) Whether this category of ‘native speaker’ is racialized or not, and if so, how?

I approach my research topic with the theoretical framework of poststructuralism, which encompass the facets of language and meaning, discourse, power and knowledge. It holds that meanings do not pre-exist but are acquired through human interpretations of language (Baxter, 2016), and that nothing in the human society exists meaningfully outside of discourse (Foucault, 1972). While meanings are always in flux and deferral (Derrida, 1976), power intervenes in discourse precisely to fix meaning and delimit the ways of talking about a subject as well as its

practice. Discourse, as Foucault puts it, is a system of representation, it is “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Hall, 1992, p. 291). It produces knowledge and this production process is always inextricably interrelated to power relations, “there is no power relations without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations” (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). Knowledge can have real effects once applied in real world and deployed to regulate social behaviors (Foucault, 1977). The result is the normalization of a set of statements and conducts about a certain topic as the truth, which is what Michel Foucault (1977) calls the “regime of truth” (McNamara, 2012, p. 475). In my study, the triadic arrangement of power, knowledge and discourse is used to investigate the knowledge production process about the ‘native speaker’ on the ELT websites in China. While the term ‘native speaker’ cannot be pinned down with a precise definition, it has been taken as given and attributed with meanings which resulted in the privileged ‘native speaker’ and the negatively perceived ‘non-native speaker’ in the ELT profession. My analysis would probe into the details of this meaning construction process. One of the key approaches to investigating the knowledge about a subject in poststructuralism is through deconstruction (Derrida, 1976), by which Derrida (1976) means to look closely into the text, locate the moment where it contradicts itself and expose the tactics of the hierarchical constructions. And in my study particularly, I draw upon the approach of representation (Hall, 2013), which does just that and I shall explain.

Poststructuralist theories such as power/knowledge and discourse by Michel Foucault have greatly contributed to the study of representation (Hall, 2013). As Stuart Hall (2013) asserts, representation is the production of meaning through language, and socially meaningful events are created through the practices of representation. To explain, first, the ‘language’ in here is a broad term which includes but not limit to the written and spoken system of a language, any sound, image, word, gesture or object (Hall, 2013). These elements are all ‘languages’ by which meanings are produced through the work of representation (Hall, 2013). Second, an event does not meaningfully exist until it is represented, and representation constitutes the event (Hall, 1997). That is what Foucault (1972) claims, ‘nothing has any meaning outside discourse’ (p. 32).

Therefore, the question of representation is never explicable from the issue of power, with regard of questions such as “*who* has the power, in *what* channels, to circulate *which*

meanings to whom” (Hall, 1997, p. 14). Like how power attempts to stop meaning in its flow, the work of power in representation is exactly to decide a relationship of the representation and “a powerful definition of it to become naturalized so that *that* is the only meaning it can possibly carry” (Hall, 1997, p. 19). Hall (1997) continues to argue that, to contest a closed representation and the meaning of a subject, one has to go deep into the representation and turn it against itself, to deconstruct it precisely because the discourse has been naturalized as ‘truth’ by power.

In terms of my study, although ‘native speakers’ cannot be pinned down with a legitimate definition, as introduced above and will be delineated in the literature review, there has already been a way of talking about it which circulates in the ELT profession and has caused negative consequences. Except for the empirical examples mentioned before, ELT administrators escape the responsibility of reinforcing the ‘native speaker’ privilege by shifting it to the shoulders of their students and parents (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). It is therefore a closed loop of representing the ‘native speaker’ where a certain discourse is normalized as conventional knowledge, or ‘regime of truth’ which the ELT profession has constructed and maintained. What my analysis did is exactly going into the representations of ‘native speakers’ to expose the ‘discursive formation’ (Hall, 2013, p. xxii) of this discourse, to deconstruct the ways in which the regime of truth about the ‘native speaker’ that has been produced, sustained and reinforced. As online spaces have been playing an essential role in spreading knowledge and information in today’s world, ELT marketing websites have become a valuable site of research for understanding what meanings have been given to the ‘native speaker’ and the ways in which these meanings are produced and reproduced through the work of representation.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a fit methodology and method for achieving the answer to my study, since it also concentrates on the nexus between power and discourse with a critical eye (Van Dijk, 1993, Wodak & Meyer, 2016). As a methodology, CDA investigates the construction process of a category, investigating not only what is present but absent, with the ultimate purpose of revealing the different ways in which this construction is linked to power relations. As a method, CDA does not have a united set of methods but relies on the specific question(s) asked by different studies (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2020). In translating this flexibility into my research, my critical analysis has been guided by the central question of representations of the ‘native speaker,’ namely, what are the different ways in which the ‘native speaker’ is represented? I first created a corpus of 34 ELT websites in China using key word

searching, then, in reference to Ruecker and Ives (2015), I developed an evaluation matrix based on which I selected 8 websites as a manageable volume for a close investigation. Throughout the analysis, I looked at the languages, such as images, texts, video, physicality, linguistic elements, and so on, being used on the websites cross-textually, as well as what these languages were telling us audience about how to interpret the meaning of the ‘native speaker.’

My study suggested a hegemonic representation of the category of the ‘native speakers’ on the Chinese ELT websites, where the issues of Whiteness and accent play an essential role and are inexplicably entangled with who an English ‘native speaker’ is in contemporary China. I recommend the ELT profession both in China and around the globe at large to rethink about the ‘native speaker’ and be aware of the intricacies in its discursive construction, so as to open a possibility to make the dominant image uninhabitable.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of 8 chapters. In Chapter 1, I started by stating the problem and topic that I would address in this thesis, while introducing the main elements of my study. Then I deliberated the motivation of my interest in this research. This was followed by an outline of the objects and research questions of my study. I shall provide an overview of the following chapters of the thesis below.

In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature which sets the background of this study. I first review the theoretical debate on the native speaker concept and argue that although it is problematic in nature, the native/non-native dichotomy persists in the ELT profession and takes on political connotations. Next, I review a group of empirical studies which focused on ‘native speaker’ in ELT recruitment practices and read them from a representational perspective. Thereafter, I turn to the context of China, where I debrief the past and present of ELT in China, reviewing dominant discourses around ELT, the public’s perceptions, the debates around English language and how ‘native speakers’ are positioned, as well as examination of two empirical studies explicitly focused on the native speaker issue.

In Chapter 3, I explain the pertinence of applying poststructuralism as the theoretical framework for my study. I introduce the origin of poststructuralism and deliberate how it remains some ideas of structuralism while departs from the latter to become an independent stream of thought of its own right. Then, I elaborate the main tenets of poststructuralism,

including language, meaning and deconstruction, discourse and power/knowledge and identity. Lastly, I make connections of poststructuralism and its implications for my study.

In Chapter 4, I present critical discourse analysis (CDA) as both methodology and method of my study design. I first introduce CDA, its concept, background, main tenets as well as my positionality in the research. In doing so, I also illustrate how these facets such as power, discourse and language would be operationalized in my study. Then, I describe the two-step data collection process which resulted in the corpus of my analysis. To follow, I explain the analytical process guided by the essential problem, the representation of the ‘native speaker,’ which involved three rounds of reading the corpus websites and narrows down to the 8 websites of my close investigation.

In Chapter 5, I present a thick description of the 8 websites within my investigation. Since the websites are in Chinese originally, I translate, describe and explain in detail the content and format of each website in alphabetic order. Based on this thick description, I conduct a critical discourse analysis of the 8 websites and present the emerging themes in Chapter 6. Here, I detail the various attributes attached to ‘native speakers’ and the respective representations of three groups of English teachers on these websites.

In Chapter 7, I discuss what the findings mean to my research, in doing so I also compare and contrast existing literature and make connections to the poststructuralist theory which informed my study. I conclude the chapter by responding to the five sub-questions and leading research question.

In chapter 8, I review and conclude the dissertation by summarizing the main results of my analysis, outlining the limitations of my study, explaining the pedagogical and policy making implications of the current research for ELT profession in China and worldwide, as well as listing prospects for future research on the question of ‘native speaker.’

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this Chapter, I begin with a genealogical review (i.e., tracing) of the term of ‘native speaker’ which leads to the argument that sets the basis of this thesis. I then read a group of empirical studies about recruiting ‘native speakers’ in ELT practices from a representational perspective to map the landscape of the current study. I continue to review literature about ELT in China’s context, elucidating the socio-historical background and political discourses of ELT in China, the debate around China English (also known as Chinglish) within a World Englishes framework and the ELT profession from the expatriate teachers’ perspective. Meanwhile, I particularly focus on the role which ‘native speakers’ play in these discussions. Lastly, I review two studies specifically examining the native speaker issue in China and then offer a conclusion of the chapter.

To be absolutely sure, in the following section, I first review the debate around the term ‘native speaker,’ then look at the native/non-native dichotomy in the ELT profession worldwide. Based on this, I offer a working definition of ‘native speaker’ for this research. That is, the term ‘native speaker’ is not a legitimate concept, I will show, yet it has been taken as given and further been used for unjust practices in ELT profession. In addition, for the interest of my project, I look at studies that examine the native/non-native dichotomy as embodied in ELT administrative decision making and employment practices. This would allow me to understand the general ideas and ways in which ‘native speaker’ is talked about and represented.

The Native Speaker and ELT In China

The Problematics of ‘Native Speaker’: A Terse Review

According to Davies (1991), the term ‘native speaker’ first appeared in Bloomfield’s (1933) work. However, Chomsky’s (1965) controversial notion of “an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows the language perfectly” (p. 3) has been the centre of recent debate. Chomsky (1965) holds that there is an innate, built-in universal grammar in human brains that enables speakers to acquire their native language, and the linguistic intuition of “the idealized native speaker” (p. 24) is held as the standard against which the grammar of a language should be measured. With this idealized model comes critiques and discussions from various aspects.

Applied linguists find the ‘native speaker’ an unrealistic concept in the first place. Some argue that the ‘native speaker’ is rather a myth than a real existence (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991; Paikeday, 1985). For example, Paikeday (1985) contends that the term is arbitrarily established and can never be established in reality. Cook (1999), from a second language acquisition perspective, echoes that the ‘native speaker’ is an unattainable goal for L2 users and “often maintains a ghostlike presence” (p. 189) and that “adults could never become native speakers without being reborn” (p. 187). It seems that no one can match this idealized image of ‘native speaker’ with a real-life person.

Another major critique is around the connotated inferiority associated with its opposite category, ‘non-native’ speakers. By using the prefix ‘non-,’ the terminology signifies a deficit and negative impression (Holliday, 2006); meanwhile, the ‘native speaker’ community itself does not necessarily represent the highest standard of the language (Braine, 2013). For Paikeday (1985), the Chomskyan construct of ‘native speaker,’ who possesses the linguistic intuitions of the language, implies no scientific evidence that ‘non-native speakers’ cannot have them, thus ‘native speakers’ are not naturally better at the language than their ‘non-native’ counterparts.

Furthermore, this notion indicates a monolingual ideology, presuming that the ‘native speaker’ speaks only one language, which is not true in the actual world, especially so-called Third World (J. Jenkins, 2006; Medgyes, 1992, 1994, 2001). In terms of the English language, this monolingualism is even more problematic. The increased mobility of the English language has generated new forms of Englishes around the globe, and speakers of these Englishes can hardly be defined or categorized by the binary terms of ‘native’ or ‘non-native’ (Davies, 2003). Moreover, Pennycook (2017) radically contends, given their local adaptation and cultural embeddedness, these diverse varieties of English have grown into a part of the global cultural flow, and simply using grammar and lexicon to define who is and who is not a ‘native speaker’ is out of date.

More recently, to further dismantle the dichotomy and its troubling politics, scholars (for example, Rose et al., 2020) propose the term Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT). Given the global spread of the English language, these scholars propose to use Global Englishes as an umbrella term for all variants of English and call for a paradigm shift in TESOL curricula.

The Native/Non-Native Dichotomy in ELT

Despite the vagueness they embody, “the superordinate terms ‘native speaker’ and ‘non-native speaker’ seem to persist in the language use of researchers and teachers alike” and have influenced discussions on language pedagogy and ELT methodology (Medgyes, 2001, p. 429). Both ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ English language teachers have their pros and cons and can produce effective teaching on their own terms (Medgyes, 2001). However, in practice, the dichotomy may cause discriminatory practices, be it in academic publishing, material development, assessment, hiring practices, and ‘imposter syndrome’ reported by ‘non-native’ speaker professionals doubting their own teaching competency due to their birthright (Braine, 2013; S. Jenkins, 2017; Selvi, 2010). Indeed, this issue has moved beyond a linguistic construct but acquired another flavor in ELT profession, one where complex ideologies and power relations are involved (Holliday, 2005).

For Kramsch (1997), what he calls ‘native speakership’ is a social, historical and ideological construct that confuses language as a tool of communication with language as a symbol of social identification. Some argue that this construct has attributed ownership of English (Widdowson, 1994) and default expertise (Canagarajah, 1999) to ‘native speakers.’ Phillipson (1992) describes the attribute of nativeness in ELT practices as the native speaker fallacy. It positions ‘native’ English speaking teachers as the ideal teachers, superior to their ‘non-native’ colleagues. As a result, it contributes to maintaining the position of central English-dominant nations such as the US and Canada in ELT. Along similar lines, Holliday (2006) coins the term “native speakerism” in reference to “the belief that ‘native speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (p. 385). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1994) further reveal that the use of “languages of different groups as defining criteria and as the basis for hierarchization” (p. 23) is essentially linguicism, a parallel form of racism.

Kubota and Lin (2009) echo that the linguistic dichotomy is projected onto racial categories. Although race is a social construct that has no biological proof, they argue, a certain type of phenotypical feature (e.g., skin color) is used for dividing people into White and non-White, which is further conflated with English speakers’ ‘(non)native’ statuses. Additionally, by essentializing ‘non-native’ as being non-White, ‘native speaker’ professionals of colors are left out of the dichotomy, hence further marginalized in the field (Kubota & Lin, 2009).

What even further complicates the picture is the observations by some scholars (Rudolph et al., 2015) that the attribute to ‘White native speakers’ seems not only bring privileges to these group of professionals but work as a double-edged sword. For example, ‘native speakers’ report to have confronted discriminations and resistance to their assumed dominant status in local contexts such as Japan (see Houghton et al., 2018). Therefore, the privilege-marginalization negotiation is not static, it flows through communities around the globe and their specific sociohistorical conditions (Rudolph, 2019).

Mapping the Field: Reading Empirical Studies from a Representational Perspective

In this section, I look at previous empirical works that examined the category of ‘native speaker,’ most of which emphasized the recruitment practices in ELT. Given my research interest in the intersection of representation and the native speaker issue, I read these studies closely through a representational lens.

Mahboob et al. (2004) surveyed 118 administrators of intensive English programs in the US colleges about the importance they placed on different criteria of English teachers. Mahboob et al. found that compared to other criteria, administrators’ preference for ‘nativeness’ can significantly influence the number of ‘non-native’ English speaker teachers in the whole teaching staff. Three years later, Clark and Paran (2007) revised Mahboob et al.’s questionnaire and surveyed 90 respondent administrators in the UK context. Their study evidenced a similar correlation between the importance that employers attach upon ‘native speaker’ criterion and the hiring decisions. That is, if employers highly value the native status, then ‘non-native’ speaker candidates have little chance to get interviewed, even if they are qualified.

It is worth noting that neither of these two studies has given explicit definitions of the ‘native English speaker’ in the questionnaire. Nor has there been any confusions about the term reported by the respondents. Most interestingly, Mahboob et al. (2004) showed that while ‘citizenship,’ ‘nationality’ and ‘ethnicity’ were the least concerned features that administrators were looking for on the candidates, the criterion of ‘native English speaker’ has been most valued. However, there was no clarification on by what standard can one be recognized as a ‘native English speaker.’ Arguably one can say that the participants involved in these investigations have all assumed there is such an unquestionable identity as the ‘native speaker.’

This naturalization of ‘native speaker’ has also manifested itself in advertised teaching positions. In their study, Govardhan et al. (1999) concluded that, although the job titles and their

minimum requirements vary greatly, “being native or nativelike – whatever these vague terms mean – was the main and perhaps the only common requirement” (p. 117). In the past decade, as we shall also see, more studies have been conducted to reveal how recruiters filter the imagined (Anderson, 1983) ‘native speaker.’ In some cases, the vagueness of the term is pinned down through complementary characteristics or requirements.

To this point, Wang and Lin’s (2013) study is illuminating. It looked at the professional English teaching requirements in four regions in Asia, namely Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. Central governments of these regions recruited only ‘native speaker’ English teachers to improve their youth’s English competency. They found that, except for Hong Kong, governments of the other three areas provided a list of traditional English-speaking countries from which their candidates were selected. They also revealed that all governments were subscribed to ‘native speaker’ norms, which naturally legitimized all the ‘native speakers,’ with or without teaching qualifications, as superior teachers.

Selvi (2010) pioneered in using content analysis to examine 249 ELT job advertisements from two worldwide repositories. Selvi found that two thirds of the advertisements required a ‘native or native-like/near-native proficiency,’ and some of them further narrowed the category with residence history in North America, citizenship of specific countries and locations of professional training. Selvi pointed out that the prioritizing of the ‘native speaker’ and discrimination against non-native speaker professionals were institutional phenomena circulating in the worldwide ELT profession.

Following Selvi (2010), there have been more studies examining job advertising in other areas than the traditional English-speaking countries like the UK, the US and Canada. Mahboob and Golden (2013) explored what exact criteria were employed to mark a candidate as a ‘native speaker’ in East Asia and the Middle East. They identified seven key features from the recruitment advertisements, where ‘nativeness’ was the most cited and required. Apart from direct uses of the term ‘native,’ some advertisements referred to specific countries or language genres to imply this intention. Also noteworthy, as Mahboob and Golden showed, was the correlation between race and nativeness in some discourses such as ‘white native speakers’ and ‘Caucasian native speakers.’ For the purpose of my study, a significant conclusion from Mahboob and Golden’s study is that this correlation is implied, almost taken for granted but never stated.

Elsewhere, Lengeling and Pablo (2012) used critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a methodology in a study within the Mexican context. The authors examined a variety of public documents that contained ELT employment information, including ads, websites, fliers and signs. Apart from confirming the native speakerism discourse, their image analysis also indicated a tendency of using promoting discourses to convey such information as a) English teachers are young and energetic and can make English learning easy and fun, and b) teaching English in Mexico is an exciting traveling experience.

Also using CDA, Ruecker and Ives (2015) conducted an analysis of online ELT employment advertisements in Southeast Asia. Taking a representational viewpoint, the authors built up a corpus of 59 sites for macro analysis, then specifically focused on two sites for micro analysis. Their results revealed the intertwined relations between language background and race and confirmed the connection between White privilege and native speaker fallacy in ELT. Ruecker and Ives made a significant revelation, which is significant to my study: they unveiled a rhetorical construction process which produced a ‘White native speaker’ as the norm of an ideal English-language teacher. First, the websites they investigated defined ‘native speakers’ through profiles of White teachers who come from specified countries, which the authors referred to as ‘Inner countries’ (Western, English-speaking countries: namely, Canada, U.S., U.K., Australia and New Zealand). Second, the destined countries were represented as non-Western exotica; thus, normalizing the discourse and the status of the White ‘native speaker’ as the naturalized assumed teacher. These conclusions will be directly relevant to my current research.

The study by Jenks (2019) in South Korea’s context also sheds light on my research. Jenks (2019) comprehensively collected open interviews, job advertisements and immigration documents, and ELT school billboard images, which the author considered as exchange mechanisms in the ELT market. Jenks argued that these exchange mechanisms are based on an perpetuate racial discrimination and privilege. Through a four-phase critical discourse analysis, Jenks came up with the following findings: First, echoing the finding of Wang and Lin (2013), the immigration policy document issued by the Korean Ministry of Justice regulated that only instructors from a small group of English-as-native-language countries can be legal English instructors. This provided space for ELT profession to employ and perpetuate racialized practices, for instance, photograph requirement in recruiting process, as suggested by the second phase of analysis, which consisted of approximately 930 advertisements on a popular recruitment

website. The author argued that appearing to be an occupational practice, requiring photos from prospective instructors allowed employers to exploit the stereotypically 'White' figure in mainstream discourses, such as news and media, to create exchange values in physical features and commodify ELT instruction. Third, the author analyzed images circulated on ELT school billboards and indicated that the use value of English is also tied with upward mobility, economic success, and cosmopolitan living, which are associated with "not only White, but also successful, well-dressed, attractive, or competitive individuals" (p. 530). Fourth, the open interviews with ELT instructors of color suggested that the commodification of ELT instructors had real consequences for language teachers, the privilege of being White instructors devalued instructors of color. Jenks concluded that in a market-driven ELT profession in South Korea, values that are traditionally associated with language teaching competency, for example, effective communications, are perverted into racially motivated characteristics and features such as skin color and facial morphology.

Finally, a most recently study by Qin and Ibrahim (2021) has inspired the current doctoral research. This was likely the first attempt in examining the online representations of the 'native speaker' in China's context. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, Qin and Ibrahim investigated the British Council's official website in China and demonstrated the discursive process through which the 'native speaker' was created and naturalized. The results showed that the British Council website first took 'native speaker' as a natural category through verbal languages such as texts and transcripts. It further saturated this category with the image of a group of White, mostly male, figures from core English-speaking countries, especially the UK in this case. Significantly, as Qin and Ibrahim revealed, these White 'native speakers' were positioned as the arbiters and gate keepers of the English language, and even when they were proven to be grammatically wrong, they still hold ownership to the authentic English.

It is clear, from the reviews above, that few studies have approached the native speaker question from a representational point of view except for Ruecker and Ives (2015) and Qin and Ibrahim (2021), and Jenks (2019) included a semiotic analysis as part of the study. Generally, nonetheless, these studies have all confirmed the native speaker fallacy, and reading from a representational perspective, we can identify some strategies employed by recruiters and policy makers to define the 'native speaker.'

Esch et al. (2020) suggest that “more work is needed on the analysis of imagery appearing in curriculum and materials as well as representations being offered of speakers of languages other than English” (p. 11). Specifically, regarding the reorientations of ‘native speakers,’ while most of existing research examine the recruitment policy or employment advertising, my research project is a systemic investigation into a selective group of ELT websites in the context of China, which is what I turn to in the following section. In this digital era, websites and other media forms have become popular among educational institutions in self-representation. My analysis thus provides insights and ample details on how the whole ELT industry is constructing the discourse of ‘native speakers’ through online representations.

English Language Education in Contemporary China

In this section, I offer a review of research over the past two decades on the English language teaching (ELT) profession in China’s context. I first provide a brief overview of the socio-historical background of second language education (SLE) in China. I then discuss the dominant ELT discourses embedded in current official policies and their influences on public perceptions towards English and on ELT practices. Following that, I look at current debates around English in China and how ‘native speakers’ are positioned in these discussions. Moreover, I argue that a group of studies from expatriate teachers’ perspective contribute to a more complex picture of the ELT landscape and shed light on the politics of ‘native speakers’ in China’s context. I then take a closer look at two studies which specifically address the native speaker issue in the Chinese context before offering a conclusion of the chapter.

A Brief Socio-Historical Background of Second Language Education (SLE) in China

The spread of English and the English language education in China cannot be considered in isolation from the socio-historical background of foreign language education in China (Bolton & Botha, 2015). The shifting status and role of the English language in contemporary China is closely related to how the country narrates its historical and present relationship with the Western world and how it strategically develops its global competency (Adamson, 2002; Evans, 2006; Leonard, 2019). Controversial attitudes towards the English language have been present throughout different historical moments that “at worst, the language has been perceived as a threat to national integrity. At best, it has been seen as a conduit for strengthening China’s position in the world community” (Adamson, 2002, p. 231).

The official teaching and learning of English in China began in 1862, the year that witnessed the establishment of the *Jingshi Tongwen Guan*, an interpreters' college in Beijing, and this was the first time that ELT was formally introduced in schools in China (Evans, 2006). This measure was part of the Self-Strengthening Movement (*yangwu yundong* 洋务运动) after China's major defeats by Western powers in the Opium Wars, which targeted at employing English as an instrument for transferring Western technology and science and sustaining the rule of the Qing Dynasty (Hu, 2021). The principle of the Self-Strengthening Movement was "Chinese learning for fundamental principles, Western learning for practical applications (*zhong xue wei ti, xi xue wei yong* 中学为体, 西学为用)." By placing the Confucian ethics at the core of this formula, the Late Qing government sought to maintain the Chinese cultural integrity with a "controlled appropriation" of the English language and achieve self-protection (Adamson, 2002, p. 232). However, the English language was abhorred by elites from older social structure who directed mass antforeignism riots, prominently the Boxer Uprising, to eradicate its traces from China (Adamson, 2002).

The foreigners had been addressed by Chinese as Yi (夷) or barbarian until the Treaty of Tien-Tsin after the defeat in the Opium War in 1858. The principle of the Self-Strengthen Movement was also partially inspired by the precursor of "To learn from barbarians to check them (*shi yi chang ji yi zhi yi* 师夷长技以制夷)" (Pan, 2015, p. 61), indicating that the Chinese once despised the Westerners when China was at the height of its power. Pan (2014) highlights another "linguistic shift in signifiers used by the Chinese: the word 'Yang Guizi' (foreign devils or 洋鬼子) was coined at that time. This form of address was at first due to foreigners' non-Chinese looks but later took on implications of their perceived aggressive nature (Lafayette De Mente 2000). Of more significance in this term was an unwilling realization and recognition that foreigners were no longer objects of contempt but were to be feared" (p. 60).

After the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China since 1911, the status of the English language was still ambivalent. On the one hand, new philosophies and social theories from foreign countries were introduced to help China develop into a modern country, and English was written into the secondary curriculum. On the other, however, conservative scholars resisted the language and viewed it as resulting in "ideological consequences and feared pernicious cultural transfer" (Hu, 2021, p. 23).

After the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, policy directives in foreign language education have undergone ebb and flow. First, due to the anti-Communist stance of the US government in the Chinese civil war, the Chinese Communist Party sought solidarity with socialism of Russian. As a result, Russian was the main foreign language taught in schools, whereas English was viewed as the language of the enemies, with merely instrumental values for accessing science and technology (Adamson, 2002). The early 1960s saw a warm welcoming of foreign experts, among which foreign language teachers, by the Chinese government to boost the skills and global economic competency (Leonard, 2019). By the end of the 1960s, the welcoming mood switched to a wave of anti-foreignism due to a Sinocentric cultural nationalism in protecting the Chinese cultural identity. Next, since the initiation of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the English language was associated with capitalism and privilege, something the revolution aimed to eradicate, and all the foreign language teaching was total abandoned. It was only in the early 1970s that there was a limited revival of English language education. Lastly, the English language re-emerged towards the end of the 1970s (Lam, 2002). The status and role of English language teaching reached its high point after the Open Door Policy in 1978, and the English language has been closely connected with China's modernization and globalization projects (Gil, 2016). From early 1980s to late 1990s, English began to acquire an outstanding status in the national curriculum (Bolton, 2002). Moving into the twenty-first century, fueled by China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 and host of the 2008 Olympic Games, English became increasingly significant for China to saturate its positive international image and to accelerate its globalization process (Gil, 2016).

Regardless that English has achieved such a high status in China as a key subject in curriculum, there has been the argument that the English language education is a threat to both Chinese cultural integrity and the society (Adamson, 2002; Pan, 2015a). The ambiguous perceptions about the English language has been a persistent theme throughout the foreign language teaching history in China.

Both the public and official perceptions are closely bound to China's political, economic and international interests, and such views permeate through the practices of English language education (Gil, 2016). This is what I look at in the next section.

Political Discourses and ELT Practices in Contemporary China

In contemporary China, marked by what is known as the Reform and Opening Policy since 1978, the English language has been closely connected with China's blueprint for modernization and connection with the outside world (Gil, 2016). Pan's (2011) critical investigation into Chinese Foreign Language Education Policy (FLEP), from elementary to tertiary level, revealed a fundamental ideology of facilitating "economic development and national modernization and internationalization" through compulsory education (p. 66). For the Chinese government, FLEP foregrounds the English language as an essential medium for boosting economic power and bolstering national identity on the global arena (see also Botha, 2014; Guo & Beckett, 2012; G. Hu, 2009; L. Pan & Seargeant, 2012).

In this regard, Guo and Beckett (2012) argue that such assumptions contribute to a dominant discourse of linguistic instrumentalism, which "underscores the importance of English skills in achieving utilitarian goals such as economic development and social mobility" (p. 56). This has manifestations within public spheres, triggering education curriculum reforms and bearing impacts on individuals' perceptions and learning experiences.

At the curriculum level, Henry (2016) contends, English language education has the agenda of training "a generation of interculturally competent global citizens, fluent in English and capable of successfully engaging (and competing) with foreigners on the world stage" (p. 2). Echoing this communicative goal, major initiatives have been launched, including the English as a medium of instruction (Bolton & Botha, 2015; Botha, 2014) and the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) pedagogy (G. Hu, 2005a; D. Li & Edwards, 2013; L. Pan, 2015a). And in policies, as Pan (2011) explains, certain types of Englishes, prominently represented by North American English and British English, are tactically neutralised as models for teaching. These reforms are not without controversies in practices, however (G. Hu, 2002, 2005b). Here I take the latter, CLT pedagogy, as an example of elaboration.

The CLT pedagogy was imported from the West and carries within it a predominantly Western ideology and cultural influence such as "teacher as a facilitator" and "student-centred" approach (Lu & Moore, 2018, p. 12). Therefore, it contradicts the assumption of linguistic instrumentalism and contrasts an exam-oriented reality in China's education system which requires vocabulary memorizing and grammar precision but are inadequate for oral practices and communicative skills (Guo & Beckett, 2012; G. Hu, 2005b; L. Pan, 2011). Moreover, teachers revealed a discrepancy between their reality and the role that they are expected to play in

classroom (Lu & Moore, 2018; Rao, 2013). As the pedagogy demands an extensive knowledge of Western sociolinguistic and cultural issues, local Chinese English teachers who have barely been exposed to foreign cultures and societies may feel inadequate in their teaching capacity (Lu & Moore, 2018; Rao, 2013). Whilst urban schools with abundant resources can aptly cater to the communicative curriculum by recruiting ‘native speaker’ teachers and cultivate western-trained Chinese English professionals, this dilemma is especially true for teachers from rural China (Fleming, 2020; Yan, 2012). As Guo and Beckett (2012) radically contend, the increasing dominance of English language and the focus on native English norms are “empowering the already powerful and leaving the disadvantaged further behind” (p. 55). Such curriculum reforms thus further raise the concern of whether they have helped eliminate or actually enlarged educational inequality.

For individuals, English comes to serve mainly three functions. Firstly, informed by the linguistic instrumentalism assumption, English language proficiency is closely tied up to one’s career prospective and upward social mobility (Guo & Beckett, 2012; L. Pan & Block, 2011). Here, English is the language of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), it is a commodity whose economic return can be defined by standardized exams (L. Pan & Block, 2011). Secondly, for those Chinese nationals who do have cross-cultural contacts, the English language is rendered a communicative instrument for individual communication and global participation at large (Pan & Block, 2011). Thirdly and most intriguingly, mastery of the English language can be further associated with an imagined cosmopolitan identity of learners (Henry, 2012; L. Pan, 2015a). Henry (2012) illuminated that urban Chinese students tend to indicate through their English names a modernized identity which differentiates themselves from their rural peers. Based in a Northeastern city in China, Henry (2016) further illustrated that the opportunities for individuals to conduct cross-cultural activities are scant, rather, the more common usage of English takes place among homogeneous groups of Chinese learners. Here, the use of English as common language actually suggests to the interlocutors a “membership in a class of globally competent Chinese citizens as signified through English fluency” (Henry, 2016, p. 11). As such, English for individuals in China can be a stepping-stone to climb the social ladder or a symbol for a modernized identity, only for a small portion of people it scaffolds cross-cultural communications.

As such, the English curriculum reform with a native-model communicative goal has caused conflicts in classrooms; and English for most individuals in China serves as a stepping-stone to climb the social ladder or a symbol for a modernized identity, only for a small portion of population it scaffolds cross-cultural communications. Related to this, in the next section, I address the efforts made on transgressing the native-based English norms and the notion of China English.

World Englishes, English as a Lingua Franca and China English

Applied linguistics scholars have proposed new frameworks to discuss the English language in a globalized world. World Englishes (WE) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) are two prominent perspectives that have illuminated ELT studies in China (Chan, 2017). The World Englishes framework is originated from Kachru's (1985) work, where he divides the English speaking community into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle represents countries where the English language is traditionally the native language of the majority; the Outer Circle includes countries where English is used officially albeit not as the native language; and the Expanding Circle encompasses those countries where English is widely used as a foreign language or a lingua franca. Central to these advocacies is a 'pluricentric' view of English that challenges the native speaker norm and the monolingualism of the English language. They place an emphasis on respect for individual language differences, maintenance of effective communication, and Englishes used in different local contexts (Chan, 2017; J. Jenkins, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2005, 2009).

Under these influences, scholars pay increasing attention to whether the English used in China should be counted as an independent English variety. Although the Chinese government does not recognize it and endorses exonormative native-based models² (2007), a group of scholars promote the notion of China English as a legitimate variety (He, 2020b; Kirkpatrick & Zhichang, 2002; Wen, 2012). Wang defines China English as "The English used by the Chinese

²By native-based model or Standard Englishes, it is generally referred in previous literature to the varieties from traditionally English-speaking countries such as the UK, the US, Canada, and Australia, also known as Inner Circle varieties, as proposed by Kachru (Kachru, 1985, 1992). To unify my use of terminology and by way of a problematization of the legitimacy of the native speaker construct in ELT profession, I address 'native speaker' with a quotation mark in my writings.

people in China, being based on Standard English and having Chinese characteristics” (Wang, as cited in Y. Li, 2019, p. 4). Here, the legitimacy of China English is still based on its conformity to Standard English.

Andy Kirkpatrick (2007) and Hu (2004) both predicted that China English might become an independent and commonly spoken variety of English. He (2017, 2020a) doubts this optimism and notes that the China English is still in its development into a distinct English variety. Some also hold that based on Kachru’s classification of English varieties, the English used in China can only be considered as a performance variety for international purposes with Chinese phonological and morphosyntax features, instead of an ‘institutionalized variety’ that has gained an official status and been employed both at international and intranational levels (Bolton, 2003; He, 2020a; He & Li, 2009).

China English still awaits recognition within the Chinese community (Fang, 2017). A group of work has examined the attitudes of learners and English professionals in China towards the native speaker model and China English (Edwards, 2017; He, 2017; He & Miller, 2011; He & Zhang, 2010; Jin, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Zhichang, 2002; Z. Pan, 2019; Si, 2019b, 2019a; W. Wang, 2015). Overall, students and English professionals in China demonstrate a growingly positive perception towards China English across time (Edwards, 2017), although native-based models remain the most desired language target (He, 2017; He & Zhang, 2010), and sometimes students and learners show incoherent perceptions about China English (Pan, 2019; Wang, 2015). Kirkpatrick and Zhichang (2002) surveyed 171 university students in Beijing and found out that although students recognize the variants of a language, they do not take China English as socially acceptable. Jin (2005) conducted a brief investigation into Chinese university students’ attitudes toward (non-)native speaker teachers, and its initial findings were later echoed and strengthened by He (2017) and colleagues in a large-scale study. He and Miller (2011) demonstrated that “participants are far more in favor of Standard English than of ‘China English,’ although they do not necessarily perceive the latter negatively” (p. 435). Edwards (2017) further revealed a divergence between students’ willingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of China English and their negative perceptions towards its linguistic feature in comparison with ‘native’ varieties of English. This ambivalent attitude is what Kachru (1983) terms as ‘linguistic schizophrenia,’ meaning that people hold an exonormative attitude towards a language, i.e., the native speaker model in terms of the English language, while practicing an

endonormative behavior and holding to a local variety of speech, in this case, the China English. This phenomenon also finds its manifestation in Pan (2019), where the Chinese university students endorse China English as a legitimate variety, but they simultaneously emphasise the importance of gaining standard American and British English. On the one hand, students may show acceptance of China English as an implicit resistance of western cultural and ideological hegemony over China, as well as a protection of their Chinese national pride, yet on the other hand, students recognize the socio-economic capital attached to American and British English, that is, these two English varieties signal the elite class and professionalism (Pan, 2019). In terms of pedagogy, some studies showed that college students embraced the idea of learning a ‘native speaker-informed’ English supplemented by well-codified and salient linguistic features of China English (He, 2015, 2017, 2020a). In general, there is an obvious preference for a combination of both ‘native speaker’ English teachers and the local Chinese teachers (He, 2017; He & Miller, 2011).

Despite the development in World Englishes (WE) and English as a lingua franca (ELF) theories and advocacies for China English, English teaching classroom transformation is facing major obstacles in China. Teaching practice is plagued by the lack of textbooks, assessment frameworks, and qualified teachers who are well informed of such frameworks (Si, 2019a). In fact, the majority of textbooks and course materials are encompassed by monolingualism and native speaker norms (Chan, 2017; He, 2015; G. Hu & McKay, 2014; Si, 2019b; Wen, 2012). Hu and McKay’s (2014) analysis at secondary level and He’s (2015) research with university students both revealed that standardized Englishes and Anglo-American cultures and pedagogies still served as the sole resource for English learning in mainland China. The meagre representations of other cultures and biased perceptions of the intelligibility of ‘non-native’ English variations remain salient across contexts (see for example, Chan, 2017; Si, 2019b). For one thing, as Chan analyzed, this is due to the deeply rooted Anglo(phone)-centric attitude of key stakeholders (i.e., teachers, students, English learners). For another, the answers to what should be included in textbooks instead of ‘native speaker’ models remain inconclusive (Wen, 2012).

Along with the notion of China English, two other terms are brought about together and distinguished, namely Chinese English and Chinglish. Among the discussions about the terminology of the English used in China, some scholars argue for the term, Chinese English (Y. Li, 2019; Xu, 2017). The whole discussion between Chinese English and China English is

inconclusive so far, nevertheless, what is particularly noteworthy for the current research is the subtle stratifications between Chinglish and China English (or Chinese English) (Fang, 2016; He, 2015; Henry, 2010; Nuske, 2017; W. Wang, 2015). The shadowing influences of native-speaker model is implacable within such differentiations (Z. Pan, 2019).

While China English is recognized by advocates as a potentially legitimate variation of English with a unique conception of translating Chinese words and phrases (He, 2015; Henry 2010), Chinglish is tacitly referred to as “language which does not conform to Standard English conventions of expression, but ‘deforms’ them in the process of expressing Chinese thought to a foreign audience,” or simply, a stigmatized variation of English (Henry, 2010, p. 678). It tends to be stigmatized as an imperfect learner language (Z. Pan, 2019), or more bluntly, as errors and mistakes (Yang & Zhang, 2015) As such, Chinglish and its speakers are largely devalued and connote pejorative implications in China’s context.

However, Hu (2004) argues that by virtue, there is “no clear boundary between Chinglish and Chinese English on the one side and China English on the other: it is not possible to place them neatly into two categories. Instead, they are situated on a continuum and progressively merge” (p. 47). With this being said, the contrasting meanings attached to the two terms are even more intriguing. Indeed, the learning of English language and preferences of certain varieties are “fraught with conflicts of ideologies and interests” (Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 71). The ideological implications are further imbued in the degradation of Chinglish through a judgement on the accent (Fang, 2016; Henry, 2016).

To this point, Henry’s (2010, 2015) extensive ethnographic observation and investigation in an English language school in a Northeastern China province is especially illuminating. Henry (2010) found that Chinese students seemed to universally consider Chinglish as undesirable or as a betrayal of their modernity. Moreover, Chinese “students tend to fetishize readily available linguistic markers as convenient indexes of language fluency, such as knowledge of English slang and idioms, with accent being considered the most reliable marker of validity” (p. 680). Chinese English learners generally desired a native-like accent (Fang, 2016) and held negative attitudes towards China English accent (He, 2017). Speech featuring Chinese linguistic characters is intrinsically marked as “sounding Chinese” (Henry, 2010, p. 680), hence sub-standard. Nuske (2017) provided a prominent example of how Chinese learners have long internalized the native-centric rules which led to an unconscious discrimination against the

speech of their counterpart Chinese learners. As Henry (2010) aptly described, the gaze of the ‘native speaker’ is so powerful that “even where native speakers are not physically present, Chinese English speakers subject their language production to a kind of monitoring as though they are” (p. 682).

Furthermore, Chinglish can work to stratify the English speech community in China. Based on Henry’s (2010) ethnographic investigation with different social groups involved in English language education in China, namely students, foreign teachers and linguists and Chinese English professionals, the Chinglish variety is not necessarily distinguished through linguistic features, rather, it is a judgement on the appropriateness of the English usage given by an authoritative and authorized expert. As such, Henry (2016) argues that varieties such as ‘Chinese English’ or ‘Chinglish’ are social categories embodied with power dynamics instead of linguistic categories.

Due to the omnipresent discourse of modernization in China and its close association with foreign languages fluency (Henry, 2010; G. Hu, 2009), English has become a “semi-official linguistic signifier of modernity” and Chinglish signifies “a kind of failed modernity” (Henry, 2010, p. 685) where speakers may feel betrayed by the Chinese linguistic feature in their speech and denied their claims to an authentic English speakership, hence the denial to China’s modernization. To quote Henry (2010) directly, “The discourse of Chinglish, in other words, is a discourse on modern Chinese identity” (p. 670). Henry (2013) further clarifies the role of the foreign language, particularly the English language, in the modernizing China as a vehicle of redefining modern Chinese selfhood.

Another example comes from Pan (2015b), who examined the vernacular signs in a historical commercial district in centre Beijing. This author found that the incorporation of ‘unstandardized’ and glocalised forms of English in those commercials framed within a constrained historical and cultural tradition is the local shop owners’ effort to indicate their modernity and them strive to integrate into a globalized and modernized world. They took English, despite their limited knowledge of standardized usage of this language due to their social status along the hierarchy and access to resources, as a symbol of foreign identity which embodies advancement and forwardness in the society. Pan (2015b) argued that this localization process of English is “characterized by various forms of inequality” (p. 166), “hence, rather than a single global English, the results is a range of different manifestations of English” (p. 182). The

English produced from local signs and logos “has become unfamiliar to the locals, strange to the elite, illegible to foreigners” (p. 182). The English language in this case is again a symbolic index for modernity which is not measured by its correctness but its sole appearance.

Additionally, some scholars have attempted to transgress the allegiance to a singular global English and shift focus to the glocalization of English in China (Henry, 2012; W. Li, 2016; L. Pan, 2015b). For instance, Henry (2012) demonstrated through the nuanced pragmatics of English names of Chinese learners how English has been refashioned and re-customized within Chinese traditions. And the creative usages of younger generation of Chinese learners on the new media (see also, Li, 2016) are found to be particularly productive in understanding how English in China has encountered noble creations and applications both in and beyond Chinese society (Fang, 2018). Studies on this front also pointed to the unequal spread of global English, the elite class and well-educated group can easily gain full access to it and acquire the most prestige standard variety to bring further symbolic capital which solidify or improve their social status, whereas for the disadvantaged groups, English can cause stigmatization and misunderstanding due to limited resources (Pan, 2015).

From the review above, it is obvious that the English language in China is undergoing turbulent theoretical reconceptualization and the traditional inner circle norms have confronted resistance from various aspects (Edwards, 2017; Fang, 2018; G. Hu, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2007; W. Li, 2016). A stream of discussion concentrates on the emerging variant of China English in light of WE and EFL perspectives. From this line of research derives an effort probing into Chinglish as “a stigmatised linguistic code” (Henry, 2010, p. 670) which is intertwined with power dynamics. Another emerging stream looks at how English is localized, re-accustomed, and re-created in modern China. This body of work demonstrates an awareness of the problematic politics of ‘native speaker’ models in today’s global linguistic flow (Pennycook, 2017), particularly in the context of China. However, most researchers have skipped the nuances of this concept without underpinning its meaning in their investigations. It thus becomes a slippery term in literature. In next section, a group of studies about expatriate teachers’ experiences will enrich our understanding of both the ELT landscape in China in general and the ‘native speaker’ in specific.

ELT Industry in China: Expatriate Teachers’ Perspective

Now, a group of studies focused on expatriate teachers can reveal more on the dynamics of ELT industry in China (Appleby, 2017; Camenisch, 2019; Farrer, 2010; Henry, 2013; Ke & Lai, 2018; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019; Stanley, 2013). This research demonstrates the rather complicated picture of the life of expatriates and their navigation within the ELT industry in China. Especially, we shall see, the intersection of the ‘native speaker’ construct and Whiteness has a special implication here.

To begin with, foreign ELT teachers are positioned in contradictory way in China and are constantly negotiating an insider/outsider dynamic within their host society (Farrer, 2010; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019). They can be “simultaneously esteemed as and denounced as both ‘superstars’ and ‘devils’” by local resident (Leonard, 2019, p. 170). I shall illustrate below.

On the one hand, Western expatriate teachers enjoy privileges in the job market in China, in particular, Whiteness is a key component in terms of gaining ELT positions (Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019). Lan (2011) investigated the lived experiences of 17 high-skilled Western migrants in Taiwan and found that these participants enjoy what she terms “flexible cultural capital conversion” (p. 1672). This concept refers to the fact that high-skilled migrants of Western origins are able to convert their ‘native-language privilege’ into other social, economic, and even marital benefits. This is a highly racialized privilege, however (Lan, 2011). Whilst Western expatriates are warmly welcomed and granted as “global talents” who can help improve the economic development and modernization process, and hence treated as “superior others,” contract workers and marriage migrants from South-East Asian are denounced as poverty-struck, culturally backward “inferior others” (Lan, 2011, p. 1679). One of the tangible benefits which Western expatriates enjoy is being directly accommodated in English language teaching positions in the labour market (Lan, 2011). The native-language privilege, which is connected with Whiteness and one’s birth right, helps Western English speakers “to obtain work quickly and easily, whether or not they are appropriately qualified” (Leonard, 2019, p. 148). Meanwhile, due to the shortage of well-qualified teachers in private English organizations as well as the mixed standards and vagueness of employment practices that stretch beyond the legal regulations (Leonard, 2019), the ELT industry is a “pool of muddy water” (Lan, 2011, p. 1678) filled with unqualified expatriate teachers. This naturally brings up the dark side of the prestige.

On the other hand, as mentioned in a previous section, the attitude towards foreigners have long been ambivalent, and the resentment is fuelled by the fact that many expatriates come

to China with meagre or zero skill sets (Leonard, 2019, p. 151). The zero-benchmark entry into the ELT industry entitled by White privilege and English native status brings about bad reputations of the expatriate teaching group (Farrer, 2010; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019; Stanley, 2013). For instance, the young Westerners working as unqualified English teachers in China in Leonard's (2019) study reported receiving antagonism and xenophobic hostility from local residents. Stanley (2013) demonstrated negative perceptions of students towards their expat teachers at universities, which contradicted the overwhelming positive attitude suggested by studies in the previous section. Farrer (2010) pointed out that all expatriates are not transitional elites. Even the expatriate community itself is highly stratified with internal boundaries. The 'low-quality' foreign teachers are seen as finding refuge in the competitive labour market through teaching English and are often portrayed as "the 'loser' English teacher or seen as the rootless 'expat'" (Farrer, 2010, p. 1225).

Moreover, Whiteness can be turned into a performance and a modernized imagination. To start with, (White) expatriate teachers in China often find themselves reduced to a mere figure and exploited for pure performances in classrooms (Henry, 2013; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019; Shi & Lin, 2016). Let me explain. White Western expatriates easily fit into the image of *laowai* (foreigner) that Chinese people have in mind, with phenotypical characteristics such as blonde hair and blue eyes (Farrer, 2011). In the ELT industry, their Whiteness is further utilised to satisfy the stereotypical imagination of an authentic foreign English teacher, if not precisely a 'native speaker' English teacher, whom the students and their parents expect (Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019). Administrators recruit (White) foreign teachers with generally low expectations for their professional capacity, argues Lan (2011), but mainly for fulfilling their clients' alleged demands (see also, Shi & Lin, 2016). In other words, these expatriate teachers are recruited to feed into what a 'native' English teacher should be and act according to the customer students and parents. As a result, some expatriate teachers find their professional capacity relegated to sole entertainment value (Farrer, 2010; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019) and merely to meet the clients' expectations (Stanley, 2013). Some employers also shift the responsibility of their discriminatory practices (as reviewed in previous section) to the shoulders of the parents and students. As such, teachers who are determined to conduct professional teaching in their positions may be limited to performing "fun rather effective" lessons (Stanley, 2013, p. 151). Once recruited by ELT schools, these expatriate teachers thus enter a pure performance of "an

English person” speaking their native tongue, regardless their professional skills (Lan, 2011, p. 1688).

To take one step further, (White) English teachers are also attributed with a cultural halo by Chinese media, symbolizing a superior civilization, advanced development and especially, modernization and globalization (Henry, 2010, 2013; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019). In Taiwan for example, Lan (2011) explains, the Taiwanese often show enthusiasm for connecting with Westerners out of a chase for “cosmopolitan cultural capital” gained through these exchanges (p. 1684). “Mastery of the English language and Western culture, and access to the expatriate community,” as Lan (2011) observes, “indicate a cultivation of cosmopolitan identities in association with wealth and social prestige in the context of contemporary Taiwan” (p. 1684). This symbolic function of the English language is also manifested in Henry’s (2010, 2013) investigations in Shenyang, mainland China. Henry (2013) finds that language schools would ‘borrow’ foreign teachers to saturate the English classrooms and represent engagement with the world beyond China. Although sometimes the events and practices held by the schools are operated based on Chinese traditional values such as obedience and collective discipline, the classic Hollywood figures employed in these occasions are meant to signal the modern spirit and an ‘authorised’ international character (Henry, 2013). Again, the symbolic indication for modernity is largely attributed to Whiteness, while other racial groups are differentially perceived in this regard (Henry, 2013).

Additionally, Whiteness in Asia can be further complicated by its interplay with gender (Appleby, 2017; Farrer, 2008, 2010, 2011; Howard, 2019; Ke & Lai, 2018; Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019), and China is not exceptional. In Lan’s (2010) framing of the ‘flexible cultural capital conversion,’ the white privilege is also embedded in the conversion of ethnicity and nationality capital into romance and marriage assets as well as social status mobility.

White males in Asian countries tend to enjoy vested interest for appealing to female partners (Farrer, 2010; Stanley, 2013). According to Farrer (2010), foreign men in China tend to employ sexuality to make connections and aid their integration into the local reality, and as a result, some Chinese complain that White men continue to enjoy cultural and social prestige simply because of their race [and gender]” (p. 1226).

On the other hand, such romantic relationship marked by race and gender can also be exploited by ELT industries to package White male teachers as products to be sold to attract

female English students (Appleby, 2017). Ke and Lai (2018) surveyed young female learners from Taiwan and evidenced that indeed, English language learning could be fueled by an aspiration towards an intracultural romantic relationship with White males, albeit the influence is not as strong as that of other factors such as mass media and popular culture. Stanley's (2013) critical ethnography with 'native speaker' teachers in China indicated the similar discourses that White male teachers are woven into. Appleby (2017) explored this phenomenon in English language education in Japan. By examining the lived experiences of white Western men working as English teachers in the higher education institutions and English conversation schools, Appleby found that these White men were placed in a complex web of racialized, gendered and sexualised discourses, in which they were objectified as an eroticised, White Western ideal commodity to be sold to Japanese customer-students. This projecting process of a racialized and gendered ideal on to the body of the male Western English teacher is what the author terms as Occidental romanticism. Drawing on Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, which portrays Middle East and Asian cultures as inferior and exotic from a Western perspective, Appleby (2017) inversely proposes Orientalism as the ideology which essentializes and usually idealises the West from the viewpoint of the East, and romanticism "refers to a desire for an idealised, fantasy version of the West that may or may not be gendered or sexualised" (p. 249). Appleby (2017) posits that the opposing binary "occidental" and "oriental" are "social and political constructs that carry the legacy of an earlier colonial history and echo a racialized view of humanity mapped onto a fictional division of the world" between "a masculine West and a feminised East" (p. 249). This embodied discourse seems to be beneficial in the beginning of these men's job searching, Appleby (2017) concludes, but turns out oppressive and limits their professional promotion in the long run.

To sum up, this body of work expands our understanding of ELT in China especially with a consideration of how Whiteness (or race) can inform and complicate the politics of 'native speakers.' The English language, the Western foreigner, the Whites as well as gender, all contribute to a complicated intertwined dynamic of the ELT profession in the contemporary China. Some researchers identified a tendency of shifting attitudes towards 'native speaker' English teachers as China rapidly grows as a global power (Camenisch, 2019; Farrer, 2010). Whiteness may gradually lose its aura of supremacy and no longer serves as a guarantor of prestige (Camenisch, 2019). It is yet to be seen how the dynamic would change in future China.

Following up, I discuss two studies which pay a specific attention to the native speaker issue in China, before reaching a conclusion of my literature review.

Native Speaker Issue

Within my search thus far, there are only two studies that have investigated the construct of ‘native speaker’ in the context of China (Liu, 2018; Shi & Lin, 2016).

Informed by previous studies of expatriate teachers (for example, Lan, 2011; Stanley, 2013), Shi and Lin (2016) attempted to triangulate the perspectives of both local students and their foreign teachers through a case study with one ‘native’ English-language teacher teaching at a top Chinese university. Shi and Lin (2016) confirmed findings from previous studies, such as the vested market value of the ‘native speaker’ status and the conflict between the privilege attributed to these teachers in hiring practices and the low expectations in their teaching outcomes (Stanley, 2013). Their findings also illuminated some nuanced perceptions of ‘native speakers’ from Chinese professionals’ perspective. The two Chinese professors at the participant university put an emphasis on hiring ‘native speakers’ to teach English and explicitly associated this superiority with their linguistic intuition as opposed to ‘non-native speakers.’ This echoed the Chomskyan notion of ‘an ideal speaker-listener’ (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3). One of the participant professors, who held a PhD degree in Applied Linguistics, insisted that only by learning with ‘real native speakers’ can students improve their spoken English. This is rather telling of the prevalence of native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) in current ELT profession in China. Similar to empirical studies mentioned before, Shi and Lin in this research did not offer a precise definition of who a ‘native speaker’ is, either, nor did the participant professors, but they tended to refer to them as coming from the ‘English five’ (the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, or New Zealand).

The second study, Liu (2018), pioneered in examining the native speaker issue in China’s context from a critical stance. Drawing upon Holliday’s (2006) concept of native speakerism, which refers to the belief that ‘native speakers’ are the ideal English teachers, Liu conducted a critical discourse analysis of the perceptions of three groups of Chinese ELT stakeholders, namely students, teachers and administrators, toward this ideology (Liu, 2018). These attitudinal data consisted of four dimensions, respectively towards ELT teachers of different first languages, English language varieties, cultural orientations, and ELT pedagogies. The findings confirmed the existence of native speakerism held by Chinese ELT stakeholders. All three types of

stakeholders tended to aspire to Inner Circle English speakers as the ideal English teachers, Inner Circle Englishes as the ideal model, the Inner Circle culture as the standard reference, as well as the Inner Circle teaching approaches as the ideal pedagogy. In light of the socio-historical background of ELT in China, Liu analysed that this is largely due to the structural influence of both the historical-present unequal relations between China and the English-speaking West, as well as the top-down governmentality of ELT policy in China which naturalises the native-based models. I shall now conclude my literature review.

Conclusion

In this section, I conclude with current trends of ELT research and the saliency of addressing the native speaker issue in contemporary China. The ideologies and discourses circulating in ELT in China has been interrelated with the country's narration of its relationship with the West and the strategic navigations in its economic and political interests throughout history. Contemporarily, the English language education is foregrounded in the national policies of China as a prime strategy for the country's move into globalization and modernization. This instrumental role of English also lends itself to curriculum reform initiatives and how individuals position themselves within and beyond China.

From the review of empirical research, I have shown that in China's context, except for Liu (2018), few studies have been attributed to critical investigations of the native speaker construct in ELT profession. Efforts of getting beyond the native speaker model are abundant in theory, especially from the WE and ELF perspectives, but they are inconclusive when it comes to practices. Moreover, the term 'native speaker' itself largely remains a sliding concept. It is exploited without careful examinations in current research in China, despite its problematic nature (for example, Davies, 2003; Medgyes, 2014; Selvi, 2016). Additionally, within available research about perceptions towards the 'native speaker' teacher, no definite conclusions can be drawn. I have noted contradictory results from attitudinal studies of ELT stakeholders. For example, students' negative perceptions towards expatriate teachers in Stanley's (2013) and Shi and Lin's (2016) studies versus an overwhelming preference for foreign or 'native speaker' as suggested by Liu (2018).

In the field of ELT worldwide, ever since Pennycook's (1999) call for critical applied linguistics, immense efforts have been made to challenge the dominant constructs, dismantle the inequalities in our field, and pluralize the English language (Kubota, 2015). Fleming's (2020)

longitude study of a professional development project with Chinese EFL teachers foregrounded the significance of decolonizing the ELT profession, and Vasilopoulos et al. (2020) further proposed to frame training programs as sites of peace building. Within China, scholars of ELT also start to reconceptualise the English language (Hu, 2015; Edwards, 2017; Li, 2016). For instance, Li (2016) calls for attention on translanguaging and re-fashioning of English in its locality. Nuske (2017) has demonstrated the potential and possibility of shifting students' perceptions through critical yet cautious reading and analyzing the taken-for-granted notions. I would argue that further dismantling of the native speaker norm should be integrated into this flow of change. It is an epitome of the complex politics of the ELT as intersections of colonialism, racism, and imperialism (Guo & Beckett, 2012). I take the position in this study that it is necessary to tease out the foundational power relations at work that encompass the native speaker model, and particularly, how the element of race interweaves in this whole process in China.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework: Poststructuralism and Its Implications for Researching ‘Native Speakers’

This doctoral research is guided by the theory of poststructuralism, particularly its theorizing of language. I begin this chapter with an introduction of structuralism, which serves as the basis of poststructuralism. I then compare major similarities and differences between structuralism and poststructuralism, before illustrating on the main tenets of poststructuralist theories, including language and deconstruction, discourse, power/knowledge and identity. At last, I elaborate explicitly the methodological implications of poststructuralism for this study, which critically looks at the native speaker construct in English language education.

Structuralism

Structuralism is a French intellectual movement largely originated in Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1974) lectures on general linguistics. It focuses on ‘semiology,’ the science of signs which are ‘at the heart of social life’ (Almeida, 2015, p. 626). Structuralism argues that the appearances of phenomena or observed patterns are undergirded by underlying systems and structures, therefore it devotes to exposing the underlying causes and hidden mechanism of active human subjects. This principle opens the door to several areas, such as psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan), literature (Roland Barthes), philosophy (Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault) and anthropology (Claude Levi-Strauss), and structuralism gradually becomes a mega-paradigm for human sciences (Peters & Burbules, 2004).

Saussure (1974) attempts to secure language as an object of science and study the general laws that govern language. He takes language as a self-contained system of signs “whose interdependent parts function and acquire value through their relationships to the whole” (Peters & Burbules, 2004, p. xii). Saussure rejects that language acquires meanings through the reflection of pre-existing, intrinsically meaningful realities, but that the value of a sign must be determined with consideration of its context, in relation to other elements which surround it within the system (Saussure, 1974).

For Saussure (1974), “language is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual” (p. 14), meaning that there is no such thing as private speech. Rather, human language is conventional, and meanings are determined by the long, repeated and largely shared rituals by the community (Saussure, 1974).

Saussure (1974) then argues for the inseparability between *signifié* (meaning) and *signifiant* (form). To explain, a sign comprises the signifier (the sound or image) and the signified (the concepts or ideas designated), and the signifier-signified relationship is characterized by two qualities, arbitrary and differential. For one, the sound-image is assigned to a concept arbitrarily which has no natural connection with it. For another, a sign can only be known negatively through everything else that it is not. To explain, an apple is an apple because it is not a pear. A thing is itself precisely because it is not anything else.

Retaining some important aspects of this approach, poststructuralism then makes a rupture from it and in some cases, radical transformations based on it, which I now turn to.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a philosophical movement dating back to the 1960s and 1970s in France. It challenges certainty with a focus on language, and it is often called the linguistic turn. Poststructuralism argues that language is an open, complex system of symbols which gains meanings through human interpretations and constitute social reality for us (Baxter, 2016). Poststructuralism has three major characteristics. First, it has to be seen not as a simple method, a unity of theory or a school of thought, but a flexible flow with a wide range of perspectives on the core concepts of language, meaning, power, knowledge, subjectivity, discourse and identity (Baxter, 2016). Second, poststructuralism is in and of itself multiple and interdisciplinary, and third, just as its view of language and meaning, poststructuralism itself is also forever open to changes and challenges.

In this section, I demonstrate how poststructuralism aligns with and departs from structuralism, before an illustration of its fundamental assumptions about language and deconstruction, discourse, power/knowledge and identity.

Similarities and Differences

Poststructuralism and structuralism both reject the status of consciousness of the subject (Sarup, 1993). They share a critique of the humanist discourses which depicts an individual as a self-present, stable, rational human being who functions through reason and logic. In classic liberal humanism, which is still prevalent in the Western societies, if one is sane and not mad, it is assumed that one can develop rational and objective perceptions of reality through experience (Weedon, 1987). In this vein, language is a transparent medium through which pre-existing reality is reflected. Both structuralism and poststructuralism reject this view of language.

Poststructuralism also goes beyond it to claim a mutually constitutive relationship between language and reality. It holds that language can have social effects and plays an active role in creating knowledge. It extends language into social spaces constituted by power and knowledge relations (Weedon, 1987).

As for differences, poststructuralists critique structuralism for (a) its notion of a complete system; (b) the scientific basis of linguistic systems and human activities; and (c) the fixing of meaning in Saussurean linguistics. First, poststructuralists attempt to disrupt any claims of overarching and totalizing statements; they are against a conception of historical continuity and of things progressing in a quantitatively accumulative sense (Sarup, 1993). They care more about fluidity, the unstable, the discontinuous, the marginalized, and the fragmentary in social fabrics (Sarup, 1993). Second, poststructuralists question the scientific pretension of structuralism (Peters & Barbules, 2004). They are suspicious of the status of science itself as well as “the possibility of the objectivity of any language of description or analysis” (Sarup, 1993, p. 4). Third, whereas structuralism puts forward the significance of the signified, poststructuralism appeals to the signifier, which, as shall be explained below, is subject to constant changes. This indicates that interpretations of language are varied, and meaning has lost its finality and stability.

In short, poststructuralism involves a series of reflections upon structuralist arguments. As McNamara (2012) contends, “poststructuralism takes structuralism to its logical conclusion” (p. 474), where language takes center stage in political struggles and reality construction. Linking it with language acquisition, poststructuralism can be broadly defined as “an attempt to investigate and to theorize the role of language in construction and reproduction of social relations, and the role of social dynamics in the process of additional language learning and use” (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 282). I follow this position in this research. Next, I discuss some foundational poststructuralist concepts.

Language, Meaning and Deconstruction

The poststructuralist challenge to structuralism on language is most exemplified by Jacques Derrida’s (1976, 1977, 1978) work, particularly his approach of deconstruction and a reconceptualization of difference.

Derrida (1976) radically contends what he calls the ‘metaphysics of presence’ on which most of traditional Western philosophies were based. Derrida (1976) regards any concepts

related to principles, fundamentals, or centers as metaphysical, as they indicate a determination of being as presence. For Derrida (1976), the metaphysics of presence entails logocentrism, a priority of speech over writing. In Western philosophical traditions, speech indicates an immediacy to presence, and meaning is immanent in speech rather than in writing (Derrida, 1976). This bias results from a humanist assumption that a rational individual can objectively express their experiences and beings immediately through their speech.

Moreover, Derrida (1977) claims that the binary opposition of metaphysical concepts (e.g., speech/writing, presence/absence) contains hierarchy and the order of a subordination. The superior pole is always defined by what it excludes, through the inferiority of the other, just as prioritizing the status of speech through downgrading that of writing. Derrida argues that these dichotomies can always be questioned by showing their innate illogic through close investigations into texts. He thus proposes ‘deconstruction’ as a methodological and an epistemic approach, where one looks closely into the text and locates the moment where the binary oppositions are contradicted by its own argument (Derrida, 1976). As Derrida (1976) famously declares, “There is nothing outside of the text” (p. 158), and thus “the movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside” (p. 24). Texts are read against themselves to reveal their aporias and expose the tactics of the hierarchical constructions (Derrida, 1976). In doing so, it aims not just to immediately neutralize the hierarchy, but to “put into a reversal of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system” (Derrida, 1977, p. 21). Only by this can deconstruction effectively intervene the binary distinctions it criticizes.

A crucial idea of Derrida’s theorization of deconstruction is difference and disassociation. The existence of something comes from what it is not, from other things that are different from it. This dissociation and separation, according to Derrida (1997), is condition of the relation to the other, “I can address the Other only to the extent that there is a separation, a dissociation so that I cannot replace the other and vice versa” (p. 13). Disassociation is thus also the premise of community or any unity as such. Deconstruction aims at “disrupting totalities, identities, in favor of loosen them up in terms of diversity, disruption, fissures” (Derrida, 2020, p. 10), yet the condition of this disruption is the relation to the other.

Derrida (1976) ‘deconstructed’ Saussurean linguistics by showing that the signified/signifier relationship is not neutral but conceives logocentrism, biased in favor of

speech. As he explains, “there has to be a transcendental signified for the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible” (Derrida, 1976, p. 20). That is, the signifier and the signified are not locked in fixed one-to-one correspondences, instead, these relationships are only temporary. This is because signs are not self-present, but a sign is always “of sign”, in substitutive reference to other signs (Derrida, 1976). The signifier is always ready to become the signified in a constant flow, and thus a sign can never arrive at its finality. Therefore language, for Derrida, consists of a chain of infinitely referring signs. Following this, meaning also loses its immediacy to us, it constantly moves along a chain of signifiers.

Derrida has thus transformed the conception of difference in structuralist linguistics. His idea of ‘différance,’ a combination of difference and deferral (Derrida, 1976), sets the basis for poststructuralist understanding of language. For Derrida (1976), meaning is produced through difference and deferral. For one, an individual sign acquires meanings through their difference from other signs; for another, the acquired meanings are postponed and always in deferral. Thus, words produce more words, signs bring about more signs, they exist temporarily and are open to alternative readings, depending on various contexts. This conception of plurality and non-fixability of language and meaning is significant for poststructuralist theorization (Weedon, 1987).

In addition, Derrida (1976) destabilizes the author and privileges the text, contributing to ways of reading differently. A text can no longer be regarded purely as the intention of the author (Gutting, 1998). Rather, Derrida emphasizes the active role of the reader and the interaction between the reader and text, and there is no longer a final interpretation of a text. With Foucault’s consideration of power dynamics, as we shall see next, the various interpretations are determined by competing social interests.

Before delving into the question of power, however, it is worth noting that Derrida’s work helps us, first and foremost, complicate the category of ‘native speaker’ and, second, open it up to and for infinite interpretations and meanings. To explain, first, viewed from the Derridean perspective, since meanings are always in flux, the ‘native speaker’ is a floating concept in its indefinite deferrals in social and historical processes, yet it is taken as a given in practices, as demonstrated in the literature review, precisely because politically and socially constructed meanings have been attached onto it and pinned it down. Second, the work of deconstruction as offered by Derrida helps us loosen up this constructed discourse and thaw out

the edges of this term by an investigation from within. That is, by looking at the representations of ‘native speakers’ and analyzing the discursive process in which they are defined, talked about, positioned and pinned down through texts, images, physicality, linguistic uses and so on, we could gain insights into the discursive construction process of this category and deconstruct it.

Discourse, Power/Knowledge

Michel Foucault expands the attention from language to discourse (Hall, 2013). While Derrida sets free the fixed meaning in Saussurean theory into an infinite space of play, Michel Foucault anchors discourse in social and historical contexts and illuminates the power relations inscribed in meaning productions.

Foucault (1977a, 1977b) derives a vision of history which he called ‘genealogy.’ While traditional historical analyses focus solely on grand narratives, monumental moments and significant individuals, genealogical critiques attempt to “identify the accidents, the minute deviations ... and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us” (Foucault, 1977b, p. 146). Genealogies do not restore an unbroken continuity from the past but confirm the local and marginalized knowledge and memories that were ‘lost’ in history (Foucault, 1977b). This shift of attention to the local and individual has implications for Foucault’s conceptions of power and the body.

For Foucault, power has three major features: First, Foucault exempts the centrality of power. Foucault (1978) argues that, instead of radiating in a single top-down direction, power exercises in a ‘net-like organization’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). He argues that power must be understood “as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate, and which constitute their own organization” (p. 92). That is to say, power is not a solid collective that can be monopolized by one control-centre, a group of elites or a central figure. Rather, power extends everywhere in the social nexus, influencing and is imbued in every aspect of our cultural and political relations. It is impossible to grasp power as a possession or let it slip away (Foucault, 1978).

Second, Foucault conceives power not as negative but productive. In his analysis of sexuality, for example, Foucault (1978) argues that power does not only enforce repressive constraints upon human behaviours, but it produces new ways in which people perceive and act about sexuality through cultural normative practices and scientific discourses. Power produces knowledge and discourses (Foucault, 1980).

Third, power for Foucault (1978) is beyond the play of signifier and signified, it is ultimately the formative action of one body on another. Foucault shifts our attention from the question of who attains power to that of what effects power exhibits to subjects and how subjects are constituted by power (Foucault, 1978). For instance, Foucault's (1977a) genealogical analysis of the prison shows a new mode of exercise of power through the regulation of human bodies. This disciplinary power functions through the internalized surveillance of inmates, and it has been operationalized in other modern institutional settings, such as schools and hospitals.

Moreover, in his theorization of genealogy, Foucault (1977a) calls power circulations at the localized levels the 'meticulous rituals' or the 'micro-physics' of power which "go right down to the depth of society" (p. 27). The lower levels of power relations, as Foucault (1977a) indicates, showcase the production of the body and the concrete forms of behaviour within discursive formations of discourse and power. For instance, Foucault's (1977a) genealogical analysis of the prison shows the contrasting ways in which the body of the criminal is 'produced' and disciplined in different punishment regimes in different times of the French history. The body has been differently inscribed by different disciplinary regimes in their respective discursive formations of power/knowledge which I now turn to.

Foucault (1972) expands the attention of language to that of discourse. Instead of the production of meaning through language, Foucault analyses the production of knowledge through what he calls discourse, "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (Hall, 1992, p. 291). For Foucault, discourse is historically specified, as being implied through genealogy, which is above mentioned, the discourse of the body of criminals changed from one historical moment to another in France. Therefore, Foucault (1972) argues that "nothing has any meaning outside discourse" (p. 32), that is, nothing meaningful in the human society would exist outside of discourse, i.e. the specific ways in which it is represented within discourse, of a specific society and culture at a particular time (Hall, 2013). A social event only takes on meaning and becomes knowledge within discourse (Hall, 2013). Discourse has influences on both language and practice/the way of talking and the way of behaving. In other words, "discourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about" (Hall, 2013, p. 29). Meanwhile, as Hall (2013) continues to explain, "just as a discourse 'rules in' certain

ways of talking about a topic ..., it [also] ‘rules out’, limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it” (Hall, 2013, p. 29).

Meanwhile, Foucault (1978) argues that knowledge is inexplicable apart from power in constituting social relations, hence the notion of power/knowledge. Foucault sees “knowledge as always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice” (Hall, 2013, p. 32). Foucault (1972) objects the traditional view of knowledge as liberating and empowering. Rather, to him, knowledge is a product of power and becomes a mode of surveillance and regulation. The human sciences make knowledge claims and designate norms about human activities, which are legitimized and reproduced through practices of institutions and eventually function to discipline humans in modern societies (Foucault, 1972). It is the “application and *effectiveness* of power/knowledge” that was more important than the question of its ‘truth’ (Hall, 2013, p. 33). In analyzing the construction of scientific discourses, Foucault (1972) argues that “there is a whole new ‘regime’ of discourse which makes possible the separation not of the true from the false but of what may be characterized as scientific from what may not be characterized as scientific” (p. 64). In other words, knowledge is not only assumed as ‘the truth,’ but it would be *made true* when linked with power (Hall, 2013). And knowledge can have real effects once it is applied, entailing “constraint, regulation and the discipline of practices” (Hall, 2013, p. 33). In this sense, “Foucault sees all systems of knowledge as discourses, not as ‘truth’ but as ‘regimes of truth,’ that is, widely shared and accepted systems of representation” (McNamara, 2012, p. 475).

As we shall see in Chapter 5 to Chapter 7, my analysis shows that the knowledge about the ‘native speaker’ has been produced through a system of representation through such categories as texts, image, video, physicality and so on. Without intervening and imposing my personal assumptions, these texts on the ELT websites are “telling” their audience how to read and perceive the information, for instance, the interactions between the caption of an image and the image. Through representations across a range of websites which characterize a common way of how the ‘native speaker’ should look like, sound and perform, i.e. the knowledge about the category of the native speaker,’ we then understand the discursive formation of the category of the ‘native speaker’ in a snapshot of time period in contemporary China. The following chapters demonstrate what is made true about the native speaker while the meaning of this term cannot be

fixed with theories. We would also see, just as this category includes and regulates who has the authority to claim the native status in terms of English teaching and learning, also who and what this category excludes and rules out. Discourses are thus closely tied to the regimes of power in the given social contexts, which, I explain next, is tied up with the question of identity.

Identity

As indicated before, poststructuralists question unitary notions and refuse to consider anything as a stable unity. Similarly, subjects are also viewed in close relation with its cultural and political complexities, as a product of power dynamics.

Poststructuralist theory of identity in contemporary time largely originated from Bonny Norton's most commonly cited works (for example, Norton, 1997, 2001, 2010; Norton Peirce, 1995) in second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Recognizing the central role of language in the social world, Norton foregrounds that language learning is enwoven with identity construction and negotiation. That is, people are always navigating their sense of self and their relation to the social world when participating in linguistic communications. By identity, Norton (1997) means "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (p. 410). Norton's framework is majorly built upon the feminist poststructuralist notion of subjectivity proposed by Chris Weedon (1987) and Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) theorization of symbolic power.

Chris Weedon (1987) brings forth a poststructuralist conceptualization of subjectivity constituted by the relationships among language, individual experience and power relations. For poststructuralists, social reality does not exist outside of language. Yet the material effects of language, as Weedon (1987) contends, have to manifest themselves through individuals who become the bearers of meanings by taking on subject positions and acting accordingly. Weedon forwards the terms of subject and subjectivity to signal a break from the humanist presumption of an irreducible essential humanness about individuals. Here, subjectivity refers to "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1987, p. 32). It implies the multiple subject positions that we take within discursive social spaces constituted by complex power relationships and implicated through conflicting discourses. As such, poststructuralist frameworks portray social identity as plural, "precarious, contradictory and in process" (Weedon,

1987, p. 33). It is constituted through language and meaning, and it is a site of struggle and open to changes, depending on the shifting historical moments and physical spaces.

Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of cultural capital is also productive for understanding identity construction in SLA (Norton, 1997). Bourdieu (1991) contends that the structuralist framework of language is ahistorical and apolitical. Bourdieu asserts that language use cannot be studied in isolation from its speakers and specific social-historical conditions. He posits power relations have direct impacts on language exchanges within the social field, and that interlocutors are not always unequally positioned due to differentiated value and meaning ascribed to them (Bourdieu, 1977). He makes an economic analogy of linguistic usages as "a symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is offered" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 651). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) also use cultural capital in reference to the knowledge, skills and credentials that individuals can demonstrate to signal their social classes. Transferring this idea into SLA, Norton (1997) renders learners' desire of learning a language has to do with the ascribed value to target language with which learners can enhance their symbolic and cultural competence in the given social field. Furthermore, Norton brings forth the construct of investment to emphasize that although learners can be motivated in learning a particular language, their commitment into such language practices can be hindered because of hegemonic classroom pedagogies with racist, sexist, or homophobic connotations (Norton & De Costa, 2018).

Since Norton Peirce's advocacy for a reconceptualization of the individual in SLA theory, the field has seen a rapidly exploding studies on interrelations between identity and language learning, and identity has now become a field of study in its own right (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Poststructuralist theory has proved productive for SLA and applied linguistics theorization (Mcnamara, 2015). For the purpose of my research, I am particularly interested in its implications for understanding the native speaker construct in English language education.

Representation: Methodological Implications of Poststructuralism on My Study

In the poststructuralist framework, meaning cannot be fixed and is ever floating, but power attempts exactly to fix meaning by intervening in discourses. Here, representation plays an essential role in the discursive formation of discourses around a subject (Hall, 2013), including the native speaker construct.

Representation is the production of meaning through language (Hall, 2013). It is one of the fundamental elements of cultural activities in human societies, it functions as a dialogic process between the sender and receiver of language who share a similar set of cultural codes (Hall, 2013). In my study, drawing upon poststructuralism, particularly from a representational perspective, was pertinent to investigating the ‘native speaker’ issue in ELT in three ways.

First, it disrupted the naturalized status of ‘native speaker’ and dismantled its dominant position. Through the literature reviewed above, ‘native speaker’ is a problematic term whose meaning cannot be pinned down. However, it circulates in ELT as a given with certain attributes and causes discriminations. A poststructuralist lens could help dissect the deferred and differentiated meanings of ‘native speaker’ and open it up for multiple interpretations. As Derrida (1997) suggests, the work of deconstruction is “deconstructing totalities, identities, in favor of loosening them up in terms of diversity, disruption, fissures” (p. 17). And to open up the closures of the representations, as Hall (1997) indicates, “requires one to go into the power of the stereotype itself and begin to, as it were, subvert, open and expose it from inside” (p. 21). My investigation into the representations of ‘native speakers’ was indeed aimed at exposing the power relations behind.

Second, with the central problem of examining the representations of ‘native speakers.’ Using Hall (2013) and Derrida (1976), my study has deconstructed the images, texts, videos, advertisings, and so on, what I call ‘representational strategies,’ which were exploited to saturate the image of the ‘native speaker.’ These representations, as Hall argues, create discourses of the very category it represents, that of the ‘native speaker.’ The current research was intended to analyze these representations and see what they represented, how and why; what they opened and what they closed as possibilities. Following Derrida’s argument about binary oppositions, my main contention is that the non-/native dichotomy is not neutral or apolitical. Therefore, post-structurally framed, a representational perspective has afforded me insights on how the practices in ELT profession were inscribed by power relations. Especially, by cross-textual analyses of a repertoire of website representations, I gained an understanding of the formation of a regime of representation about ‘native speakers.’

Third, and finally, with the data collected for my study, we could have a critical look and analyze the regime of representation of ‘native speakers’ in ELT. This analysis was guided by the post-structuralist contentions that, knowledge does not exist outside discourses,

representations are contested and that their interpretations are ever shifting. These contentions and methodological implications were put to work in my research, which at its heart looked at the representation and discourse of ‘native speakers.’ To explain, it was essential for my study to look into the multiple interpretations of ‘native speakers’ in ELT and whether they are closed or left open, how and why, in the hope to open it up for diversity and inclusion. And to open up the representation means that one would go into the power of the fixed representation and begin to expose it from inside, “in such a way that they become uninhabitable for very long” (Hall, 1997, p. 21).

Chapter 4

Methodology and Method: Making Use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Introduction

For the purpose of my research, I make a distinction between methodology and method. By methodology, I am referring to the broad theoretical term that underpins a study, and a method refers to the technique by which data is collected and analyzed (A. Ibrahim, personal communication, July 13, 2021; Howell, 2013).

The objective of my study was to understand the different ways in which the ‘native speaker’ is represented on the marketing websites of ELT organizations in China. Considering its alignment with poststructuralism in concerning the interrelated concepts of power, language and discourse, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a fit methodology and method for answering the overarching research question and sub questions of my study. In what follows, I shall first introduce CDA as a methodology and its main tenets, while explaining its pertinence to my study and how these tenets would be operationalized in my analysis. Then, to apply CDA as the research method, I present my CDA design and detail the data collection and analysis procedures.

What is CDA?

CDA has developed into an independent discipline over the past three decades (Wodak & Meyer, 2016) and has flourished in its application to educational research (Rogers, 2018). Methodologically, according to van Dijk (2015), “CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 466). Drawing upon critical social theories and linguistic theories, CDA researchers critically and systematically describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which language use (or discourses) construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Taking language as social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), CDA is not only an analysis of what is present in the text but also of what is absent (Rogers, 2011). It aims to reveal the hidden assumptions in language use and uncover the implicit power relations at work (van Dijk, 1993). It follows that CDA researchers are politically committed and appealed to pressing social issues (van Dijk, 1993). Here, as van Dijk indicates, the project of critique is primarily concerned with domination and the maintenance of inequality, speaking for the interests of those

less powerful and the oppressed. However, for CDA, criticism is not an end, the ultimate goal is to apply the result from research and hope for social changes through critical understandings (van Dijk, 1993). It is emancipatory in nature, calling for alternative realities based in equity, love, peace, and solidarity (Rogers, 2011).

My study was a critical investigation of how the category of the ‘native speaker’ was produced through representations on the ELT websites. In so doing, I focused on the discursive formation process of this category by the websites through uses of languages, namely all kinds of textual, visual and verbal elements. I looked into the interactions between these elements and explored the ways in which these languages were exploited collectively to bring about an image of the ‘native speaker’ when this term cannot be precisely defined. Moreover, I intended to unveil the power relations behind the discourse of ‘native speaker’ and analyzed how unequal power relations were maintained and reproduced through the work of representation.

Main Concepts of CDA

Critical

What essentially distinguishes CDA from other discourse analyses is its critical nature and its “constitutive problem-oriented interdisciplinary approach” (Wodak, 2020, p. xxiii). That is, CDA does not investigate a linguistic unit per se but pays special attention to social phenomena (Wodak, 2020). As van Dijk (1993) stresses, CDA researchers are politically committed, they clearly spell out their sociopolitical stances, both within their discipline and within society at large. They stand in solidarity with those in need of empowerment, critically analyzing how the power elites enact, sustain, and legitimate social inequality and injustice (van Dijk, 1993). As such, CDA is discourse analysis “with an attitude” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466).

CDA critique is usually beyond the immediate issues of the day and digs into the structures where inequality and dominance are embedded (van Dijk, 1993). In making critiques, CDA hopes to provide human beings with knowledge that enable emancipation (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Therefore, CDA is not only descriptive, but normative and explanatory (Fairclough, 2012). It does not only point out the social wrong, but also systematically evaluates, assesses, and explains how and why such social ills emerge and perform (Fairclough, 2012).

The topic of my CDA research originated from the social phenomenon of privileging the ‘native speaker’ over ‘non-native speaker’ professionals in the field of ELT, which has had political and materialized effects, as deliberated in literature review. My study investigated how

the category of the ‘native speaker’ has emerged from the text and talk in the ELT industry. Since description is an essential premise for conducting CDA, as we shall see in the next chapter, I provide a thick description of the ELT websites within my investigation. Beyond description and translation of the Chinese websites, I have looked into the texts and images and probed into the question of not only what is present but what is absent with these elements, and what is being done and indicated about the ‘native speaker,’ in terms of power, physicality, language competency and so on.

Next, the analyst’s position itself constitutes another essential yet often ignored part of the critical impetus of CDA (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The research system itself and hence CDA is socially embedded, and both analysts and the critiques they make are embraided within the societal hierarchy of power and status (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Power

CDA perceives power in a Foucauldian conception (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDA is particularly focused on power abuse of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively resist dominance (van Dijk, 1993). Power has the following features in CDA. First, power is not unilaterally imposed from the top, but is jointly produced by both power elites and average people (van Dijk, 1993). It is the more subtle, routine, and seemingly natural discourses that CDA extend a particular interest into (van Dijk, 1993). Second, social power implies access to and control over discourse (van Dijk, 1993). Social groups representing different interests contend for their meanings and interpretations through power negotiations (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Third, power is organized and institutionalized (van Dijk, 1993). Dominance and oppression function beyond individual bigotry but operate at the systemic level, mediated by discourses. Finally, power is productive. Following Hall (2013), meanings flow from one context to another according to the social actors and their social interests, until power intervenes to fix it.

In my study, through a critical examination of the representations of ‘native speakers,’ I intended to unveil the power relations at work, exposing the construction process of binaries such as ‘native’ versus ‘non-native,’ White versus non-White, standard versus non-standard, and so on, as well as the meanings attached to these dichotomies which naturalized and normalized the priority status of one pole but deficiency of the other. To repeat Stuart Hall (1997), my analysis was concerned of questions such as “*who* has the power, in *what* channels, to circulate *which* meanings to whom” (p. 14) in and throughout the representations about ‘native speakers.’

Discourse

CDA distinguishes between two senses of discourse, namely language in use and the Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse. In the first sense, discourse is a linguistic concept referring to primarily written and spoken texts (Gee, 2014). CDA takes on the Foucauldian sense of discourse, which is an aggregate of ideas or beliefs expressed through different forms and around some subjects. It consists of language and everything else at human's disposal. Foucault (1972) takes discourse as both the product of power relations and the technology to exert power, it plays an important role "as discursive formations in conveying and implementing power and domination in society" (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 35).

For CDA, discourse is dialectically entwined in social structures, it is both socially conditioned and socially constitutive (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). To explain, social structures give rise to discourse, while discourse exhibits influences on social structures in turn, sustaining, reproducing, and transforming the status quo (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). More specifically, discourse constitutes social reality in two senses. For one, it not only shapes the reality, that is, exert an ideological impact on reality; but for another, it creates the reality, or one could say "discourse is a material reality of its own" (Jäger & Maier, 2009, p. 37). In this sense, as Jäger and Maier (2009) suggest, "discourses may be conceptualized as societal means of production. Discourses are not 'mere ideology'; they produce subjects and reality" (p. 37).

So, the key question of CDA now becomes, how does this discourse create knowledge? To be specific, what is the knowledge that has been created by it and what are the ways in which it produces such knowledge? In and throughout this process, what is getting submerged and hidden? These are questions that I investigated closely in my study when examining the discourse of 'native speakers' in ELT in China.

Analysis

Since CDA investigates social phenomena which are innately complex, it naturally requires a multi-/inter-/transdisciplinary and multi-method approach (van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2020). There is not a fixed way of conducting CDA (van Dijk, 1993). Rather, procedures and methods vary, depending on one's interests, questions and nature of the data. It is common to apply a "hybrid" approach to CDA, as long as the social theory and linguistic theory being employed for the analyses are coherent (Rogers, 2011, p. 10).

CDA has been developed into various well-formed frameworks including dialectical-relational (Fairclough, 2009), sociocognitive (van Dijk, 2015), discourse-historical (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016), Foucauldian (Jäger & Maier, 2009), among others. Despite the diversity in these frameworks, they share some common principles. Wodak and Meyer (2016) summarize seven commonalities in CDA approaches: a) an interest in the properties of ‘naturally occurring’ language use by real language users, b) a focus on larger units than isolated words and sentences, c) the extension of linguistics beyond sentence grammar towards a study of action and interaction, d) a focus on dynamic (socio)-cognitive or interactional moves and strategies, e) the study of the functions of contexts of language use, f) analysis of a vast number of phenomena of text grammar and language use.

Reflexivity and My Subjectivity

CDA recognizes researcher’s subjectivity and rejects a neutral and objective stance in analyses (Mullet, 2018). It is thus essential for researchers to remain reflexive in and throughout the analysis process upon their self-positionality (Rogers et al., 2016).

My subjectivity in this study lies in the fact that I am an English as a foreign language (EFL) speaker born and raised in China. My English learning experience in China for nearly two decades prior to pursuing graduate studies abroad has afforded me insights of the complicated emotions which Chinese people perceive the English language and the Anglophone West.

In my growing up experience, English was a core subject in the curriculum, attached with an instrumental value both for passing entrance examinations and gaining decent career prospects in job market. I had personally experienced the worship of native speaker model in both standard English curricular and private English training sessions, where the American and British types of English were the predominant language target. With such an influence, I used to also attribute privilege to ‘White native speakers’ as the ideal teachers and models of learning.

My graduate education in Canada, however, has afforded me alternative perspectives on English language learning and teaching. It has also largely triggered my constant questioning and problematization of the notion of ‘native speaker,’ which is still ubiquitous in the current ELT profession in various forms, be it advertising flyers and daily conversations. My stance in this project is that ‘native speakers’ is a problematic notion without a rigorous definition, yet it functions as just any other social discourse that are taken as given, especially in ELT in China, and its knowledge production process is worth a critical investigation.

Meanwhile, there has been another term alongside my English learning experience, *chongyang meiwai* (崇洋媚外), which is used to criticize Chinese citizens who self-position as subordinating and have a servile attitude to foreign, especially Western things. For instance, young people who value Western festivals like Christmas and Valentine's Day more than traditional Chinese festivals, and Chinese people who consider the European and American countries as superior and advanced in culture and social life in general. It seems that English language education has been going hand in hand with the concern of losing sight of the Chinese identity and cultural integrity (Adamson, 2002). On the one hand, Chinese desire the English language and the advanced ideas it mediates to wash off the backwardness and inferiority of themselves; on the other, they have fear and resentment for the Westerners for both their aggressive invasions in history and cultural imperialism in nowadays. As Pan (2015a) highlights, after the first Opium War, the once superior sense of the "Middle Kingdom (literature translation of *Zhongguo*, 中国)" was gone, and Chinese has coined the term *yangguizi* (洋鬼子) to address the aggressive foreigners. It has connotated a mixed feeling of fear, despising as well as resentment towards the West (Pan, 2015a). Ever since then, the English language became an instrument for accessing the more advanced knowledge, technology, as well as ideas from the West, in order to strengthen the national power of China. The binary of the superior West and the inferior Self was embedded in the English language education policy from the beginning. And some claim that the Open Door policy which attracted foreign capitals to help transfer the technological expertise of the PRC has further boost the perceived superiority of the West (Adamson, 2002).

It can be said that the learning of English language has been interwoven with the love and hatred about how Chinese view themselves and their relations to the Westerners, either out of nationalism or cultural integrity. English has become both an object of desire and something to despise of.

Given the swift development of China in recent years, the economic strength seems to have to some degree remedied the inconfidence of Chinese in face of the English language and the Western world. Pan (2015a) studied Chinese English users' opinions about the influence of English language to China and one respondent identified "economics as the principal driver in

modern global politics” and Pan continued to assume that “if the country’s economic power remains strong, there is no worry about the threat of English to Chinese language and culture” (p. 148).

Whether the perceptions about the China vs. West dichotomy have reversed because of China’s recent development, Chinese citizens are still trapped in the binary colonial logics of inferior vs. superior and Self vs. Other. That is, the impact of coloniality is persisting. The English education websites in my study can thus be viewed as an intersection of desire and coloniality and a delve into how coloniality has shaped the desire of Chinese towards the West through the examining the native speaker model.

At the same time, my reflexivity in the research process was also reflected by the fact that, in reading and analyzing the data of my study, I was closely guided by the central research question, the ways in which the ‘native speaker’ was represented on the websites, so that the analysis depended not on my imposed interpretations of the data, but on the relevance to the research question as well as what the textual and visual representations indicated and implied to the audience about the ‘native speakers.’

Now I turn to the details of my CDA design for this study.

Method: My Study Design

CDA is a problem-oriented and transdisciplinary framework that entails a wide range of methods and analytic tools (Rogers, 2018). Due to flexibility and hybridity in its approaches, CDA lacks unity in methods (van Dijk, 1993), and concrete methods of research have to depend on specific contexts and research question(s) of the investigation (van Dijk, 2001). I referred to Ruecker and Ives (2015) to guide my data collection and analytical processes due to the similar nature of our research projects.

Data collection

The data of my research was collected between July and early September 2021. I built my corpus through a two-step process. First, I used online search to generate a list of as broad as possible results which involved various kinds of English learning organizations existing in China. Since my study is situated within the Chinese context, I prioritized using two popular Chinese sites, namely Weibo (or Microblogging) and Baidu. Weibo is one of China’s biggest social media platforms with 521 million monthly active users as of 2020 (CIW, 2021). It thus served as a main site for searching potential English language organizations that make use of

Weibo for self-promotions. On Weibo, I used the term ‘英语 (English)’ to search for any English language related user accounts. I recorded the first ten pages of results and selected results that indicate an official account of an ELT organization in their profile introduction. Baidu is the leading simplified Chinese search engine and the fifth largest website around the globe in the Alexa Internet rankings (Alexa, 2021). I used Baidu for a series of key word searching, including “英语培训 (English training),” “英语 (English),” “英语机构 (English organizations),” “学英语 (Learning English),” “英语学习 (English learning/studying),” which average English learners and parents would type in when seeking relevant resources. I also used terms such as “学英语 在线 (Learning English + Space + Online),” “在线英语 (Online English)” and “英语 外教 (English + Space + Foreign teacher),” which directed to English learning organizations that are mostly in an online format and likely to recruit foreign teachers. I recorded the first six pages of results and selected those which suggest an English language learning organization. Among all results from Weibo and Baidu searching, I filtered out the repetitive results and kept only one record of each potential website, which left me 47 results (See Appendix A).

Second, I piloted each of the 47 results to further filter out the websites that are either inaccessible or not operating appropriately. I clicked on the links to the websites and searched the titles of the companies or organizations on Baidu, which helped remove organizations that had stopped running and were inactive. Organizations which have been reported by official news in relation to false advertising and pricing frauds (Z. Wang, 2021) were also removed.

The second step resulted in 34 websites, which made up my corpus (See Appendix B). Next, I opened each website within my corpus and saved all pages of each website by screenshots using the application, Fireshot. These screenshots were then imported to NVivo. I then started my initial analysis.

Analytic Procedures

Due to the bottom-up and emerging nature of CDA analysis, I did not jump into the analysis right away. I first familiarized myself with these websites by browsing their screenshots quickly and skimmed through their content, taking initial notes about the structures and layout of the websites. I also noted down what features were being represented about the teachers by the ELT organization or company. This became my preliminary reading or skimming (or initial impression if you like, see Appendix C) of what was being displayed on the websites and how to navigate them. Following up, based on this first skimming process, I developed an analytical

matrix (Ruecker & Ives, 2015) (see Appendix D). The matrix included two sections, one regarding the general characteristics of the organization or company being promoted, and the other concerning the teachers being represented on the websites. Below is a list of the characteristics included in the matrix, which I then used for a second round of reading the 34 websites.

Analytical matrix:

- General
 - Location
 - Platform
 - Course subject(s)
 - Course types
 - Student age group
 - Tool bar
 - Activities
 - Why choose us
 - Other notes

- Teacher representations
 - Teaching Staff
 - Qualifications/Certificates
 - Videos and/or teacher demos
 - Native/non-native status
 - Skin color
 - Country of origin
 - Educational degree
 - Experience
 - Characteristics (teaching style, personality etc.)
 - Recruitment information

Guided by this matrix, I commenced a second round of reading of all 34 websites. With each website, I took detailed notes of the texts, images and audios under the elements of the matrix and recorded them with an Excel sheet (see Appendix D). The time I spent on each website varied from 20 minutes to 40 minutes, depending on the volume of content and pages included on the website. After taking notes of all websites, I reviewed my notes and did an evaluation of each website based on three criteria: relevance, format and representations, see below:

a). Relevance. How close is this website speaking to my research questions?

Scales: Very close, close, less close, not close.

b). Format. How well (user-friendly) is the website formatted?

Scales: Very well, well, less good, poor

c). Representations. How clear is the content and information displayed and represented?

Scales: Very clear, clear, less clear, poor

This step helped me sort out the websites that are more relevant to answering my research questions and those that are further from my research questions. Based on this analysis of what the websites have suggested and represented, the results included 8 websites that are very closely speaking to my research questions with very clear representations and are very well formatted, as well as 5 websites that are close, (very) well formatted with (very) clear representations. These 13 websites are listed below. The rest 21 websites did not meet one or more of the three criteria.

Very close & very well, very clear (in random order)

1. Kuaiku <https://www.kuaikuenglish.com/>
2. Lishuo <https://www.lishuo.com/general>
3. VipKid <https://www.vipkid.com.cn/>
4. Spiker <https://www.spiker.com/>
5. 51 Talk <https://www.51speaking.cn/>
6. Omeida <https://www.omeida.com/>
7. EF <https://www.ef.com.cn/>
8. Hellokid <https://www.Hellokid.com/user/login/login.html>

Close & (very) well, (very) clear (in random order)

1. RiseEnglish <https://www.risecenter.com/index.html>
2. LineWow <http://www.linewow.com/>
3. Victor <https://www.victoredu.cn/>
4. Weiwo <http://www.weiwoenglish.com/>
5. wzKings <https://www.wzkings.com/>

Next, considering the scale of a doctoral project, and borrowing from the logic of case studies (Yin, 2018), I selected the 8 websites in the first rank for a close-up examination. This not only makes my investigation more manageable, but it affords me a vertical examination, instead of a horizontal approach, to my data.

For each of these 8 websites, I created a word document to translate and take detailed descriptive notes of the content and display of the website. I looked at the languages, or what I call ‘representational strategies,’ such as texts, images, videos and audios, employed by the websites in representing ‘native speakers.’ In doing so, I observed the ways in which the figures are represented on the websites, their skin color, nationality, native/non-native status, ethnicity, characteristics, clothes and dresses, accents, teaching experiences, gestures, body languages, tones, expressions, etc. I considered these elements in these respects including but not limited to: How is ‘native speaker’ defined? Is there a specific concept or not? Who is or is not a ‘native speaker’ of English, according to these 8 websites? What features are attached to the image of ‘native speaker’? What kind of roles are ‘native speakers’ playing in different contexts? What are they doing? How are they treated and perceived by students, parents and their colleagues and fellow teachers? And in terms of the power relations behind these questions, I ask, to repeat Hall (1997) again, “who has the power, in what channels, to circulate which meanings to whom?” (p. 14).

I also looked up the teacher recruitment pages of these ELT websites, if available. Some of the recruitment information was included in the Chinese website, some had external links to an English-only page. The pages introducing tuition fees and contact information were skipped in my analysis due to their irrelevance.

As I processed each website, I jotted down some notes, reflections and questions whenever they occurred to me along the way and highlighted them in the document. I also listed some prominent qualities and characteristics of this website based on my overall evaluation. Next, I went through all 8 website screenshots several more times and edited my notes with each review. The major themes and categories of representations emerged from reiterative visiting of the website screenshots and taking notes back and forth.

In the next chapter, for the purpose of critical discourse analysis, I provide a thick description of the 8 ELT websites in a thematic manner.

Chapter 5

Thick Description of the 8 ELT Websites

Thick description of the websites is central to the method of my thesis. In this chapter, I translate and describe what was being displayed on the 8 ELT websites, namely (in alphabetic sequence): EF China, Hellokid, Kuaiku, Likeshuo Adult English, Omeida, Spiiker, VIPKID, 51Talk. First, I offer a brief introduction of the features of the 8 websites respectively. Then, I develop the description thematically, collocating different parts and content of each website indicating a similar theme under a sub header, to demonstrate the cross textual reading of the websites. In the descriptions of the websites, all content was translated by me, unless otherwise specified. The majority of the website representations was translated from Chinese to English, places that were originally in English were specified.

Introduction of the 8 Websites

In this section, I introduce each of the 8 ELT organizations in terms of ownership (Chinese company operating in China alone, Chinese-owned or foreign-owned company operating internationally), locations of operation (national or international, platform (in person or online or mixed), target audience age groups and target audience interest (in general English knowledge, speaking English or English as advanced job skills).

EF China

EF Education First was an international English education company founded in 1965 in Sweden (About Us, EF official website in China, 2021). The China branch of EF offered courses both in person and online nationwide and has offices in various areas and cities in China. In this thesis, I use EF China to refer to the Chinese official website of EF (<https://www.ef.com.cn/>). The homepage the EF China official website was automatically set in the location of Beijing. After experimenting, I found that the website content remained the same regardless of change of cities and therefore this is not a variant of what I translated and described in the next section of this chapter considering the EF China official website. The teachers at EF China were made up of both Chinese and foreign English teachers. EF China offered English training courses and programs both within China and abroad. The courses within China targeted at students of all age groups including children of 7-9 years old, teenagers of 10-14 years old, adolescences of 15-18 years old and adults. The courses overseas encompassed a variety of types including study abroad (*liuxue* 留学) at secondary and tertiary levels, business English training, educational

travel (*youxue* 游学). On the EF China official website, the programs within China were introduced more extensively, whereas those overseas programs were lacking details, therefore the former category was the focus of my analysis in this thesis. As such, my investigation of the EF China website involved content from the following 5 pages: a) Homepage, b) the page of “High Flyers” [English original] program for children of 7-9 years old, c) the page of “Trailblazers” [English original] program for teenagers of 10-14 years old and d) the page of “Frontrunner” [English original] program for adolescences of 15-18 years old.

Hellokid

Hellokid was a Chinese-owned company founded in 2014 which aimed to provide authentic and professional online English educational resources in China (Hellokid Specialty, 2021 <https://www.Hellokid.com/character/>). It was an online based ELT organization mainly targeted at children and teenage English learners ranging from 6 to 16 years old. The courses were focused on improving students’ spoken English skills and inspiring English learning interest. A primary feature of Hellokid was that it claimed to offer an authentic and pure mother tongue (*muyu* 母语) English spoken by European and American foreign teachers (*oumei waijiao* 欧美外教). The Hellokid official website included the following pages, namely Homepage, Hellokid Specialty, Teaching Philosophy, Curriculum and Euro-American Teaching Resource.

Kuaiku

Kuaiku was an ELT organization based in the Philippines. It was founded in 2009 by a Japanese and had developed branch offices in several Asian areas including Japan, South Korea and China. Kuaiku offered online courses with the philosophy of “Quick and Quality” (original English, Kuaiku homepage) for adult English learners. The Chinese title of Kuaiku was a combination of the character for quick (*kuai* 快), corresponding to the element in the teaching philosophy phrase, and cool (*ku* 酷), which assumedly intended to echo the first syllable of the word quality. Kuaiku also organized educational travel programs (*youxue* 游学) in the Philippines facing all age groups under the title QQ English (<https://cn.qqeng.net/>). Its student group spread across the globe including but not limit to such countries as Brazil, Vietnam, Hazakstan and Thailand. Kuaiku was one of the only two organizations within my close investigation which recruited predominantly Filipinos as English teachers. The Kuaiku website was composed of the following pages: Homepage, the Curriculum page, the Foreign Teaching

Resource page, the Student Testimonial page, the Educational Travel page (for QQ English) and sub-pages within it.

Likeshuo

Likeshuo was a Chinese-owned organization operating within China and offering raining of various languages, namely English, Japanese, German and Spanish, as well as different types of courses including Adult English and Overseas Exams. However, the main promotion throughout the website revolved around its Adult English program, which became the focuses of my analysis. The Likeshuo Adult English was an online speaking English program for adult learners in China. “Likeshuo” is not a combination of the English word “Like” and the Chinese word “Shuo” or “speak or talk,” but of the Chinese word for immediate (*like* 立刻). Therefore, the name “Likeshuo” can be understood as “immediately speak” in English. The teachers at Likeshuo were made up of “Euro-American foreign teachers from around the world with high face value as well as Chinese teachers” (Teaching Philosophy, Likehsuo Adult English, 2021, <https://www.likeshuo.com/general/philosophy>). “High face value” was the literal translation of the original Chinese term used by the website, *gaoyanzhi* 高颜值. It is a popular phrase on the Chinese internet which refers to one’s gorgeous look as having a high value (*Chinese Buzzword: 颜值 (yánzhí) The Prettiness Index*, n.d.), and it will be discussed with greater detail in my analysis in Chapter 6. The curriculum involved speaking English courses with different concentrations, such as TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) exam preparation, general oral English, travel English and so on. The Likeshuo Adult English website consisted of 6 Chinese pages and 1 English page, respectively they are: Homepage, Teaching Philosophy page, Teaching Resource page, Course Introduction page, Boutique Public Classes page, Teacher Qualification page and Teacher Recruitment page (in English).

Omeida

The Omeida Language College, also known as Omeida, was a Chinese-owned English training organization founded in 2001 in Yangshuo, Guilin province, China. On the website, it is introduced that “Yangshuo has been a world renowned tourist destination with a great number of visitors traveling, working and studying here, thus forming a natural foreign language environment” (About Us, Omeida, 2021 <https://www.omeida.com/about/us/>). The Chinese name of Omeida read 欧美达 (*Oumeida*), which literally meant “Europe and America (*oumei* 欧美)

arrived (*da* 达).” The Omeida teachers included foreign teachers from predominantly native English-speaking countries and Chinese teachers either from the English major or had overseas study experiences (Homepage, Omeida, 2021<https://www.omeida.com/>). Omeida offered a great variety of in-person programs to teenagers of 7-18 years old and adults, such as full-time English immersion programs, IELTS and TOEFL test preparation programs, and winter holiday camps. It had also developed its one-to-one online program encompassing general English, business English, pronunciation training and courses as such for adults, as well as other courses such as Cambridge English, study abroad preparation and so on for teenage learners. The Omeida website included the following pages: Homepage, Premium Courses, Collaboration Programs, Teaching Philosophy, International Teachers, Students’ Stories and About Us.

Spiiker

Spiiker was a Chinese-owned company operating in China alone and specializing on customized one-to-one online speaking English training. There were two streams of programs, one for adult students and another for cooperations. The teaching resource was made up of three parts, namely strictly selected foreign teachers from around the globe, Chinese bilingual teachers and Chinese study managers or tutors. Spiiker adult English programs covered a wide range of topics, from beginner speaking English to advanced oral English, from business English and interview English to medical English. The cooperation training program were customized on further inquiry. The Spiiker website (<https://www.spiiker.com/>) included six pages for my description: Homepage, Curriculum, Learning System, Course Customization, Global Teaching Resource and Student Testimonies.

VIPKID

VIPKID was founded in 2013 in China by the Chinese entrepreneur Cindy Mi (Wenjuan Mi) and specialized on K-12 online English training by pairing students with purely North American foreign teachers (About Us, VIPKID, 2021). By the time of my data collection, VIPKID had operated globally with 9 offices around the and signed over 70,000 North American foreign teachers. It had attracted investments from famous people including but not limited to Kobe Bryant and Kaifu Lee. VIPKID held the mission to “inspire and empower every child for the future,” the hope “to be the leader of global K12 education” and the value of “students at heart, fighting spirit at the core” (all English original, About Us, VIPKID, 2021 <https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/about>). The VIPKID website included these pages: a)

Homepage, b) Curriculum, which included three sub-pages, c) Curriculum Advantages, d) VIPKID North American Foreign Teacher Class and e) VIPKID Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class Pub.

51 Talk Adult English

51 Talk Adult English (<https://www.51speaking.cn/>) was a brand owned by 51 Talk, a global online English education organization founded in China in 2011 (About Us, 51 talk, 2021. <https://en.51talk.com/global/companyinfo>). The Chinese name for 51 Talk Adult English is *wuyou yingyu* 无忧英语, which is the combination of the English words “No or not” and “Worry or concern.” As its name indicated, this was an Adult online English training organization. Apart from Kuaiku, 51 Talk Adult English was the other company which recruited primarily Filipinos as foreign English teachers. Its curriculum oriented two concentrations, the systematic stream covering business English, English for interviews and IELTS speaking based on self-developed materials, and the general, interest-inspiring stream covering daily English, free talk and travel English. The 51 Adult English website included these pages: Homepage, Learning Philosophy, Curriculum, Foreign Teachers and Learning System.

In what follows, I present the thick descriptions of the 8 ELT websites in a thematic manner.

Thick Descriptions by Themes

In this section, I demonstrate the different themes generated from my investigation and observation of the 8 ELT websites. With each theme, I would gather the different parts and sections extracted from separate websites with brief discussions where applicable, and these themes will be further analyzed and developed into major findings in Chapter 6.

Professionalism of the ELT Organizations

The first thing that these ELT websites tended to demonstrate was the professionalism of the organizations they are representing, as well as their leading role in the whole ELT industry. This was done mainly through textual promotions.

EF China. On the EF China website, when opening the homepage (<https://www.ef.com.cn/>), a big title appeared on the middle of the page: “Education Removes Boundaries” (EF China, 2021, head banner, n.p.). On the top right corner, audience could see the official logos for the Beijing Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. A small line under these logos read: “Official Language Training Services Exclusive Supplier of Beijing 2022” (EF

China, 2021, n.p.). A textual section on this page further explained the connection between EF China and these logos by stating “EF is the Exclusive Supplier of Beijing 2022 Official Language Training Services” and that “EF has supported and served seven Olympic games since 1988, including those held in Seoul, Beijing, Sochi, and Rio de Janeiro, the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic games and the coming 2020 Tokyo Olympic games” (EF China, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Readers thus received a clear information that the EF brand has a long history being the official language training supplier of the Olympic games, and the EF China branch was no exception.

Moreover, on this homepage, EF China also provided a three-paragraph textual introduction of the EF English Training Programs:

About EF: EF Education First is a globally renowned private English language education organization focused on language learning, studying abroad, traveling overseas, as well as degree courses. EF Education First has turned the whole world into a giant English classroom. The creative English learning system, integrative English teaching materials, wonderful foreign instructors with international certificates, convenient locations, modernized learning environment and opportunities for studying abroad... [English original] (EF China, 2021, Homepage, para. 3.)

Hellokid. the Curriculum page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/system/>) of Hellokid introduced: “Self-Developed Based on International Standard, Steadily Improving Children’s English Learning Ability” (Hellokid, 2021, n.p.). This “international standard” was further explained by a curriculum system chart on the same page to include such systems as American and Canadian educational systems, the Cambridge International children English system and the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) framework (Hellokid, 2021, n.p.).

Omeida. The Omeida Language College mentioned several times on its website about its rich experience, expertise and linguistic resources through texts. First, the head banner of the Omeida homepage (<https://www.omeida.com/>) represented a bold, big font slogan, “20 years of experience in ELT, we will take charge of your English learning all the way” (Omeida, 2021, Headbanner, n.p.). and another text under the title “Why Yangshuo & Omeida” on this page stated:

Twenty years of dedication, worthy of trust. Omeida was founded in 2001, has been devoted to English training with the guideline of ‘full-time, immersive, super small class.’ Internationalized teaching source, scientific curriculum, as well as well-rounded,

wholesome instruction, help students to breakthrough their ‘Deaf and Dumb English’ and achieve success. (Omeida, 2021, “Why Yangshuo & Omeida,” n.p.)

Another text used numbers to show the natural linguistic environment of Yangshuo, the location of the school,

Converse with 5000+ foreign guests: Yangshuo has the reputation as the ‘global village,’ where over 5000 foreign tourists come to visit, explore, have adventures, relax, or invest annually. One can converse with Westerners (洋人 *yangren*) from around the world on the streets. (Omeida, 2021, “Why Yangshuo & Omeida,” n. p.)

This statement was accompanied with a picture of the street scene of Yangshuo, the venue of Omeida Language College, where three tourists were discussing something on the street, including 2 Chinese males and 1 White male.

A text on the Premium Courses page (<https://www.omeida.com/course/>) stated: “Five major advantages, always in the front tier of spoken English training profession” (Omeida, 2021, Premium Courses, n.p.). Their five advantages listed here included: “a) Native-like English environment, b) High quality teaching team, c) Scientifically developed curriculum, d) Super small class, and e) More economic.”

Omeida further emphasized its leadership in the ELT industry in the About Us page (<https://www.omeida.com/about/us/>). The head banner featured a circle of White foreigners looking down to the camera. In the blank circle that their heads form, a slogan read, “Omeida – Trailblazer of Fulltime English Training” (Omeida, 2021, About Us, n.p.). And an introduction text stated:

Omeida, founded in 2001 and focused on English and Chinese language , is located in Yangshuo, Guilin, a city that enjoys the honors of “China’s biggest English corner” and “Global Village.” The beautiful nature and village sceneries have attracted a large number of tourists to visit, work and study here. There are more than 5000 regular foreign visitors, forming a natural foreign language environment. (Omeida, 2021, About Us, n.p.)

The next section on the About Us page again emphasized its history and professional development through numbers:

Omeida has been devoted in “full-time, immersive, super small class” English training, strictly selecting long-term professional foreign teachers from English-speaking countries such as the UK, the US, Canada, and Australia. Each class has 6 to 8 students, with the scientifically designed curriculum, one-on-one communication and all-round services, every student can be taken good care of. A series of numbers are presented here to show

the experience and expertise of this college: 20 years of history, 30+ high quality foreign teachers, and 30000 students from all around the globe. (Omeida, 2021, About Us, n.p.)

Spiiker. Making use of numbers was a representative strategy commonly seen on these ELT websites. For instance, on the head banner of the Spiiker homepage (<https://www.spiiker.com/>) there was an outstanding, bolded number, 13, which was followed by a promotional line: “13 years focused on online training, creating a learning platform exclusively for speaking English for students” (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). And On the Global Teaching Resource page (<https://www.spiiker.com/teachers.html>), there was a section called “Strict Foreign Teacher Recruiting Standard,” where a smaller text strengthened this idea: “13 years of experience, strictly select 5000 high quality foreign teachers from around the globe” (Spiiker, 2021, Global Teaching Resource, n.p.).

The Spiiker website also stressed its expertise in ELT training through texts. In the introduction of the Spiiker Curriculum (<https://www.spiiker.com/course.html>), a text stated,

Spiiker Smart is developed by a global professional teaching and researching team which has over 10 years’ teaching experience. According to Spiiker’s many years’ experiences of interactive teaching and based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as well as the globally popular English as a second language, we carefully created a curriculum that is interactive and favored by students. (Spiiker, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.)

This text above indicated that, first, Spiiker was a professional ELT organization with 10 years’ expertise at the global level; second, Spiiker curriculum was professionally developed in reference to international language frameworks; and third, this professionalism has been acknowledged by students. Similar statements were stressed again elsewhere on the Spiiker website. On the detail page of Adult Speaking English (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize6.html>), a text was promoting the quality monitoring of Spiiker programs,

A) Technology: Spiiker 14 years of technology foundation creates the best learning experience. B) Teaching and research: Having professional teaching and research team, all teaching materials are self-developed. C) Word of mouth: Word-of-mouth reputation by 3 million students, fully recommended. (Spiiker, 2021, Adult Speaking English)

VIPKID & 51 Talk Adult English. The promotions on VIPKID and 51 Talk Adult websites fell into the same logic as above mentioned.

On the homepage of VIPKID (<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/>), there were a list of numbers which were printed in large and bolded fonts to introduce the organization:

63 countries and regions of the world have their students; over 800,000 paid students have registered; 100% purely North American foreign teachers; and over 70,000 high quality teachers. A smaller text indicated that these numbers were retrieved from the internal statistics. (VIPKID, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

On the 51 Talk Adult English website, when promoting the curriculum (<https://www.51speaking.cn/index/system>), a text stated the following,

The curriculum is developed by a professional curriculum development team with more than 10 years of experience from around the globe. It is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and covers all aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing. (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.)

Meanwhile, on the Foreign Teachers page (<https://www.51speaking.cn/index/teachers>), there were texts about the teaching resource as taking the lead in the industry, “More than 30000 professional foreign teachers, our teaching resource takes the lead of the industry; 51 Talk has been devoted in on matching students with the foreign teachers that suit them the best”; and “51 Talk has more than 30,000 high-quality foreign teachers from around the globe. Only the top 3% of excellent teachers are recruited. Standard pronunciation. Rich experience” (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Foreign Teachers, n.p.).

General Claims about Teacher Qualifications

Following up, another thing mentioned side by side with the fame and professionalism of these organizations was the strict selection and assessment standards of the foreign teachers at these ELT organizations.

EF China. The textual introduction on the EF China homepage (<https://www.ef.com.cn/>), mentioned above also contained the following two paragraphs:

EF teaching methods are unique and productive! We use the English training materials crafted by our EF academic experts; Most of our foreign English teachers hold TESOL certificates and teach in small classes. Our EF centers are mostly in convenient locations and are equipped with language labs and mentoring techniques, which can help students be more productive.

The EF creative training products are mainly surrounding the Efekta system. Aside from the cutting-edge teaching facilities for the experienced English instructors, there are also the creative language lab (iLAB) for students. Additionally, students can participate in our English clubs, including the English Coffee Club, English Speech Contest, English Corner and English Dinner Party, to hone their spoken English skills. (EF China, 2021, Homepage; para. 1-2) [English original]

As we could see, these two paragraphs provided an overview about the strict standard of recruiting teachers, the teaching methods, technology support as well as the all-rounded resources available to students.

Hellokid. On the Hellokid website, the Euro-American Teaching Resource page (<https://www.hellokid.com/teachers/>) first claimed to “Carefully select high quality Euro-American Native Speaking foreign Teachers” which contributed to a “Pure foreign language context,” then it complimented, “Assessed through different levels with monitored pass rate; multiple years of experiences teaching Chinese children; certified with international English teaching qualifications” (Hellokid, 2021, Euro-American Teaching Resource, n.p.). Lastly, on this page, there was also a section illustrated through a flow chart the process of recruitment. It included seven stages, namely: “Filtering CVs, First Interviews, Preparing a Lesson, Demo Class, Background Investigation, Induction Training and Evaluation” (Hellokid, 2021, Euro-American Teaching Resource, n.p.). As such, Hellokid demonstrated on this page a full circle of selecting and assessing the European and American foreign teachers. this was echoed on another page, “Strict selection at each level, stringent recruitment standard” (Hellokid, 2021, Euro-American Teaching Resource, n.p.).

Kuaiku. The Kuaiku website also began with asserting the professional qualification of foreign teachers by saying “Affordable Foreign Teacher Classes: 1300 teachers at your disposal, certified with TESOL qualifications” (Kuaiku, 2021, homepage, n. p.). Meanwhile, on the Foreign Teaching Resource page (https://www2.kuaikuenglish.com/pages/about_teacher.html), a section was titled “Strict Recruitment and Assessment System: Only to Provide High Quality Teaching Service.” Here, a series of evaluations that a candidate teacher must go through to become an official teacher at Kuaiku was illustrated through a process chart. Basically, it involved the process of CV filtration, three rounds of interviews, recruitment, followed by internal training and a 2–5-month TESOL training at the same time, during which only the qualified candidates can stay and move on to official online teaching. There were also periodical

assessments afterwards, where poor performance will lead to terminations of employment (Kuaiku, 2021, Foreign Teaching Resource, n. p.).

Kuaiku also emphasized their strict standard for choosing foreign teachers through a different rhetorical strategy. On the promotional page of QQ English (<https://cn.qqeng.net/>), the educational travel program of Kuaiku, a section titled “Why QQ English” specifically stated that,

Although it is said that anyone can teach English as long as they can speak English, QQ English holds a strict standard upon teachers’ qualifications and teaching competency. Especially, we would organize periodical teacher training sessions to improve our teachers’ teaching and service standard.” (Kuaiku, 2021, Why QQ English, n.p.)

Through this claim, QQ English differentiated itself from the practice of randomly recruiting any English speakers as English instructor, and in doing so enhanced the impression of its strict nature in selecting English teachers. This impression was further strengthened by mentioning the details involved in the serial assessments.

51 Talk Adult English. On the Foreign Teachers page (<https://www.51speaking.cn/index/teachers>) of 51 Talk Adult English, a text also mentioned about the strict assessing system of foreign teachers as a way of showing how 51 Talk Adult has been maintaining and perfecting its professionalism, “The foreign teaching team keeps perfecting: Only the fittest survive, the teaching competency keeps improving,” as well as “After being officially employed, the bi-weekly in-service training, regular pedagogical panels, as well as the teaching quality tracking and feedback system will help our foreign teachers progress” (51 Talk Adult, 2021, Foreign Teachers, n.p.). It indicated that students also played a part in the assessment of foreign English teachers.

Omeida. On the homepage (<https://www.omeida.com/>), Omeida also introduced its “30+ Professional Chinese and Foreign Teachers” as such, “Foreign teachers mainly come from native English-speaking countries, they either hold teaching certificates or have rich teaching experience; Chinese teachers either have achieved bachelor’s degree or have overseas study experience” (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

VIPKID. The VIPKID website had one general statement on the homepage (<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/>), “70,000 strictly selected excellent North American foreign teachers” (VIPKID, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Then, on the Curriculum page, it was stated “Strictly Selected Teachers, Trustworthy Teaching Quality” (VIPKID, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.). There was

also another text on the North American Foreign Teacher Class page

(<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/mc>), “Tons of thousands of quality North American foreign teachers, 100% bachelor’s degree and above, 100% certified with teaching license and certificates, on average over 7.5 years of teaching experience” (VIPKID, 2021, North American Foreign Teacher Class, n. p.).

Spiiker. On the Spiiker website, the homepage put forward a similar leading statement, “Fixed foreign teachers: strictly selected quality Euro-American teachers from around the world; equipped with professional teacher certificates and rich teaching experiences; one-on-one teaching with foreign teachers makes learning more joyful” (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n. p.).

On the Global Teaching Resource page (<https://www.spiiker.com/teachers.html>), numbers were again put into use: “2% recruitment rate, 3 years of teaching experiences and bachelor’s degree” (Spiiker, 2021, Glonal Teaching Resource, n.p.). To the right of these numbers, there was a pyramid chart consisting of ten phases of filtering and evaluation process before and after one candidate is qualified to become a foreign instructor. To take a closer look at it, these ten phases included, before employment, “a) resume filtering, b) first round interview, c) training before career, d) final interview”; after employment, “e) OJT (On the Job Training), f) three-month trial period, g) grading and feedback, h) index measurement (*zhibiao jiance* 指标监测), i) review meeting and j) re-training” (Spiiker, 2021, Global Teaching Resource, n.p.).

Moreover, on the Business English genre in a separate page (<http://www.spiiker.com/qiyepeixun/>), a section title read: “Our teaching competency fears no comparisons,” which was followed by four aspects, relatively they were:

- A) In-depth learning model, established in two years, based on Oxford University linguistics professors’ theories.
- B) Expert teaching and researching team: master graduates of linguistics graduates from Europe and America.
- C) Making use of fragmented time with productivity. Each lesson is 20-30 minutes, learn with ease even during long-term business trips.
- D) 5000+ quality foreign teachers. All have acquired international certificates from institutions like the Cambridge University. (Spiiker, 2021, Business English, n.p.)

So far, we have seen similar discourses around the professional English teachers at various ELT organizations. That is, they generally talked about the expertise in research and curriculum development, the scientific teaching method and the qualified foreign teachers with

certificates selected through strict processes. However, Likeshuo brought up some different aspects of assessing the teachers.

Likeshuo. There was a “This is How We Select Our Teachers” section on the Teaching Staff page of Likehsuo website, where it was said, “Strict selection and pass rate, stringent international teacher management rules.” Meanwhile, it came along with explanations of the four measures of selection, which was worth quoting at length:

- 1) Based on international standards: Likeshuo applies international recruitment standards to employing teachers, skipping the middle agency and establishing our own professional recruitment and management team, building high standard teaching staff.
- 2) Authorized teaching certification: [Teachers have acquired] teaching certificates such as TESOL and TEFL, having rich experiences in ELT.
- 3) Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value (*gaoyanzhi* 高颜值): Attracted by their appearances at first and ended up fallen for their talents, good-looking Euro-American foreign teachers will bring you classes with authentic American (British) ways of thinking.
- 4) Assessing teachers with real money: Encountering a teacher that really suits you is the most important thing! Scores and reviews are not always objective. With the gratuity system (*dashang* 打赏) exclusively to our students, teachers and their teachings are examined by real money. (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.)

Here, except for the first two measures about professional standards and certifications, Likeshuo raised two other aspects which were not common to see within the ELT websites within my investigations. They were respectively referring to physicality and monetary rewards as part of the teacher evaluation system. To explain, the term high face value is the literal translation of the Chinese word used here, *gaoyanzhi* 高颜值. It is a popular word used on Chinese internet context to refer to one’s physical beauty as having a high value. If physical looks can be scored, those with high face value are scored the highest. The term gratuity is the translation of the Chinese word, *dashang* 打赏. In Chinese internet context, it refers to the act of monetary tipping willingly by users, audiences and/or readers of online platforms such as blogs, short video platforms and live streaming on social media. Here, with this system, students not only participated in the evaluation of the teachers, but in a monetary rewarding manner. Both aspects would be further examined and discussed in Chapter 6.

Specific Recruitment Requirements

Except for the general claims made about professional standard of the English teachers on the 8 ELT websites, two organizations provided detailed recruitment requirements on their

websites, namely Lishuo and VIPKID. These two websites were both in English original, seemingly targeted straight at potential (foreign) English teachers.

Lishuo. The Teacher Recruitment page of Lishuo (<https://www.lishuo.com/recruit/teacher>) put forward “Six Main Reasons to Be a Teacher at LKESHUO” (English and Capital original) on an outstanding spot, which stated that “Everyone can find their own unique purpose to join Lishuo!” These reasons include: “Earn extra money, make new friends, get bonus from students, make new courseware, receive teacher training, and work with a flexible schedule” (English original. Lishuo, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.).

This Teacher Recruitment page was further illustrative of the recruitment criteria under the “Four Product Lines of Teachers at LKESHUO” (English original) section, illustrated the recruitment standard for four lines of programs. For each product line, the information was provided in both images and texts (all in English original). I tabulated all information below.

Table 1

Job Requirements of Four Product Lines of Lishuo

Product lines		General	Junior	Overseas Test	Professionals
Images		A white male in shirt and tie with the background of an empty classroom.	A child and a paper robot.	A Chinese female in formal wear drawing a chart.	Two white females focused on a laptop.
Requirements	Degree	Bachelor's degree or above.	Bachelor's degree or above.	Bachelor's degree or above	Bachelor's degree or above
	Background	English major preferred.	/	Overseas graduates or returnees preferred.	Rich experience in many different fields of industry is preferred.
	Native Status	Native English speakers from UK, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand etc. OR Chinese.	Native English speakers with clear accent from US, Canada or UK.	/	Native English speaker, American, British or Canadian preferred.
	Skills and Certificates	Proficient teaching skills. TESOL or TEFL certificate is preferred.	TEFL/TESOL certificate is preferred.	Online teaching experience preferred.	/
	Teaching Experiences	Previous teaching experience or training	3 years or above teaching experience. Online or classroom	Familiarize with TOEFL/IELTS/GR E/GMAT; Candidates with	Have rich experience in teaching adults English, enjoy

		experiences is preferred.	teaching experience are both OK. Phonetics teaching experience is preferred.	high-scored students preferred.	teaching, good communication, organization and management skills.
	Personality	/	Outgoing, enthusiastic, patient, friendly and love kids.	Great interest and belief in the strength of mentorship.	/
	Other	No less than 30 teaching hours per month.	/	Coach students on test-taking strategies for TOEFL/IELTS/SS AT/ ...	No less than 30 teaching hours per month.

On the bottom of this page, there was also a section called “Gorgeous Native Speakers Here!” which displayed some teacher profiles and images. This section will be picked up in the remainder of this chapter. Now let us take a look at the recruitment site of VIPKID.

VIPKID. VIPKID had a separate site for Teacher Recruitment (<https://www.VIPKID.com/teach>), which afforded us insights into the details about the employment of foreign English teachers. The top banner featured a slogan, “Teach English Online, Earn \$14-\$22 an hour from the comfort of your home” (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.). Below the banner, there were three advantages of teaching at VIPKID.

Frist, Teach When You Want. Set your own schedule and work on your own time. No minimum hour requirement.

Second, No Lesson Planning. We provide the lesson plan with our best-in-class curriculum, you just focus on teaching.

Third, Competitive Pay. Our top-notch teachers are what set us apart, so we make sure they’re fairly compensated. (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.)

There were also separate links to learn more about teaching hours, teacher requirements and teacher pay, which I shall turn to respectively.

First, on the Teacher Requirements page (<https://www.VIPKID.com/teach/teacher-requirements>), a section called “What We Look For” listed the qualities that are required from teachers:

A) Teaching experiences: we recommend that you have at least two years of experience in teaching, tutoring, coaching or mentoring.

B) Bachelor’s degree: you must have obtained a 4-year degree from a university. Great news is that this can be in any field or major.

- C) Work authorization in US or Canada: legally eligible to work in the U.S. or Canada.
 D) Reliable technology: this shouldn't be a shocker, but a virtual class requires a few technical things to make it happen. (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirements, n.p.)

In a different section on this page, “Things You Should Know,” more details were provided:

- A) Teach anywhere: from the comfort of your living room, or kitchen, you can almost teach from anywhere in the world as long as you meet our basic requirements. No need to hop on that commuter bus since everything is online.
 B) Flexible hours: you set your own schedule. You can teach as many hours as you like. No minimum hour commitment.
 C) Lesson plans, check: Our curriculum team has already designed materials for every class, so you don't have to. Just one less thing for you to worry about.
 D) Don't speak Chinese? Not a problem.: we offer full English immersion for our students, so there's no need to know any Chinese. That said, your students might teach you a word or two. (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirements, n.p.)

Second, on the Teaching Hours page (<https://www.vipkid.com/teach/teaching-hours>), a section title suggested, “When we say flexible, we mean it” (English original). And it was explained further as such,

Flexible Hours: There's no minimum hour commitment. You can teach as many hours as you'd like to. Remember, you're in the driver seat.
 Your Own Schedule: Set your teaching availability in advance in the VIPKID Teach App. If you change your mind on your schedule, don't worry, just give us a heads up. (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teaching Hours, n.p.)

Third, on the Teacher Recruitment site, there were also frequently asked questions regarding recruitment requirement, teaching hours and payment. I summarized those which were relevant in Table 2 below and some phrases were bolded. In general, the requirement for foreign teachers at VIPKID were relatively flexible and afforded the teachers with full executive control. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 2

Summary of Q&As on the VIPKID Teacher Recruitment Page [English Original]

Q	What kind of commitment is there?
A	There is no commitment - you can work as much or as little as you'd like.
Q	Is there a maximum number of hours a teacher could teach?

A	VIPKID sets no limit on how much a teacher can teach - you have 100% control over your schedule . However, non-peak times may not be as popular amongst our students as they are not available for classes (they are likely in school or asleep) ...
Q	Can I take a break or go on vacation?
A	Yes, you can! The world is your oyster and flexibility are one of the best perks when teaching with VIPKID. Just make sure to change your slot availability accordingly.
Q	Do I need to prepare teaching materials?
A	Nope, our curriculum team has already designed materials for every class. However, teachers please prepare for class by reviewing the materials beforehand. You can preview class materials in the classroom on the teacher portal 6-12 hours in advance.
Q	Can I apply if I don't have bachelor's degree?
A	We require you to have at least a bachelor's degree to be eligible to teach. We are very strict about applicants' education level and require you to have at least a bachelor's degree. We require this because this is something that the parents of the children in China that we teach care about and trust that we are maintaining.

Physicality – White ‘Native Speakers’ English Teachers

One could notice that in the descriptions mentioned so far, the term ‘native speaker’ was coined by the websites without giving any definitions. Rather, the meaning of this term was closely tied up with visual representations, i.e. images and videos, on 6 ELT websites of the 8 ELT websites, EF China, Hellokid, Lishuo, Omeida, Spiker and VIPKID, the term ‘native speakers’ was coined in promotional texts to describe the foreign English teachers, who are predominantly associated with visual representations of racialized White figures, and occasionally texts. Among the human figures represented on the websites, there were one group which were explicitly identified as English teachers in the teaching resource sections and real class videos of the ELT websites. There were also another group of human characters which were exploited in the promotions by the websites. In this section below, I would describe and summarize the official teachers identified on each of the 6 ELT websites. And I describe the second group of human characters in the next section of this chapter. The rest two organizations, Kuaiku and 51 Talk, were based in the Philippines and will be discussed separately in the remainder of this Chapter.

EF China. The teacher figures represented on EF China website included 5 White male foreign teachers and 1 White female teacher “from native English-speaking countries” (EF China, 2021, High Flyers, n.p.), as well as Chinese female teachers. They spoke in either British or American accent. The information was summarized in Table 3 below. From this EF summary

we might notice that Whiteness becomes increasingly valued the older the learner becomes. However, this cannot find further evidence on other ELT websites within my investigation.

Table 3

Summary of English Teachers Featured on EF China Website

Where on the Website	Representational Tools	Teachers and Their Roles
High Flyers Program (7-9 years old)	High Flyers video	A White female as classroom teacher.
	Real Class videos	A Chinese female teacher speaking in American accent.
		A Chinese female teacher who speaks in American accent.
EF Trailblazer (10-14 years old)	Real Class videos	A White male teacher speaking in British accent.
		A White male teacher speaking in American accent.
		A Chinese female teacher speaking in American accent.
	Real Class videos	A White male teacher speaking in British accent.
EF Frontrunner (15-18 years old)	Real Class videos	A White male teacher speaking in British accent in all the videos.
	Frontrunner Promotional video	A White male teacher speaking in American accent.
Summary		6 White teachers; 3 Chinese teachers.

Hellokid. First, the Hellokid website represented three demo class videos on the bottom of the Curriculum page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/system/>). These class demos featured 2 foreign teachers, a White male teaching in British accent and a White female in American accent. No additional information was provided about these teachers.

Second, the Hellokid website showcased 5 teachers' profiles on the Euro-American Teaching Resource page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/teachers/>). Each of them had a professional teaching certificate attached with their profile. Their information is tabulated in Table 4 below. As can be seen, all of them were White people, including 3 females and 2 males, 3 from the US, 1 from the UK and 1 from Canada.

Table 4

Summary of English Teachers Featured on Hellokid Website

Name	Skin Color	Gender	Country	Teaching Experience (year)
Chentelle K.	White	Female	UK	7
Mladen C.	White	Male	US	4
Sally P	White	Female	Canada	3
Flavia Gardellim	White	Female	US	9

Joe Brooks	White	Male	US	8
Summary	5 White teachers.			

Likeshuo. There were four places on the Likeshuo website where teachers were featured through texts, videos and images.

First, on the Course Introduction page of Likeshuo (<https://www.likeshuo.com/general/course>), there was a section attached with 16 video clips of real classes, each teaching a different theme. Table 5 below summarizes the information about the 16 teachers featured in the clips. Including the one Chinese teacher featured here, there were 3 Chinese teachers represented on the Likeshuo website. And we could see from Table 5 below that the predominant teachers were White foreign teachers speaking in either British or American accent.

Table 5

Summary of English Teachers Featured in Major Themes Class Section on Likeshuo Website

Class Themes	Teacher	Teacher's Accent
Business and Workplace	A White male in a light blue shirt and dark red tie	British accent
Interpersonal Communication	A White female in a light-colored shirt	American accent
Management Skills	A White male in a blue shirt and tie	British accent
Traveling and Vacations	A Chinese male teaching a beginner student	American accent (aided with Chinese)
Art and Fashion	A White female	British accent
Daily Life	A White female	American accent
Entertainment	A White female	American accent
Food and Catering	A White male	American accent
Colorful Life	A White female	American accent
Current Affairs	A White male	American accent
Technology	A White male	British accent
History and Culture	A White male	American accent
Training and Studies	A White female	American accent
Health and Well-being	A White male	American accent
Finance Management	A White male	British accent
4D English	A White male	American accent
Summary	15 White and 1 Chinese teachers	5 British accent; 11 American

Second, on the Teaching Resource page (<https://www.likeshuo.com/general/teacher>), a section called “High Face Value Teaching Team” section. The brief textual introduction said: “High face value is a necessary standard of our teacher recruitment, making each of your lessons a beautiful encounter” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.). Here, it displayed the biographies of 9 teachers working at Likeshuo. Each teacher had a polished profile picture linked with a self-introduction video. Under their profiles, there were texts demonstrating their names, key words that summarize their styles, and a brief introduction. I downloaded the videos and summarized all information about these teachers in Table 6 below. What is particularly interesting here is the key words and brief texts being used to represent the teachers, which shall be analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Table 6

Summary of High-Face-Value Teachers on Likeshuo Website

Who	Nationality (as indicated in the self- intro videos)	Key Words Attached [Chinese original)	Textual Introduction [Chinese original)	Summarized Characteristics from Self-introduction Video [English original)
Craig Wasahlo	a White male teacher from England	“England, British accent, Gifted musician, Witty and Humorous.”	“Teaches with wit and humor, full of sense of topic [<i>huatigan shizu</i> 话题感十足], as well as a talented singer-songwriter”	6-years teaching experience. Past expatriate in China. A professional musician.
Ewelina	A White female	“American accent, Chinese- English bilingual host, interactive, yoga coach.”	“Teaches English in a unique ‘experiential’ style to help students expand their knowledge, the interactivity in her classes is off the charts.”	9-years teaching experience. TEFL certificate and TEFL Grammar Advisor Certificate. Graduated from Xiamen University with a major in Chinese Ancient Literature.
Dave W. Ouellette	A successful White male from Canada	“Canada, American accent, Educational charity pioneer, IT expert.”	“Good at creating a lively classroom, makes students feel safe to embrace challenges and encourages students to express themselves.”	Graduated from the University of Waterloo with honors degrees in English and in Speech Communication. Rich business experience. Aims to help students to become highly effective English speakers. A businessman, CEO.
Nathan Sewoff	A White male from Australia	“Australia, British accent trainer, A handsome millennial.”	“Student-centered teaching philosophy, good at breaking ice with students, teaching through communication.”	TESOL certificate holder. More than 5 years’ teaching experience. Focus on grammar and fluency. Teach students to sound like a native English speaker.

Kathy Vitali	A White female, half Italian and half American	“US; American accent, beautiful face and voice, encouraging education.”	“Holds special insights about second language education, blending personal experiences into teaching, effectively increasing students’ learning interest.”	More than one year’s teaching experience. CELTA certificate from Cambridge International.
Leia (Zuliya Kahaer)	A Chinese female from Xinjiang, China	“American accent, beautiful, talented, the Walking VOA (Voice of America) in China.”	“Standard American pronunciation, good at expanding knowledge, classes are interesting and profound. Acclaimed as the Walking VOA (Voice of America) in China.”	More than 3 years’ teaching experience. Specialized in speaking English.
Kathy Huang	A Chinese female	“American accent, beautiful face and voice, meeting all demands, outgoing.”	“Good at identifying students’ needs, classes are well organized, integrates a diverse range of activities to engage students.”	4 years’ teaching experience., to share what’s going on with us in English...
Katarina	A white female from the UK	“UK, British accent, passionate, horoscopes lover.”	“Always brings in a cheerful vibe into class, good at discovering students’ interests and motivate students, full of charm, very sociable, experienced at giving public speeches.”	A degree in Business and Media Studies. Holds a TEFL qualification. A grammar mistake when speaking “I am born and raised in London...”
Ugo Marsilii	A White male	“American accent, designer, flat model.”	“Focuses on the practical use of language, a lot of body language and facial expressions, good at expanding on topics, good at guiding and encouraging students to express their opinions.”	One year’s teaching experience. Holds a TEFL Certificate and a TEFL Grammar Advisor Certificate. A still model.
Summary	• Nationality: 2 Chinese teachers; 7 White teachers (2 UK; 1 Australia; 1 Canada; 3 US) • Accent: 3 British accent; 6 American accent.			

Third, on the Boutique Public Class page of Likeshuo (<https://www.likeshuo.com/public>), there were 6 class videos featuring different teachers. I have dictated the transcripts of each video (see Appendix F Transcripts of 6 Boutique Public Classes at Likeshuo) and shall refer to these transcripts in a detailed analysis in Chapter 6. Below I briefly summarized the teachers’ information in Table 7. Each teacher had a short self-introduction text in Chinese originally (unless otherwise specified in the table), the teacher’s profile image, Chinese key words that were used by the website to summarize the teacher’s characteristics, and students’ comments about their classes, if any.

Table 7

Summary of Teacher Information in Boutique Public Classes on Likeshuo Website

Teacher	Profile Information	
Arsen	Profile Image	A White male
	Key Words	“American accent, silly but amusing type (<i>doubi xing</i> 逗比型), active classroom, English language.”
	Self Intro Text	“My name is Arsen. I grew up in the UK, I can speak multiple languages including Chinese. I am a multinational business CEO and marketing COO ...” (CEO and COO written in English original)
	Comments	Suzy (Student): “Can’t wait to see you[.]” (English original)
Teacher	Profile Information	
Nina Yang	Profile Image	A Chinese female in pink hair
	Key Words	None.
	Self Intro Text	“Hi I am Nina. I currently live in the ice-locked country of maple leaves, Canada. I graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a master’s degree of English language teaching. I got the TESOL certificate after graduating and have been teaching English for 4 years. My students are all over the world! I am good at phonetics, English pronunciation correction and word memorization. I speak English with the pure and authentic American accent~ if you want to experience Canada...”
	Comments	None.
Teacher	Profile Information	
Luke	Profile Image	A White male.
	Key Words	“British accent, UK, interactive, silly but amusing, energetic.”
	Self Intro Text	“I am Luke from the UK, I’m specialized in literature, travel, media and banking English. Characteristic is expanding knowledge.”
	Comments	Luke: “Thanks for a wonderful class, guys! Please leave a review.” (English original)
Teacher	Profile Information	
Matthew Allison	Profile Image	A White male
	Key Words	“American accent, silly but amusing type (<i>doubi xing</i> 逗比型), interactive, confidence booster, cute.”
	Self Intro Text	“I enjoy meeting new people and helping them improve their conversational skills. I spent most of my life traveling and getting to know different cultures. I have a degree in translations and am fluent in 6 languages. For the past several years I’ve been working on my teaching skills and ...” (English original) [Note: coming from Canada, as indicated in class video]
	Comments	None.
Teacher	Profile Information	
Kristy Hooper	Profile Image	
	Key Words	“American accent [Author note: Actually speaking in British accent]; Australia; Interactive; silly but amusing type (<i>doubi xing</i> 逗比型); energetic.”
	Self Intro Text	“I am Kristy from Australia. Good at teaching IELTS, law, and business English. Love music, love all my students.”
	Comments	Kristy Hooper: “Thank you everyone for your lovely feedback and comments. I am glad everyone enjoyed the lesson and learnt something. I can’t wait to see you all again soon.” (English original) Kristy Hooper: “What do you want to eat tonight – dumplings or pizza? Hot pot or hamburgers? Grab your favorite takeout food, be it Chinese or Western, and join me for our delicious Public Lesson this evening.” (English original)

Teacher	Profile Information	
Carrie Zhao	Profile Image	A Chinese female
	Key Words	“Emphasis on professionalism, beautiful, systematic, flexible.”
	Self Intro Text	“I am Carrie, an MTI graduate, good at making complex knowledge accessible, students make progress quickly. Acts speak louder than words, I bet you will make a lot of progress with me.”
	Comments	None.
Summary	4 White teachers, 2 Chinese teachers.	

Lastly, in the section called “Gorgeous Native Speakers Here!” on the Teacher Recruitment page (<https://www.likeshuo.com/recruit/teacher>), 3 teachers’ profiles were displayed but they were all featured in Table 6 already with exactly the same information.

In total, there were 31 English teachers featured on Lisheshuo website. They included 3 Chinese teachers and 28 White foreign teachers. These teachers were attached with the label of speaking in either British or American accent by the Lisheshuo website, regardless of their country origins. However, these labelling were given with a sense of randomness when the Australian female teacher, Kristal Hooper, was labeled as American accent but she was actually teaching and speaking in British accent in her class video. These public class videos were rich with regard the issue of accent, and this will be analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Omeida. The Omeida website featured teachers’ profiles in two places, namely the International Teachers page (<https://www.omeida.com/teacher/>) and the Premium Courses page (<https://www.omeida.com/course/>). Some of the teachers were repeatedly represented. Therefore, I summarized these teachers’ information all together in one table.

Table 8

Summary of Teacher Profiles on Omeida Website

Name	Skin Color	Gender	Nationality
Nick	White	Male	UK
Owen	White	Male	US
Leilei	Yellow	female	Chinese
Melissa	Yellow	female	Chinese
Emily	Yellow	female	Chinese
Maisie	Yellow	female	Chinese
Miranda	White	Female	UK

Hannes	White	Male	South Africa
Mila	Yellow	Female	Malaysia
Summary	4 White teachers (1 US, 1 South Africa, 2 UK). 5 Asian teachers (4 Chinese and 1 Malaysian)		

Spiiker. This website introduced three groups of teachers, foreign teachers, Chinese bilingual teachers and Study Managers (or Tutors). The volume of these teachers was extremely large, including more than 130 pages in total by the time of my data collection. Therefore, I described and summarized the information by text.

First, the Study Manager page (https://www.spiiker.com/sm_list.html) contained 14 pages of tutors. Each had a clear and professional profile, their name, strength, educational experience, teaching style and hobbies. These tutors were all Chinese, based on their profile images, but they all had only an English name.

Second, the Bilingual Teachers Page (https://www.spiiker.com/teachers_list/cn-page.html) There were 54 pages of teacher profiles. The information presented here included the teacher's name, positive feedback rate, teaching hours, years of teaching experience, strength aspect, teaching style, and a self-introduction audio. There were no profile pictures of these bilingual teachers, except few cases. But like the tutors, all Chinese teachers here were introduced with their English names such as Alice, Bella and Chris.

Third, the Foreign Teachers Page (https://www.spiiker.com/teachers_list/en-page.html) had a banner featuring predominantly White figures. This section displayed 77 pages of foreign teachers from Spiiker. The profile information displayed here included teacher's name, positive feedback rate, teaching hours, years of teaching experience, strength aspect, teaching style, and a self-introduction audio, some also had a recorded class audio sample attached. Among all the teacher profiles, there were only 53 attached with teachers' photos, and 51 of them were racialized White peoples, with the other 2 being Asians. I took the first five pages of teachers' audio recordings as sample and found that all of them spoke in American accent.

VIPKID. On the VIPKID Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class page (<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/vae>), a section displayed 4 teacher profiles, including 2 Chinese female teachers and 2 White female teachers. The title read, "Strictly Selected Teachers, Teaching Quality Trustworthy," and the subtitle further specified, "Chinese teachers are strictly

selected through six rounds of examinations" (VIPKID, 2021, Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class, n.p.). The basic information about each teacher displayed here included name, a professional profile picture, years of teaching experience, teaching qualifications and teaching product (jiaoxue chengguo 教学成果). With Chinese teachers, their alma maters were also included. Below I summarized the information in Table 9.

Table 9

Summary of Teacher Profiles on VIPKID Chinese Website

Name	Who	Experience	Degree(s)	Certificate(s)	Alma Mater(s)
Haoran Zhang	A Chinese female teacher	3 years	Bachelor's & master's degrees	National Teaching license	Xiamen University. Communication University of China
Elise Tedona	A White female teacher	10 years	Master of Educational Leadership and Policy	/	/
Si Chen	A Chinese female teacher	5 years	Bachelor's & master's degrees	National Teaching license	Shanghai University of Finance and Economics; Ohio State University
Louise Anne Walisser	A White female teacher	7 years	/	CELTA	/
Summary	2 White teachers, 2 Chinese teachers.				

On the VIPKID Teacher Recruitment site, there were three foreign teachers' testimonials about working at VIPKID. They contained diversity in their racial backgrounds, but their country origins were not specified. However, none of these representations was mentioned in the VIPKID Chinese website facing Chinese students and parents. I will come back to this point in Chapter 6. The teachers' profiles and testimonials were summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Summary of Teacher Profiles on VIPKID English Website

Name	Gender	Skin Color	Teaching Experience	Testimonial
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Hope	Female	White	14+ years	What I love most about VIPKID is that it gets to the teaching. The teacher in me finds so much joy in this job! I don't spend a lot of time grading papers. I don't have recess duty. I don't have the paperwork demands. I just teach. That's amazing! I also feel like my view of the world has matured and grown. This experience has made me a more well-rounded person.
Jeanette	Female	Hispanic	11+ years	I am first and foremost a teacher, and VIPKID is the most rewarding opportunity I have had as an educator. I am able to stay home with my daughter and continue to do what I love while impacting student's lives.
Willette	Female	Black	25+ years	I love the one-on-one connection between teachers and students. I have become very attached to many of my students and their families over the years! I also love that the curriculum is already developed, so all I have to do is bring my own 'magic' to the lessons.
Summary	1 Black teacher, 1 White teacher, 1 Hispanic teacher.			

In the next section, I describe the representations of human characters for promotional purposes on the ELT websites, which were predominantly White.

Physicality – Omnipresent White Characters

EF China. First, on the page of High Flyers of EF China website (http://www.ef.com.cn/englishfirst/kids/highflyers/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2), the banner was an image of a White male with a book and a pencil sitting next to a Chinese girl with a laptop in front of her. On her right side, a White female with headphones popped up from a conversation box which suggested that her name was Ms. Kelley. Both White figures were wearing a navy uniform with EF logo print and very likely that they were featured as EF teachers, with the male teaching in person and the female online. The Chinese little girl sat in the middle of the White teachers and looked straight into the camera with a lovely smile, while both the White teachers were attending to the student.

This offline-online teacher combination was further featured in a section called “EF Two-Wing English Program” with a subtitle which read, “Three essential advantages, creating a productive learning experience” (EF China, 2021, High Flyers, n.p.). It included three pairs of texts and images, with the texts reading the follows:

Offline and online foreign teachers, speaking confidently in pure accent: (the foreign teachers) hold TEFL certificates, bachelor's degree and above, and come from native English-speaking countries.

Offline and online synchronic materials, speeding up your study: the teaching materials are developed by an international professional team based on the CEFR framework, synchronizing offline and online teaching.

Study online and practice offline, choose the courses you like and practice frequently: the offline course helps enhance the knowledge and the online course instructs you to put them into use with the aid of foreign teachers. (EF China, 2021, High Flyers, n.p.)

The images accompanying these texts were sceneries from a promotional video. This promotional video split the screen into two halves, featuring a White male foreign teacher on the left half as the offline teacher, and a White female teacher on the right half as the online teacher. The scripts basically repeated the three texts above.

Moreover, on the page of the EF Frontrunner Program (http://www.ef.com.cn/english_first/kids/frontrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2), there was a promotional video which was more complex in terms of contexts and transcript. It was like a narrative of a Chinese high school girl and the whole script was in English original. I shall describe the details below.

The open scene featured a class of teenage students working on their textbooks individually. A White male teacher walked into the picture towards the Chinese female student sitting in the center.

Teacher (T henceforth, in American accent): How's that essay about your future coming along?

Student (S henceforth, in American accent): Oh, it's ok. I'm writing about palces I want to travel to.

T: Oh, that's great (taking a peek at student's writing). UK, huh?

S: Yes, I've always wanted to visit England. (English original, EF China, 2021, Frontrunner, n.p.)

In a second, the student is tranferred to the garden in front of the Buckingham Palace and is having tea with a grey haired lady who holds a corgy dog in her arms (see Figure 1). The old lady talks to her in the Queen's accent, "Splendid! Our country is filled with glorious history! Tea?"

The student, who is still holding her pen, replied in surprise, Eh, yes, thank you! And she reaches out her hand to grab the tea cup from the table. Their afternoon tea is set next to the vibrant flowers in front of the Buckingham Palace and the Queen Victoria Memorial statue.

Figure 1

Screenshot of the EF Frontrunner Program Promotional Video



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from [http://www.ef.com.cn/english first /kids/frontrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2](http://www.ef.com.cn/english_first/kids/frontrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2)

While deeply immersed in this dream, the student is brought back to reality by the teacher's voice: "You also want to see the coastline?" And she responded: "Oh, yes, I love the ocean and beaches." (English original, EF China, 2021, Frontrunner, n.p.)

The next moment, she travels to the golden coastline in Australia where a handsome young White male holding a surfing board greets to her in Australian accent: "Well, mate, for the

beaches and the oceans, there's no better place than Australia! Hands down [making a hand gesture, see Figure 2]!” (English original, EF China, 2021, Fronrunner, n.p.)

Looking a bit dazzled by this affectioning encounter, the student speaks in an infatuated manner, “Maybe I should try surfing” (English original, EF China, 2021, Fronrunner, n.p.).

Figure 2

Screenshots of the EF Fronrunner Program Promotional Video



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from [http://www.ef.com.cn/english first /kids/fronrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2](http://www.ef.com.cn/english_first/kids/fronrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2)

Then the teacher's voice cuts in, with a proud expression and a bragging tone: “Yeah, you know, it's a great sport. I used to surf a little bit when I was younger. You know, I used to hang in down back in the day.” Realizing he is a little bit too lost in his memory and a bit embarrassed, the teacher continues, “Anyway, I see that you wanna visit America as well.”

After the student replies, “Oh, I’d love to see New York.” She is then transferred to the Times Square in New York. An American White policeman, who talks in the New York street accent, greets her: “Hey, welcome to the Big Apple. Are you lost, miss? ” While talking, he takes out a donut and takes a bite of it (English original, EF China, 2021, Fronrunner, n.p.).

The student replies, “Kind of,” and looks around, not sure where she is (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Screenshots of the EF Fronrunner Program Promotional Video



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from [http://www.ef.com.cn/english first /kids/fronrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2](http://www.ef.com.cn/english_first/kids/fronrunner/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2)

The rest of the video was omitted due to its irrelevance. As the readers could see from the conversations and the screenshots, the destinations related to English communications included such locations as the UK, Australia and New York, and that these oral exchanges were between

the student and English speakers who were all White people. Particularly, this video implicitly indicated to the Chinese students like the main actress that if you command a good English, you would have beautiful encounters as she did in the narrative, including having tea with the Queen.

As way of summarizing, the foreign characters featured on the EF China website have been tabulated in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Representations of Foreign Characters on EF China Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	2 White females. 2 White males.	Students or peers of a Chinese male student.	Chatting while walking together on campus. With text “High school study abroad program.”
	1 White female.	As a graduate wearing a cape and hat.	Walking behind a Chinese female graduate in the same costume. With text “University study abroad program.”
High Flyers Program (7-9 years old)	1 White male. 1 White female.	The male as the offline teacher while the female as the online teacher	Image of the head banner.
	The same White female and male “duo-teachers combination” for another 3 times.		Promotional images.
Frontrunner Program (15-18 years old)	1 handsome White male speaking in Australian accent.	As a surfer from Australia.	Promotional video.
	1 White female. speaking in British/the Queen’s accent.	As the Queen of the UK.	
	1 White male speaking in American accent.	As a policeman on the New York Street.	
Summary	13 times of White characters.		

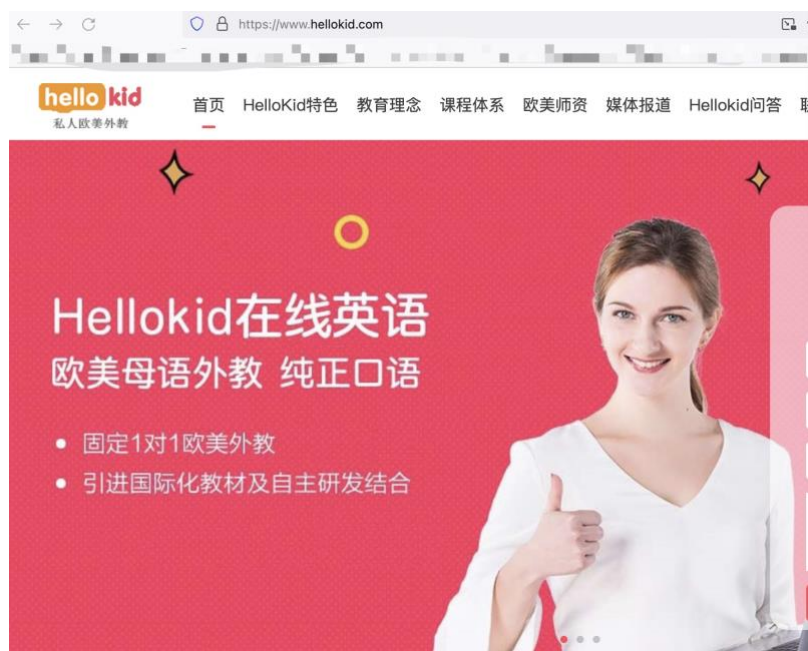
The prevalence of White images also saw its manifestation on other ELT websites.

Hellokid. First, on the head banner of the Hellokid homepage (<https://www.hellokid.com/>), there were two images of White females. The first one featured a White blonde female greeting the audience with a thumb up (see Figure 4 below). Without a particular context, she was in a white blouse and holding her laptop in the other hand.

Meanwhile, next to her, the texts suggested, “Hellokid Online English For Children,” which was followed by a text reading, “Euro-American native speaker (*muyu* 母语) foreign teachers, provide children with pure and authentic spoken English”. Under the slogan were two bullet points: “a) Fixed one-on-one Euro-American foreign teacher. b) Combining imported internationalized text materials and self-developed materials” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Based on personal observation and communications with professional translators, “native language” and “mother tongue” are used interchangeably to translate the Chinese term “*muyu* 母语” in scholarly context. And the Chinese word “*muyu zhe* 母语者” is commonly translated as “native speaker.”

Figure 4

The White Female on Hellokid Head Banner 1



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from: <https://www.Hellokid.com/>

The second one featured a blonde, White female in a nude color shirt and wears a backpack (see Figure 5 below). She is looking to her front right with a smile. A big slogan next to her said: “Self-developed based on international standard, connecting with the European and American education” (Hellokid, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.). A smaller text box again indicated the

role of this White female as a ‘native speaker’ foreign teacher by saying “ESL international English course, pure and authentic Euro-American native speaker foreign teachers” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Figure 5

The White Female on Hellokid Head Banner 2



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from: <https://www.Hellokid.com/>

Another appearance of a White figure was also on the homepage, where a text read “Hellokid persists on creating more kids’ English lessons trusted by parents” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Next to it was an outstanding image of a White female wearing headphones, who raised her head, her blue eyes looked straight at the audiences, and wore a mild and professional smile.

Then, on the bottom of the Hellokid homepage, the same White female in Figure 5 Hellokid was represented again in a section called “We Seriously Promise” (Hellokid, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.). And this time, she was making a thumb up with a bright and friendly smile to the audience, as if her existence was a guarantee of the services and products at Hellokid.

Furthermore, on the Curriculum page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/system/>) of Hellokid, a section was called “All-rounded Learning Circle, Aiding Productive Learning” which was explained “One-to-one foreign teachers, increasingly joyful as you learn” (Hellokid, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.). Here, a picture of a White female professional with a laptop was attached. One can indicate that this White female was suggested to illustrate the role of the one-to-one foreign teacher in the increasingly interesting learning process.

Additionally, there was a single appearance of a racialized Black male in one of the images on the Homepage. He was situated in a business discussion context together with a group of 3 other White people. Apart from this, there was no other places on the Hellokid website echoing this Black figure. As we shall see on the Omeida Language College website later, there was a similar representation of a single Black figure within a group, who remained “silent.”

The foreign characters featured on Hellokid website were summarized below.

Table 12

Representations of Foreign Characters on Hellokid Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	1 White female.	A European and American native speaker teacher.	Headbanner image with text “European and American native speaker teacher.”
	1 White female wearing a backpack	An “European and American native speaker teacher.”	Headbanner image with text “European and American native speaker teacher.”
	2 White males, 1 White female, 1 Black male.	An “European and American native speaker teacher.”	With text “Pure and Authentic European and American teachers.”
	1 White female.	An “European and American foreign teacher.”	With text “European and American foreign teachers who understand children better.”
	1 White female wearing a speaker.	Not specified.	With text, “Hellokid persists on creating more kids’ English lessons trusted by parents”
	1 White female.	A European and American native speaker teacher.	“We Seriously Promise” section.
Hellokid Specialty	1 White female.	Not specified.	With text, “Let China enjoy synchronized American and Canadian advanced courses.”
	1 White female on a tablet screen.	Not specified.	With text “Hellokid was the product of the era of technology and educational revolution.”
Curriculum	1 White female.	As a Foreign teacher.	With text “foreign teacher 1 to 1.”
Foreign Teaching Resource	1 White female.	“Selected Quality European and American native speaker foreign teacher.”	Head banner image.
	1 White female.	The foreign teacher.	The background image of the teacher profile section.
	1 White female.	The “academic instructor.”	In contrast to the Chinese females next to her labeled as “course consultants.”

Log in	1 White male on a tablet screen.	The foreign teacher	With text “Click to sign up for a free lesson.”
Summary	15 times of White characters, 1 time of a Black character.		

Likeshuo. On the top of the Likeshuo homepage (<https://www.likeshuo.com/general>), the banner featured a White male in a light-colored shirt (See Figure 6). He looked straight into the audience with a calm and friendly expression. He was wearing a pair of glasses with a black frame, which gave out a sense of intellectuality and maturity. To his left, there were four lines of texts. The most outstanding text was the second line in bold, situated at the center of the banner and precisely in line with the centre of the White male image, which read, “Selecting Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value (*gaoyanzhi* 高颜值, a popular Chinese term for attractive or gorgeous) from the globe” (Likeshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Above this line were two phrases containing two visually outstanding numbers, respectively 18+ course subjects and 5000+ topics. Lastly, the line on the bottom consisted of three phrases, in a smaller font and dark highlight, namely: “Choose freely, date gorgeously, talk immediately” (Likeshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Figure 6

Screenshot of the Banner of Likeshuo Adult English Homepage



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.likeshuo.com/general>

Then, on the Course Introduction page (<https://www.likeshuo.com/general/course>) of Likeshuo, there were a display of 22 course themes matched with images of different human characters situated in various contexts such as working, studying and traveling, to represent the themes. These images were likely employed from stock image resource sites, with professional

actors and choreography. All but 4 images featured White figures as protagonists. For example, the image of TOEIC Course depicted a blonde, White female in a white collared business suit in the CBD area. She raised her head towards the right-hand side of the image with a confident smile, her left hand holding a document under her arm and right hand a cup of coffee. It seemed to average audience of the website that she represented a successful white-collar. The low angle of this picture enhanced the figure of an upward-looking, strong and powerful female. Among the courses in this page, the three business-related courses were all illustrated with images of White males and females having business meetings. The same logic applies to all the 18 images featuring White protagonists as professionals (see Table 13 below), as if these were the only type of English speakers which English learners would communicate with in the future. The rest 4 pictures included 1 Chinese female doctor image for “Medical English” course, and 3 featuring no human characters. It is worth noting that despite the various themes of these courses, all the White figures represented in this section were successful people in business contexts, just like that White female. This example again indicated the prevalence of White figures spread all over the ELT websites.

Table 13 below summarizes all foreign characters represented on the Lishuo website.

Table 13

Representations of Foreign Characters on Lishuo Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	1 White male.	“High face value Euro-American foreign teacher.”	Head banner image.
	8 White females.	Actors in various contexts from business to travel, echoing the different themes within the curriculum.	Images to briefly demonstrate the courses available at Lishuo. Seen again on the Course Introduction page.
	2 White females, 1 White male.	All as teachers.	Featured on screenshots of the online learning platform to demonstrate the “High-face-value platform.”
Teaching Philosophy	1 White male wearing a pair of headphones.	“High-face-value Euro-American foreign teacher.”	Promotion for “High-face-value teachers.”
	1 White female lifting her arms triumphantly.	Not specified.	Promotions for the “General English program.”
	1 White male on a tablet screenshot.	As a teacher.	Promotion for “High-face-value platform.”

Course Introduction	1 White female 1 White male with a smile.	Two interlocutors, not specified.	“Adult speaking English” course.
	1 White female working on the laptop.	Working or studying in an office or study room.	“Day Day Up [English original]” course.
	1 White female holding a card and smiling at her laptop.	Not specified	“Adult Oral Card” course.
	1 successful White female in the CDB area with a coffee and a folder.	Not specified	“TOEIC Course.”
	1 White female on an airplane.	A flight attendant.	“Cabinet English” course.
	1 White female in a suit.	Not specified.	“Banking English” course.
	2 White females and 1 White male having coffee.	Businessmen having coffee.	“Beginner Business English” course.
	1 White male lecturing about some graphs.	A businessman.	“Advanced Business English” course.
	2 White males shaking hands, and 1 White female.	Businessmen.	“Complimentary Business English” course.
	1 White female looking at a map.	A traveller.	“Travel English” course.
	2 White males, 1 White female.	Businessmen.	“Vocational English” course.
	1 White male in a suit.	Not specified.	“Blockchain English” course.
	1 White female at the front desk.	A front desk server.	“Hotel English” course.
	1 White female holding some packages.	A logistics staff.	“Logistics English” course.
	1 White female in the flight attendant suit in front of an aircraft. 1 White male in black suit in the background.	A flight attendant and the captain.	“Flight Attendant English” course.
	1 White female in a suit sitting at desk and holding a pen.	An interview examiner.	“Interview English” course.
	1 White female wearing headphones and smiling at her laptop.	Not specified.	“Phonetics” course.
	1 White male working on the computer.	Not specified	“Social Media English” course.
	1 White male	As the “High face value, Euro-American foreign teacher.”	Cover image of all the 18 class video clips.
Summary	42 times of White characters.		

Omeida. One of the pictures on the head banner of Omeida homepage (<https://www.omeida.com>) depicted a view of a classroom discussion. The foreground featured a Chinese female smiling while talking with someone. In the background, though opaque, there

were three groups of two learners, one Chinese speaker and one White speaker, having conversations. The combination of one White speaker + Chinese speaker (s) was a repeated theme throughout the Omeida website. As can be seen from Table 14, there were 100 or so times of representing this combination. They all came from the visual promotions for the courses and programs, featuring the interactions between White foreigners and Chinese students in and outside of classrooms.

Elsewhere, on the Premium Courses (<https://www.omeida.com/course/>) page, the banner displayed a group of five Omeida teachers, including 1 Chinese female, 2 White females and 2 White males. This same image was represented on the International Teachers page (<https://www.omeida.com/teacher/>) as well (see Figure 7). One of the White males was positioned in the center of this image with his arms crossed, producing an authoritative gesture. This White male of the central position was represented again elsewhere on the website with significant meanings, I shall discuss next.

Figure 7

The Head Banner of the International Teachers Page of Omeida Website



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.omeida.com/teacher/>

As mentioned, the Omeida website represented many real-life scenarios of students taking lessons, going cycling and trekking, celebrating traditional festivals and other activities

with foreign teachers. The foreign teachers appeared in these contexts were predominantly White people. There was only one exception.

In a group photo used to promote the “Spring Festival Premium Program” (<https://www.omeida.com/course/spring-class/>), there were 1 Black figure (maybe also another Black male but whose face was half included, hence not counted), among the other 9 White figures and 8 Chinese figures (see Figure 8). Under this photo, a bold, large, white text said: “2022 Spring Festival Premium Program,” which was followed by a smaller text, “celebrating the New Year with foreign teachers” (Omeida, 2021, Spring Festival Premium Program, n.p.). This Black female figure was “silent,” however. In other words, she was not represented to “mean” something on this ELT website. Rather, she was just one of the many people at the Omeida Language College. By contrast, the images of White figures on this website were employed with a purpose, to say something about the program and they were meant to refer to the “foreign teachers from native-speaking countries” (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). just as the image which immediately followed this group picture on the same page.

As we can see on the lower part of Figure, a White male figure appeared on the left, and immediately next to him is a red, extra-large words in creative font, “Speak English!” (English original). On the right side, a few lines of smaller text read: “How do you spend the Spring Festival Holiday? Meeting friends? Visiting relatives? Travelling but stuck by the traffic? It is time to change! The same spring festival, a different way. In the new year, I will speak English!” (Omeida, 2021, Spring Festival Premium Program, n.p.). The visual effect of the large, red text here was so strong that no one could ignore it, and it was placed adjacent to the White male crossing arms with a solid, authoritative body language, it is hard for any readers not to associate him with the big “Speak English!” and the even bigger word “English!” Therefore, this White male image was a powerful announcement of the relationship between the White male and the word “English.” By contrast, the Black female in the first photo was just like a drop into the ocean, dissolved into the group.

Figure 8

Screenshot of a Part of the Omeida Spring Festival Program Page



Retrieved July 10, 2021 from <https://www.omeida.com/course/spring-class/>

Now, the foreign characters represented on Omeida website was summarized below.

Table 14

Representations of Foreign Characters on Omeida Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	3 White males	Foreign teachers and/language partners.	Headbanner image and promotion image for "Why Yangshuo & Omeida."
	1 White female celebrating Chinese New Year with local Chinese.	A Foreign teacher or language partner.	Promotion image for the "Spring Festival Class."
	1 White male.	A foreign tourist in Yangshuo.	Promotion image for "Why Yangshuo & Omeida."
	1 White female with speaker.	An Online English teacher.	Promotion image for the "Diamond VIP Course."

	10 White males, 2 White females.	Foreign teachers.	Featured in a collage of teachers with a text saying, “Taught by 30+ professional Chinese and foreign teachers.”
	1 White male, 1 White female.	Foreign teachers and/language partners.	
	1 White male.	A foreign teacher.	A classroom view of him teaching 5 Chinese students.
	1 White male.	A foreign teacher.	A classroom view of him instructing a few Chinese students, with text saying, “super-small class of less than 12 people.”
	1 White female.	A foreign teacher or language partner.	A view of this female playing a game with a Chinese student.
	1 White male.	A foreign teacher.	A classroom view of him teaching 4 Chinese students.
	1 White female.	An online teacher.	A promotion image for the online program.
	1 White male.	A Foreign teacher or language partner.	A promotion image of the “College Scenarios” section.
Diamond VIP Course	1 White female	A foreign teacher or language partner among a few Chinese students.	Headbanner image.
	1 White male making a thumb up.	A foreign teacher or language partner.	Promotional image for the section “Services at the Diamond VIP Course.”
	4 White males.	Foreign teachers and language partners.	Promotional images.
	1 White male	A Foreign teacher or language partner.	A promotional video
IELTS and TOEFL Courses	3 White males.	Foreign teachers and language partners.	Promotional images with the text “Multicultural, studying abroad without traveling overseas.”
Premium Winter Vacation Program for Teenagers	1 White female.	A foreign teacher.	A view of her teaching 2 Chinese students.
	1 White male, 2 White females.	Foreign teachers.	Photos of daily activities of this winter program.
Premium Summer Vacation Program for Teenagers	1 White female, 1 White male.	Foreign teachers.	Headbanner image of them teaching Chinese children.
	3 White females, 3 White males.	Foreign teachers.	Photos of daily teaching activities.
	5 White females, 8 White males.	Foreign teachers.	A group photo of all Chinese and foreign teachers at this summer program.
Spring Festival Premium English Camp	3 White females, 6 White males, 1 Black female.	Foreign teachers.	A group photo of Chinese and foreign teachers in the headbanner (see Figure 8).
	1 White male.	A foreign teacher.	An image attached with a bold text, “Speak English!” (Figure 8).
	2 White males.	Foreign teachers.	Photos of daily (teaching) activities.
	3 White females, 2 White males.	Foreign teachers or language partners.	A scene of these White figures making dumplings with Chinese people in celebrating the Spring Festival.
Fulltime English Program	4 White males. 1 White female.	Foreign teachers or language partners.	Photos of classrooms and outings.
International Teaching Resources	2 White males, 2 White females.	Foreign teachers.	A group photo of these White teachers and 1 Chinese teacher featured at the head banner (see Figure 7).

	(the same image appeared 4 times in total)		
Teaching Philosophy	1 White male.	A Foreign teacher.	Headbanner image of him communicating with a Chinese female, with a slogan “Learning English by using it [English original].”
	2 White males, 1 White female.	Foreign teachers	Photos of teaching activities.
	3 White males, 2 White females.	Language partners.	Photos of Chinese and foreigner language patterners.
Online English Program	1 White female	Not specified.	Head banner image.
Summary	109 times of White characters; 1 time of a Black character.		

Spiiker. On the Spiiker website, the representations of foreigners, i.e. non-Chinese characters, were dominated by racialized White characters. These White figures employed from stock image resource sites were situated in all sorts of daily and professional contexts. In total, White figures were represented for 30 times on the website, and below are some illustrative cases.

For example, on the head banner of the Spiiker homepage (<https://www.spiiker.com/>), where the profound experience and expertise of the organization was promoted through texts, the visual language featured a White male in suit and tie appearing on a laptop screen. This protagonist gazed directly into the audience’ eyes with a bright smile. The texts on the laptop screen read, “Spiiker Smart English” (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). When read together, the texts and this professional White male figure both contributed to and enhanced the impression about the professionalism and expertise of this ELT organization.

Meanwhile, still on the homepage, there was a floating banner on the bottom of the browser, which invited audience to apply for “a 1V1 lesson with Euro-American foreign teachers at no costs” (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). The image featured a White female in a white blouse (See Figure 9 below). Interestingly, although this was small-sized image in the corner of the web page, it is hard not to notice that this White female was exactly the same figure who appeared throughout the Hellokid website (see Figure 4).

Figure 9

Screenshot of the White Female on Spiiker Website



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.spiiker.com/>

Another typical example was on the Hotel Speaking English page (<https://www.spiiker.com/courseinfo/hotel-page.html>), where a young, charming White female dressed like a hotel waitress with a wine plate in her hand was matched with the large slogan, “Speak Native English to serve Distinguished Guest” (original text was mixed with Chinese and English: “用 Native 的英语 接待 Distinguished Guest” *yong Native de yingyu jiedai Distinguished Guest*).

In total, among all non-Chinese chracters (n=45), White figures were represented for 43 times on the Spiiker website, as summarized in the table Below.

Table 15

Representations of Foreign Characters on Spiiker Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	1 White male	As an English teacher	Paired with a Chinese female tutor
Curriculum Page	5 White males. 6 White females	As normal people in daily contexts	Featured on sample textbook covers
Cambridge Course	1 White female	Someone associated with “Cambridge English” and “Internationalized materials.”	Head banner image
Medical English Course	1 White female	As a doctor.	Head banner image
TOEFL Speaking English	1 White female	Someone associated with TOEFL test	Head banner image

Hotel Speaking English	1 White female	As a charming hotel waiter	Head banner image
IELTS Speaking English	1 White male.	Someone associated with IELTS test	Head banner image
Business English Training	1 older White male. 1 Black female. 1 younger White male.	The older White male at the center as the leader of a business team	Attached with text “Real person 1V1 foreign teacher.”
	1 White male. 1 White female	Colleagues in an office	Attached with text “Customized courses.”
Foreign Teachers Team	7 White females. 1 White male. 1 Asian female.	Portrayed as “Our foreign teachers’ team”	Head banner image
Learning System	1 White male	As a foreign teacher	Attached with text “(Your) exclusive teacher”
	1 White female	As a foreign teacher	Attached with text “Personalized VIP Course customization.”
Global Teaching Resources	1 White male	As a foreign teacher	Head banner, with slogan “Meet your exclusive foreign teacher here.”
	1 White male	As a fixed foreign teacher	Working on a laptop and paired with a Chinese female. With text “Fixed foreign teacher accompanying your study”
	1 White male	As a foreign teacher	Paired with three Chinese females as assisting roles to the foreign teacher.
Course Customization	3 White males. 6 White females.	White people in various learning contexts	Images used to promote the course customizations
Summary	43 White characters; 1 Asian character; 1 Black character.		

VIPKID. On the banner on the homepage (<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/>), the VIPKID logo was standing out in the largest font. On its top right, a dark blue bubble labeled out the target age group, three to five years old students. Underneath it was a text saying, “Inspire Love for Global Communication” (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). To the right of the texts, a White male with headphones in an orange shirt with the VIPKID label was greeting a little boy in yellow cartoon shirt (see Figure 10). Both characters were featured in a square shape that epitomizes computer screens. As the audience was guided by the slogan, these “computer screens” were meant to indicate the communication across screens and, the “global communication.” It is noticeable that here, the concept of the globe was represented by a White male.

Figure 10

Screenshot of VIPKID Homepage Head Banner



Retrieved July 10, 2021 from <https://www.vipkid.com.cn/>

Then, in a section called “Why You Should Study in VIPKID” on the homepage, one of the reasons was “70,000 strictly selected excellent North American foreign teachers” (VIPKID, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). The image depicted a crowd of foreigners working at VIPKID. Although the faces were tiny in the picture, it is easy for audience to identify several features of these foreigners: a) They were all White, b) they were likely the “North American foreign teachers” because they were all wearing the official orange shirt with VIPKID logo on it, and c) in this picture specifically, there were predominantly female teachers. Besides this group photo, in this section, there were three other pictures, each of which featuring one or two (a total of 4) White male figures either in discussion or interacting with Chinese children.

On the bottom of the homepage, a White female image was represented to accompany a textual content, “Our Promises,” in the same format as that of the Hellokid homepage.

And on the head banner of the VIPKID North American Foreign Teacher Class page (<https://www.VIPKID.com.cn/web/mc>), the White male figure once appeared on the Homepage banner was featured again as a foreign teacher. Likewise, the Curriculum Advantages (<https://www.VIPKID.com.cn/web/advantage>) page represented yet another White male figure wearing the orange shirt with VIPID logo on the head banner.

To summarize the human characters on VIPID website, White figures were represented for 10 times (including repeated characters but in different spots). In comparison, there was only

1 time where a Chinese figure was featured, and the Hispanic and Black female teachers only appeared on the English page but not the Chinese pages.

As mentioned in the previous theme, there were two appearances of non-White teachers being featured on the Teacher Recruitment page targeted at foreign teachers. For example, on the Teacher Requirement page (<https://www.vipkid.com/teach/teacher-requirements>), a horizontal banner featured a black female working on her laptop on which displayed the VIPKID teacher recruitment page. It is interesting that this time, at the center of this picture it was a Black female checking out the website featuring a White female teacher. Furthermore, VIPKID issued a statement of diversity and inclusion which was entitled “Our Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion” (<https://www.vipkid.com/diversity-and-inclusion>). However, none of these representations was mentioned in the VIPKID Chinese website facing Chinese students and parents. I will come back to this point in Chapter 6.

Table 16

Representations of Foreign Characters on VIPKID Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	1 White male in the orange shirt with VIPKID print.	A foreign teacher.	Headbanner image.
	31 White females in the VIPKID shirt	Foreign teachers.	A group photo with a text, “Strictly selecting 70,000 quality North American foreign teachers.”
	2 White males in the VIPKID shirt.	Foreign teachers.	Each of them was paired with a Chinese child.
	2 White males having a discussion.	Teaching and researching team.	Attached with a text, “Experienced internationalized research and teaching team.”
	1 White female in the VIPKID shirt.	A foreign teacher.	Featured in the section called “Our promises.”
Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class	1 White female.	A foreign teacher.	Paired with a Chinese male with a speaker on the head banner. A slogan said “VIPKID Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class
	1 White male.	A foreign teacher.	A promotion image for the “task-based teaching method” section.
North American teacher class	1 White male in the VIPKID shirt.	A foreign teacher teaching a Chinese child.	Head banner image.
Curriculum Advantages	1 White male in the VIPKID shirt.	A foreign teacher.	Head banner image.

North American Teaching Resource	1 White female in the VIPKID shirt. 4 White figures in the background.	The White female as a North American teacher.	Headbanner image with the slogan indicated, “North American foreign teachers, ...”
	2 White males, 1 White female (the same as that of the head banner).	VIPKID foreign teachers.	Promotional images for “pure and authentic foreign teachers.”
Teacher Recruitment [English page original]	1 White female.	A teacher candidate.	Appeared on the head banner as well as the promotional video.
	1 Black female.	A teacher candidate.	The cover of a promotional video, also featured in the video.
	1 Asian-looking female	A teacher candidate.	Featured in a banner of this page.
Teacher Pay [English page original]	1 Black female.	A teacher candidate.	The same figure mentioned above was featured on the head banner here.
	1 White male.	A teacher candidate.	Featured as remotely teaching a Chinese girl.
	1 Black female, 1 White female, 1 White male.	Teacher candidates.	In the section called “Raise your hand to teach with VIPKID [English original].”
Summary	53 times of White characters; 3 times of Black characters. 1 time of an Asian character.		

Next, I discuss a third aspect considering the representations of the physicality of the human figures on the ELT websites.

Physicality – High Face Value ‘Native Speakers’

Another prominent feature of the physicality of the ‘native speaker’ was “high face value.” Three of the ELT websites put forward this concept in the representations, Hellokid, Spiiker and Likeshuo.

Hellokid. On the Contact Us page of Hellokid (<https://www.hellokid.com/lxwm/>), the head banner was characterized by an extra-large text which read: “High Face Value Pure Euro-American Foreign Teachers with Certificates,” and a smaller text followed, “All foreign teachers come from English native speaking European and American countries and hold TESOL/TEFL certificates” (Hellokid, 2021, Contact Us, n.p.). Although there were no human faces represented on this page, the audience would already associate this text with the White figures represented on the other pages of Hellokid, particularly that White female on the Homepage headbanner, as mentioned above.

Spiiker. On the page promoting the “Adult Speaking English” program of Spiiker (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize6.html>), a slogan on the head banner said, “From Beginner

to Fluency, there is only a Spiiker missing.” This was followed by two lines of smaller texts, “High-face-value teachers, one-on-one online teaching, customizing your exclusive courses” (Spiiker, 2021, Adult Speaking English, n.p.). Meanwhile the image of this banner featured a White female on the left and a Chinese female wearing headphones on the right, who were both working on their laptops, and the texts were placed at the center between these two females. We could not yet precisely the “high face value teachers” was pinned down to which one, or both of these female figures. But the term appeared again on the Workplace English page (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize2.html>) in the text, “High face value Euro-American foreign teachers teach you authentic accent, speak English confidently!” (Spiiker, 2021, Workplace English, n.p.). Now, we would be clear that “high face value” was used to describe “Euro American foreign teachers” like the White female featured in the previous image.

Now, the Lisheshuo website representation were especially illuminating for the meaning of ‘high face value.’

Lisheshuo. To begin with, on Lisheshuo homepage (<https://www.lisheshuo.com>), the element of “High-face-value Euro-American foreign teachers” (Lisheshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.) was textually promoted as one of the major reasons that learners should choose Lisheshuo to learn English with. This was followed by the introduction text which stated: “(We) select Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value from around the globe, who have acquired professional teaching certificates and teaching experiences. This will make your learning process more joyful” (Lisheshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). This idea that “high face value foreign teachers’ could enhance the learning experience for students was emphasized on another page of Lisheshuo website.

On the Lisheshuo Teaching Philosophy page (<https://www.lisheshuo.com/general/philosophy>), one section was titled “Choose freely, Speak immediately,” where one statement was “Choose your teachers freely: Euro-American foreign teachers from around the world with high face value as well as Chinese teachers, choose whatever you like” (Lisheshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). Then, in a different section on the same page, “High Face Value, Fast Progress” (see Figure 11), the texts read: “Experience matters the most for online studies! At Lisheshuo, study is no longer boring but is something pleasing to both the eye and the mind. With joyful learning experience naturally comes fast progress” (Lisheshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). Then, three aspects of the high face

value were listed, respectively: “High Face Value Teachers, High Face Value Courses, and High Face Value Platform” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). These phrases were accompanied with images and more texts for audience to comprehend their meanings, as shown in the screenshot below.

Figure 11

Screenshot of the "High Face Value, Fast Progress" Section on Likeshuo Website



Retrieved July 10, 2021 from <https://www.likeshuo.com/general/philosophy>

Let me explain this screenshot. Regarding the High-face-value teachers, the illustration image represented a White male wearing a pair of headphones in a sky-blue shirt against a plain background. He was wearing a big smile; his hair was carefully stylized. And the caption for this image read: “We surpassed the agency and build up our own teacher recruitment and management team, selecting good-looking Euro-American foreign teachers from around the globe” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). The readers could easily associate this White male figure with the text “good-looking Euro-American foreign teachers.”

Similarly, regarding High-Face-Value Courses, the text addressed the appearance of the course slides, that “the research team not only guarantees the scientific rigor of the curriculum but also pays attention to the aesthetics of each slide” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). The image was a promotional flyer of their General English program, at its center was a White female in a coral-colored summer top sitting in front of her laptop on the street, wearing a pair of white headphones. Having a blast at her achievement, she lifted her arms triumphantly.

There was another text on the side of this picture which said: “Likeshuo, letting the world listen to you; Adult English courses” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). We could see two things happening in this representation, first, by placing a White female figure at the center of the promotion of the good-looking course slide, this act may imply that the White figure in itself is partially what contributed to the “high face value” of the course platform. Second, by adding the text “letting the world listen to you” to the White figure, one may assume that the potential listeners in “the world” were mostly White people like this female in the picture. This White figure was not only employed to represent a monolingual English speech community which students would enter in the future, but essentialized as “the world.”

In terms of the “High-face-value Platform” feature, the visually pleasing design of the online platform was demonstrated through a screenshot of the online application. Although it was a small sized profile image, readers could still tell that a White male in business shirt and tie was featured as the teacher giving this online lesson. As such, on the Likeshuo Teaching Philosophy page, the teacher, the course slides and the platform, all together, guaranteed a high face value experience for students. And the “high face value” of all these aspects has been closely associated or pinned downed with White figures.

Likewise, another section on the Likeshuo homepage also illustrated the “high face value” of the online platform. In this section titled “Intelligent Course Arrangement,” the illustration were three screenshots of the course slides. Each screenshot displayed the student profile, teacher profile, and course slides. While all three students were Chinese, my focus here was the teachers.

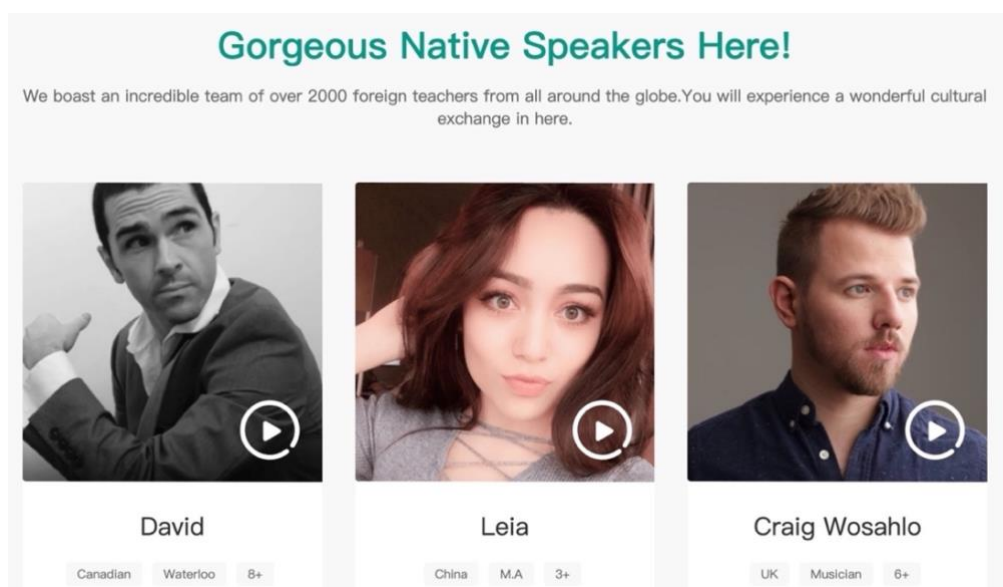
In the first screenshot, the teacher featured was Nick GC, with an avatar of a sporty, handsome White male in a tank shirt. The texts next to him suggested that he had three years of teaching experience, graduated from University of Sydney, and specialized at Adult English. In the second screenshot, the teacher profile depicted a black-and-white photography of a very fashion-forward looking, young, White female named Daria Malikova. In this profile, she did not look at the audience, instead, her eyes were closed, and her chin slightly raised, revealing only half of her face. Based on the texts, she had seven years of teaching experience with a degree from New York University. In the third screenshot, the teacher was named Mary Chen, a dark-haired female in tanned skin, wearing an American-style makeup (bronzer, contour, etc.). Similarly, this was not a professional profile but a fashionable portrait, revealing only half of her

face, while the other half was covered by her voluminous curly hair. The text indicated that she had been teaching for five years, held a degree from University of Edinburgh and taught adult students. In this section, the teachers were portrayed in refined photography that were rather polished and fashion-forward, connotating a sense that they were not normal people but more like celebrities or stars. At this point, readers are reminded of the previously mentioned text about Likeshuo's unique teacher assessment system, where teachers were assessed through both their physical looks and a monetary reward system exclusively operated by students. The word *gratuity*, (*dashang* 打赏), when used in the Chinese internet context, refers to the act of tipping by users, readers or audiences of online platforms such as blogs, short video platforms and live streaming on social media.

Two other places where “high face value foreign teachers” was emphasized and represented on the Teaching Resource page (<https://www.likeshuo.com/general/teacher>), as summarized above in Table 6, and on the English-only Teacher Recruitment page (<https://www.likeshuo.com/recruit/teacher>). At the bottom of this page, there was a section titled “Gorgeous Native Speakers Here!” (English original) With a subline reading: “We boast an incredible team of over 2000 foreign teachers from all around the globe. You will experience a wonderful cultural exchange in here” (English original) (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.). Then, it was attached with three teachers' profiles who were all represented above in Table 6. Note-worthy here is that the Chinese female teacher, Leia, was introduced together with two other White male teachers, David and Craig (See Figure 12). This is the first and only throughout the 8 ELT websites when a Chinese teacher is included in the ‘native speaker’ category. I shall further analyze this point in Chapter 6.

Figure 12

Gorgeous Native Speakers Here!" on Likeshuo Teacher Recruitment Page



Retrieved July 10, 2021 from <https://www.likeshuo.com/recruit/teacher>

In addition, there were some representations on Likeshuo website which seemed to imply a sense of romantic flavor. On the Course Introduction page of Likeshuo, a section contained 16 class video clips which all began with the same cover image of a handsome White male teacher wearing a pair of headphones in a light blue denim shirt (Figure 13). He was the same person featured in the “High Face Value, Fast Progress” section mentioned previously. He looked straight into the camera with a big smile. To the left of his chin were three lines of texts. On the top is the Chinese title of Likeshuo. In the middle were the two iconic phrases that could be seen almost on every page of the website: “High face-value, Euro-American foreign teachers.” On the bottom, the text read: “24 hours online, waiting for you to date” (Likeshuo, Course Introduction, n.p.). The word “date (*yue 约*)” here is ambiguous and can indicate a romantic flavor, making the online English class some sort of a romantic encounter.

Likewise, this reminded us of a scenery depicted in the EF frontrunner promotional video, where A female Chinese student dreamt about her travel to Australia and having an encounter with a handsome, White Australia male (Figure 2). This young male was apparently an attractive figure when he was in shorts and t-shirt and had wet hair, looked like he had just come

back to the beach from surfing, and the young Chinese female was a bit dazzled by this affectioning encounter. I shall explain this romantic flavour further in Chapter 6.

Figure 13

The White Male on the Video Cover of Lisheshuo Course Clips



Retrieved July 10, 2021 from <https://www.likeshuo.com/general/course>

The Issue of Accent

The ELT websites all put forward the idea of “the pure and authentic accent” along with promotions of their foreign teaching resource.

EF China. There was one example from the EF China which associated the pure English accent with the images of White “native speaker” foreign teachers. On the page of High Flyers (http://www.ef.com.cn/englishfirst/kids/highflyers/?itm_campaign=cn-funnel-v2), there was a section consisting of three pictures, each featuring a White male teacher on the left half of the image and a White female teacher popping out from a screen frame on the right half of the image. They were supposed to represent the offline and online teachers respectively. In one of these pictures, these White teachers both held a paper printed with “TEFL” (English original, short for Teaching English as Foreign Language), and a text accompanying this picture said, “Offline and online foreign teachers, speaking in pure accent confidently: (Foreign teachers) hold TEFL certificates, bachelor’s degree and above, and come from native English-speaking countries” (EF China, 2021, High Flyers, n.p.).

Hellokid. The Hellokid website was a typical example of establishing the correlations between ‘native speakers,’ pure and authentic accent, as well as predominant White figures in visual representations. The two images on headbanner of homepage of Hellokid (<https://www.hellokid.com/>) started off by proposing the pure and authentic accent. The first image was the White female figure in Figure 5 was put together with this text: “Euro-American native speaker (*muyu* 母语) foreign teachers, provide children with pure and authentic spoken English” as well as two bullet points: “a) fixed one-on-one Euro-American foreign teacher, b) combining imported internationalized text materials and self-developed materials” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). The second banner image featured a blonde, White female in a nude color shirt and wears a backpack. She is looking to her front right with a smile. A big slogan next to her read: “Self-developed based on international standard, connecting with the European and American education.” A smaller text box stated: “ESL international English course, pure and authentic Euro-American native speaker foreign teachers.” These two texts and images seemed to have set the tone of Hellokid website promotions already.

Following up, a section promoted the major advantages of the Hellokid organization, and “Pure and authentic European and American foreign teachers” (n.p.) was one of them. This was immediately followed by a smaller text, “Euro-American foreign teachers graduating from globally renowned universities with authentic and pure accent [*muyu fayin* 母语发音]” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). As such, the “pure and authentic European and American foreign teachers = pure and authentic English accent” equation has been set up.

Still on the homepage, there was a section titled, “Optimized Euro-American Foreign Teachers Who Understand Children Better.” Here, a profile of the same White female figure as in Figure 4, albeit in a different haircut, popped up from a cartoon computer screen (see Figure 14 below). Meanwhile, there were four text boxes accompanying this White figure. From top to bottom, left from right, they were respectively: “a) one-to-one fixed Euro-American foreign teachers; b) rich experiences, teaching with certificates; c) strictly selected, pure native accent; and d) the pass rate is only 5%” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Arguably this female figure was represented as the norm and standard of the European and American foreign teachers, and her physical appearance was associated with the type of “pure native accent.”

Figure 14

Screenshot of an Image on the Hellokid Homepage



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.Hellokid.com/>

Third, on the Euro-American Teaching Resource page of Hellokid page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/teachers/>), on the Euro-American Teaching Resource page of Hellokid, the first section explained “Why Do We Choose Only Euro-American foreign Teachers?” with four aspects of advantages, respectively:

- a) Pure and authentic accent (*chunzheng fayin* 纯正发音): Take advantage of the golden learning period, pure English context makes children acquire a fluent spoken language
- b) Multicultural: Integrating English knowledge into cultural contexts, Euro-American Foreign teachers bring about international perspectives.
- c) Educational Bridging: Advanced educational philosophy combined with quality teaching practices, Epitomizing the Euro-American educational essence.
- d) Global vision: Not only providing professional language teaching, but foreign teachers can also expose children to the world. (Hellokid, 2021, Euro-American Teaching Resource, n.p.)

Note here that in the second point, Hellokid essentialized its definition of multicultural as the perspectives brought about by European and American foreign teachers; in the third point, Hellokid equated the advanced educational philosophy with the Euro-American educational essence; and in the fourth point, equating the European and American foreign teachers with “the world” and the global vision. In another section on this page, audience were greeted again by the

same blonde, White female. The slogan on her left said: “Carefully select high quality Euro-American Native Speaking foreign Teachers; Pure foreign language context” (Hellokid, 2021, Euro-American Teaching Resource, n.p.).

Moreover, Hellokid also proposed that through training with ‘native speaker’ English teachers, students can acquire not only the English language fluency but “an English way of thinking.” On the Hellokid Specialty page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/character/>), a section introducing the Hellokid purposes suggested “Through American materials and pedagogies, (students) can not only listen, speak, read, and write in English, but cultivate an English-as-native-language way of thinking” (Hellokid, 2021, Hellokid Specialty, n.p.).

On its Teaching Philosophy page (<https://www.Hellokid.com/idea/>), Hellokid offered a synthesized text about its teaching philosophy as the following.

Systematic Learning System, Let Children Acquire Fluent Spoken English: Imitating native-language acquisition process; learning with Euro-American native English speakers; imitating standard pronunciations and authentic expressions; accumulating the expressions frequently used by European and American countries; making English a native-like language. (Hellokid, 2021, Hellokid Specialty, n.p.)

Omeida. When promoting the online program (<https://www.omeida.com/course/online/>), Omeida website put forward the major advantage of the foreign teachers, “Pure British and American foreign teachers Their spoken English is authentic and pure, with rich teaching experiences that guarantees the learning results” (n. p.).

Like that of Hellokid, Omeida also emphasized the English way of thinking as an ultimate goal of its English training programs. On the Premium Courses Page, a section about the public speech training program had a promotional text which said, “... It [this program] also helps students cultivate their passion for English learning and the English way of thinking, becoming an expert in public speech” (Omeida, 2021, Premium Courses, n.p.)!

Kuaiku. On the page of QQ English program on Kuaiku website, one Filipino teacher, Edward, was featured in the “Teacher Introduction” section. Teacher Edward paid specific emphasis on teaching students the standard pronunciation, because as he explained, this can remedy one’s grammar accuracy in standardized test such as IELTS (the International English Language Testing System) (QQ English, 2021, Teacher Introduction, n.p.).

Meanwhile, in the students' testimonials at Kuaiku, many students were concerned about the issue of accent in terms of choosing ELT organizations. This will be fully demonstrated in a later section of this chapter.

Spiiker. On the homepage, there was a banner featuring a star student of Spiiker, Xu Tianlongzi, who has another prominent identity, a world champion swimmer from China. Here, rather than a competitive athlete, Xu is now in an off-white formal suit and holds a tablet with a Spiiker engravement. She looks at the camera with a light smile with another hand flicking her hair. Next to her, the large text read: "Let the world listen to you. Pure and Authentic Speaking English, Fluent expressions, Promising future" (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Xu was representative of a successful English learner at Spiiker, indicting to the potential students and audience that you, too, can become successful like her, letting the world listen to your "pure and authentic speaking English."

On the Learning System page (<https://www.spiiker.com/custom.html>) of Spiiker website, one of the major advantages of the courses was this, "More authentic speaking English: high quality Euro-American foreign teachers, pure accent; native-speaker foreign teachers, rich teaching experiences; one-on-one foreign teachers correct pronunciations" (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.). And on the same page, one of the learning objectives was "Future vision," which was explained as "Learning foreign culture, cultivate a future vision, change ways of thinking and behaviors. Second, Authentic Expressions. And it is illustrated as: Speak fluent and authentic English, enrich your life and become confident" (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.).

On the page of Daily Speaking English (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize1.html>), the top banner featured a young Chinese girl who was pointing to the large font slogans next to her: "Systematically learn speaking English, empowering self-improvement, immediately switch into a fancy, Euro-American style as soon as you speak" (original: *Kaiko miaobian yangqi oumeifan' er* 开口秒变洋气欧美范儿, in which *yangqi* 洋气 literally means an ostentatious Western style, similar to fancy in daily context; and *oumeifan' er* 欧美范儿 refers to an Euro-American style) (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Speaking English, n.p.). And on the same page, there was an informative paragraph:

Want to improve your speaking English but without a direction and aimless, don't know where to start? Reciting vocabularies every day but still dare not open your mouth to express? Listening to BBC and VOA but still cannot understand? Recognize every word but become mute when trying to speak? Having practiced repeatedly but still speak Chinglish? (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Speaking English, n.p.)

Then, at the end of this list, a line of highlighted text suggested: “learn speaking English with one-on-one Spiiker foreign teachers, immersive language environment, enabling you to both comprehend and express!” (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Speaking English, n.p.)

The Workplace English page (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize2.html>) had a banner which features a White female in a business suit. Next to her the slogan read:

Daily routines of Working groups; Adding some poshness (*bi ge* 逼格) to your business oral English. A few texts in a smaller font follow, which read: Still worried about being watched and dare not speak English? There is the Western style speaking English (*yangqi oumeifan'er* 洋气欧美范儿)! Your boss's emails are too posh? How can newbies make a fancy comeback [*huali nixi* 华丽逆袭]? This is a circle, and learning is the only option! Let English become your workplace competency! (Spiiker, 2021, Workplace English, n.p.)

Similar textual expressions also appeared elsewhere on the website, for example, this sentence from the Hotel Speaking English program (<https://www.spiiker.com/courseinfo/hotel-page.html>), “Speak Native English to serve Distinguished Guest. (original text was mixed with Chinese and English: “用 Native 的英语 接待 Distinguished Guest, *yong Native de yingyu jiedai Distinguished Guest*” (Spiiker, 2021, Hotel Speaking English, n.p.). This code-mixing linguistic usage here in itself can be read as an attempt to demonstrate that a regular Chinese text could be elevated by adding some English linguistic elements, no matter if it makes grammatical sense or not.

On the page of Interview Speaking English (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize3.html>), a text first posed the challenges that an average interviewee might come across thanks to a lack of English competency, “Feeling even more worried when receiving an interview invitation, because ‘I’m fine, and you’ is the only sentence I can utter” (Spiiker, 2021, Speaking English, n.p.). And this came with an image depicting three Chinese people who seemed to be waiting for an interview. The text continued to read: “What to do with the tons of foreign company interview questions?” Then, in a following section on this page, the Spiiker website claimed to help

students tackle these challenges, and one of the strategies suggested, “Practicing oral English with Euro-American foreign teachers, correcting pronunciations, impress the interviewers with your authentic expressions” (Spiiker, 2021, Speaking English, n.p.)!

VIPKID. On the homepage, a section listed several reasons “Why You Should Study English in VIPKID,” among which there was “immersive teaching and a native-like learning environment” (VIPKID, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). This text was illustrated with a picture featuring a little girl with headphones who was paired with a white male teacher in an orange VIPKID t-shirt, both persons were making an OK hand gesture toward the camera.

On the VIPKID North American Foreign Teacher Class page (<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/mc>), a text stated that “High quality North American foreign teachers bring you authentic English language input. Highly interactive classes make students think more with more output” (VIPKID, 2021, North American Foreign Teacher Class, n.p.). Another text on the bottom of Curriculum Advantages page further complimented, “Immersive learning, imitating native-speaker learning environment: Children learn English in a native-like learning environment, picking up new language through practical applications, acquiring authentic English in a natural way” (VIPKID, 2021, Curriculum Advantages, n.p.).

Likeshuo. As mentioned earlier, Likeshuo explicitly included “high face value” as one of the recruitment criteria. Let us recall this statement on the Teaching Resource page of Likeshuo “Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value. Attracted by their appearances at first and ended up fallen for their talents. Selected high-face-value Euro-American foreign teachers will bring authentic American (British) ways of thinking to your lessons” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.). This text directly equated the “high face value” with the product of “authentic American/British ways of thinking.”

Meanwhile, when displaying the teachers’ profiles, Likeshuo website categorized all teachers’ accent into two exclusive types, either British or American, regardless of their country origins. However, one female teacher from Australia, Kristy Hooper, clarified in her recorded public class that she was teaching in British accent, but she was attached with the label “American accent” by the website. What’s more, in her class, there was a discussion about local Australian accent as not neutral enough to be used for teaching English, hence the teacher’s choice of British accent.

Speaking of local Australian accent, there was another example from the EF China website. In a promotional video for the Frontrunner program for 15-19 years old students, which featured an imagined encounter between the main character, a Chinese female high school student, and a young, handsome White male on the golden coastline in Australia. This young White male greeted her in the Australian accent, “Well, mate, for the beaches and the oceans, there’s no better place than Australia! Hands down (making a hand gesture, see Figure 2)!” [English original] (EF China, 2021, Frontrunner promotional video, n.p.).

Except for normal people in daily contexts, all the foreign teachers portrayed on the EF website spoke in either American or British accent. If the promotional video intended to demonstrate to Chinese students the future scenarios of the English speech community, including both the likelihood to have tea with the Queen and an encounter with a handsome young White guy on the Australian beach, then the fact that the Chinese student may come across the communicative ability with a person with Australian accent is contradictory/excluded by the target English accents (i.e. American and/or British) they were taught in the classroom. I shall come back to this point in Chapter 6.

Next, in contrast to the authentic and pure English accent, another category, Chinglish, was positioned as the opposite of the norm and ‘native English’ by the ELT websites.

About Chinglish

Many of the 8 ELT websites pointed out the dilemma of Chinese students learning English. That is, Chinese students study English for years without achieving fluency, especially regarding speaking English, a phenomenon which was called by some websites as “Mute English.” Meanwhile, in many areas, usable English is becoming (or was becoming) key for advancement. So, this is what the organizations are claiming to solve. For example, On Likeshuo homepage, the section “Why Choose Us” was explained with a text reading, “Especially designed for English application ability; Through immersive English contexts, students can get rid of Mute English and get command of truly practical oral competency” (Likeshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Other websites also had promotions as such.

Kuaiku. On the homepage of Kuaiku, the section which introduced the courses and programs was sub-titled as “Join Kuaiku, say goodbye to Mute English” (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). It is clear that the determination of Kuaiku was to terminate the Mute English phenomenon, as another text on the homepage stated, “... multi-nationally developed courses

integrated with advanced oral English theories, bringing the awkward Mute English era to an end” (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). It is almost a declaration that the awkward Mute English must be put an end when you joined Kuaiku. Then, when it comes to the core teaching method adopted by Kuaiku, Callan English, a pop-up text introduced further: “The learning method from London Callan English School, fast, intense, producing fluent oral expressions, getting rid of Chinglish mindset completely. Experimental statistics have proved the increased efficiency of the Callan method” (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Here, the “Chinglish mindset” was something that must be removed in light of the effective teaching method originated in London. Just as it was stressed again on the Educational Travel page of Kuaiku, which introduced the QQ English program (<https://cn.qqeng.net/>), where a text introduced, “Imported European-American course materials, exclusively authorized: “Mute English” cannot be solved without proper speaking English training” (Kuaiku, 2021, Study Abroad, n.p.).

Omeida. The Omeida website put forward a similar term to describe the incapability of fluent communication in English. Omeida post a series of questions on the Premium Courses page (<https://www.omeida.com/course/>).

Have you read all kinds of English textbooks, taken all kinds of training and online courses, but still cannot converse casually with foreigners? ... Come back to school and focus on studying, your excellent English is just around the corner!” (Omeida, 2021, Premium courses, n.p.)

On the homepage, a text stated, “Internationalized teaching resource, scientific curriculum, as well as well-rounded, wholesome instruction, help students to breakthrough their ‘Deaf and Dumb English’ and achieve success” (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Similar statements on Omeida wesbite appeared several times such as,

Dare not speak out your beginner English? Too occupied by business? Not effective after trying different methods? Want to give up to difficulties? No worries! Your English learning is on us! Omeida helps you break through the ‘Mute and Dumb English’! (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

On the Teaching Philosophy page (<https://www.omeida.com/idea/>), a slogan indicated “Omeida Specialty Teaching Helps You Conquer Mute English (*yaba yingyu* 哑巴英语!)” (Omeida, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.) It was also indicated that to master the English language means to “have a solid foundation, able to think in English and converse with

foreigners”; and that the English only environment at Omeida was precisely to “cultivate the English way of thinking” (Omeida, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). Therefore, the “English way of thinking” was positioned as a coping strategy for tackling “Mute English.”

Spiiker. Spiiker posed another term, “Chinglish,” in its website promotions. On the Foreign Trade Speaking English page of Spiiker website, there was a text listing a series of common problems confronted by people who are not good at English, including “Missed the opportunity to place an order because of non-standard inquiry responses in your emails?” and “Not able to communicate effectively with clients because of Chinglish?” (Spiiker, 2021, Foreign Trade Speaking English, n.p.). So, instead of “Mute” or “Dumb” English, Spiiker categorized them all under the bracket of “Chinglish.” And “Chinglish” was further equated with “non-standard” English, which can be a potential barrier to a successful career.

Accordingly, the advantages of this program was highlighted as precisely to help students achieve this. On the Learning System page of Spiiker, a section called “At Spiiker, You Will Learn,” was demonstrated as:

- a) A perfect accent: Native English-Speaking teachers from Euro-America help you get rid of Chinglish accent.
- b) a big vocabulary: learning a large number of words without memorizing.
- c) practical grammars: learn grammar well with ease.
- d) fluent speech: establishing an English way of thinking and speak fluently. (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.)

Likewise, on the Daily Oral English page of Spiiker, a text said, “Get authentic English expressions with ease, learning English is so easy” (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Oral English, n.p.). And the details of the “authentic English” included these components:

Getting command of pure English accent, get rid of pronunciation issues. B) Speak fluently in authentic English, not struggling with grammar and vocabulary. C) Getting command of common conversations, speak beautifully and confidently. (Foreign Trade Speaking English, Spiiker, 2021, n.p.)

51 Talk Adult English. On the Learning Philosophy page (<https://www.51talk.cn/index/feature>), 51 Talk also addressed the typical question that Chinese students confronted when learning English at schools, “How do you master the English language that you did not get command of after 16 years of learning at school?” The response that 51 Talk offered was this, “Pure foreign teachers, one-on-one interactive learning, make you immersed in

a pure English environment” (51 Talk Adult, 2021, Learning Philosophy, n.p.). It was further explained that “More than 30000 high quality foreign teachers from around the globe, carefully developed one-to-one online platform, provide you with a great learning condition” as well as “Pure foreign teachers provide you with an immersive native language environment and help you get rid of Chinglish and build up an English mindset” (51 Talk Adult, 2021, Learning Philosophy, n.p.). Therefore, like other ELT websites, the responding strategy offered by 51 Talk was also pinned down to eliminating Chinglish and replacing it with “an English mindset” through a “native language” immersion consisting of “pure foreign teachers” (51 Talk Adult, 2021, Learning Philosophy, n.p.).

Representations of Non-White People: Domestic Chinese Teachers

There were four websites which provided us the most prominent features of representing Chinese teachers within those ELT organizations, namely Hellokid, Spiiker, VIPID and Omeida. On these websites, Chinese teachers were most prevalently represented as assisting roles such as tutors and administrative representatives. I begin with the example from Hellokid.

Hellokid. On the European and American Teaching Resource page (<https://www.hellokid.com/teachers/>), the bottom section of this page introduced the tutor team of Hellokid. It was entitled “Professional Tutor Team, Escorting the English Learning” (Hellokid, 2021, European and American Teaching Resource, n.p.). It was indicated that the professional tutor team is to guard Children’s English learning process. It said, “At Hellokid, every kid has a fixed course consultant and an academic advisor, answering parents’ questions in a timely manner while optimizing the learning process based on periodical assessment results, enhancing learning performance” (Hellokid, 2021, European and American Teaching Resource, n.p.).

Below the text, there were two images (see Figure 15). The picture on the left representing two Chinese females with headphones was attached with a label “course consultant.” Meanwhile, the image on the right represented a blonde, White female in a professional suit, her right hand holding a pen like a magic wand what spelled out English words into the air. And she was labeled as an “academic advisor.”

Figure 15

Screenshot of "Course Consultant" and "Academic Advisor" on Hellokid Website



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.hellokid.com/teachers/>

Following up, Spiiker was especially illustrative on this point.

Spiiker. The Spiiker website introduced its “dual teachers teaching combination” as such, “Chinese teacher and foreign teachers joining efforts, Chinese teachers lay foundations for beginner learners, foreign teachers provide practical skills and training” (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). And this “joint effort” was aided with visual illustration as Figure 16 below.

From the image, we could understand that the “two teachers” in the “joint effort” were not attributed with equal positions hence power. Rather, this two-teacher formula was built based on the Chinese female teacher playing the assistant and tutor while the White male teacher being the teacher.

Figure 16

Screenshot of the White Teacher+Chinese Tutor Combo on Spiiker Homepage



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.spiiker.com/>

Meanwhile, in the last section of Global Teaching Resource page of Spiiker website (<https://www.spiiker.com/teachers.html>), there was an image featuring four teachers, and there were labels attached to them which showed up only when the mouse floated on them (Figure 17). From left to right, the first was a Chinese female wearing headphones who was labeled as “customer representative,” the second was a Chinese female labeled as “tutor.” The third was also a Chinese female labeled as a “bilingual teacher.” The last was a White male teacher with a pair of headphones who was labeled as “foreign teacher.” Next to this picture, some texts read: “There are bilingual teachers introducing you to the English language. There are also foreign teachers helping your progress along the way. And there are tutors keeping track of your learning. Do you still worry about your English?” (Spiiker, 2021, Global Teaching Resource, n.p.). Under the text was an orange button inviting the audience to “reserve a trial lesson immediately” (Spiiker, 2021, Global Teaching Resource, n.p.).

Figure 17

Screenshot of Four Types of Teachers on Spiiker Website



Retrieved July 10, 2021 from <https://www.spiiker.com/teachers.html>

As mentioned earlier, the Spiiker website also contained separate links to a full display of the three types of teachers. Here, I describe the visual representations on these pages. First, the Study Manager (tutor) page (https://www.spiiker.com/sm_list.html) had a head banner featuring 4 people, each of whom hiding their face behind a word card printed with a Chinese character, which, when put together, reads: “Study Manager” (Spiiker, 2021, Study Manager, n.p.). Second, the Bilingual Teachers Page (https://www.spiiker.com/teachers_list/cn-page.html) featured five elite-looking Chinese teachers on the top banner, all of which were in suits and looked professional and smart. Third, the Foreign Teachers Page (https://www.spiiker.com/teachers_list/en-page.html) had a banner featuring predominantly White figures wearing a bright smile, with only one Asian-looking female. At the center of this image was a blonde, White female, and the Asian-looking female was placed at the margin.

Additionally, Spiiker website also demonstrated the high standard for recruiting Chinese teachers. Even a position like tutor would require the Chinese candidate to have passed the most difficult English standardized test in China. On a page about the “Adult Speaking English” program (<https://www.spiiker.com/customize6.html>), there was a section titled “Chinese-Foreign Dual Teachers, Providing Authentic and Pure Speaking English Classes.” And the texts following up introduced three types of teachers as well as their respective responsibilities and professional benchmarks:

- A) The Chinese teacher: hold teaching certificates, standard pronunciation, correct students' pronunciations one by one, follow up students' progress.
- B) The fixed foreign teacher: Mostly coming from Euro-American English-speaking countries, authentic speaking English; teach in a relaxing and interactive way; good at spotting students' weaknesses and giving feedback specifically.
- C) Exclusive tutors: TEM-8 competency (TEM-8, short for Test for English Majors-Band 8, the most difficult English as a foreign language test for English majors in China), monitoring student progress and helping students make use of teaching materials, instructing students with correct learning methods. (Spiiker, 2021, Adult Speaking English, n. p.)

VIPKID took a similar position about the Chinese teachers as that of Spiiker, which I now turn to.

VIPKID. On the VIPKID Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class page (<https://www.vipkid.com.cn/web/vae>), a section called “Chinese and Foreign Teachers Teaching Collaboratively” was attached with a chart illustrating the roles and focuses of Chinese and foreign teachers. For Chinese teachers, the role was “to enhance the linguistic foundation and lay the basis of expressive ability” with key words “learning, knowledge, solid work” (VIPKID, 2021, Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class, n.p.). For foreign teachers, the responsibility was “to leverage the knowledge into practices and strengthen language applications” and they were described with key words “using, ability, authentic” (VIPKID, 2021, Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class, n.p.).

On another section on this page, there were some teacher profiles, including two Chinese female teachers and two White female teachers. The title reads, “Strictly Selected Teachers, Teaching Quality Trustworthy.” And the subtitle further specified, “Chinese teachers were strictly selected through 6 rounds of examinations” (VIPKID, 2021, Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class, n.p.). As mentioned earlier, in this section, the Chinese teachers were particularly identified with their alma maters in their profiles. The implications of this would be discussed further in the next chapter.

Omeida. Chinese teachers made a relatively greater appearance on the Omeida Language College website. There were 4 Chinese in the International Teachers page (<https://www.omeida.com/teacher/>). And on the homepage, there was a section in transparent light grey color which implicitly featured a collage of teacher profiles as the background of some

texts. Taking a closer look at the collage, there were 12 White foreign teachers and 18 Chinese teachers. The texts read: “30+ Professional Chinese and Foreign Teachers; foreign teachers mainly come from native English-speaking countries, they either hold teaching certificates or have rich teaching experience; Chinese teachers either have achieved bachelor’s degree or have overseas study experience” (Omeida, 2021, Homepage). This was the first and only time throughout my analysis where Chinese English teachers outnumbered (White) foreign teachers, but it was represented in a rather implicit way.

In general, the representations on Omeida website were still overwhelming attributed to White figures (109 times), and readers are reminded of the dominant position of the White male teacher in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

Representations of Non-White People: Two Philippines-Based Websites

51 Talk and Kuaiku were two organizations which represented predominantly Filipinos foreign teachers on their websites.

51 Talk. The head banner of the Foreign Teachers page (<https://www.51speaking.cn/index/teachers>) displayed three teachers and their self-introduction videos. This page also displayed a group of teachers’ profiles which included self-introduction videos as well. Based on these videos, the foreign teachers introduced here were all from the Philippines. In their videos, teachers talked about the basic information of themselves, such as name, alumni, and years of teaching experience, against a plain and neutral background. Other than the teachers’ own narratives, there were no extra descriptions attached to them by the website like Likeshuo did. After dictating all the videos and observing their profile images, the teachers’ information was summarized in the table below.

Table 17

Summary of Teacher Profiles on 51 Talk Adult English Website

Name	Years of Teaching	Gender	Accent	Ranking Stars
Ritch	5	female	American	5
Jon	2	male	American	5
Hazel	“A long time”. (English original)	female	American	5
Malrick	8	male	American	5
Paul	Not mentioned	male	American	4
Monica	1	female	American	4

Rolly	8	male	American	5
Alissa	More than 1 year	female	American	4
Josh	1	male	American	5
Kat	5	female	American	5
Marky	2	male	American	5
Nadine	3	female	American	5

Except for officially identified Filipino teachers, other images of human characters on the 51 Talk Adult English website were mostly representing Chinese people conducting various study activities, including 23 images in total. The rest images featuring foreign characters were summarized in Table 18. It is clearly a contrast with those ELT websites predominantly featuring White characters.

Table 18

Representations of Foreign Characters on 51 Talk Adult English Website

Where	Who	Presumed Role	Context
Homepage	1 Filipino male.	Not specified.	Attached with text “highly professional.”
Curriculum	1 Filipino male on the computer screen.	A teacher.	Aead banner image of a female having an online class.
Learning Philosophy	1 White female	Not specified.	A head banner image.
	1 Filipino female.	A teacher.	Attached with text “Pure foreign teachers.”
Learning System	1 Filipino female.	A teacher featured on the online learning interface.	A promotion image for “systematic learning.”
	1 White male.	Not specified.	A promotion image for “diverse supplementary courses.”
	1 Filipino male wearing a speaker.	A Teacher.	Matched with text “foreign teacher 1 to 1.”
Summary	2 times of White characters; 5 times of Filipino characters.		

Kuaiku. The representations of Kuaiku website had several features.

First, student centered visual language. On the Kuaiku homepage (<https://www.kuaikuenglish.com/>), The banner on the top of the page displayed motion pictures of three Asian actors, two females and one male, interacting on their computers through headphones. Audience can only see their expressions and gestures but barely the person whom

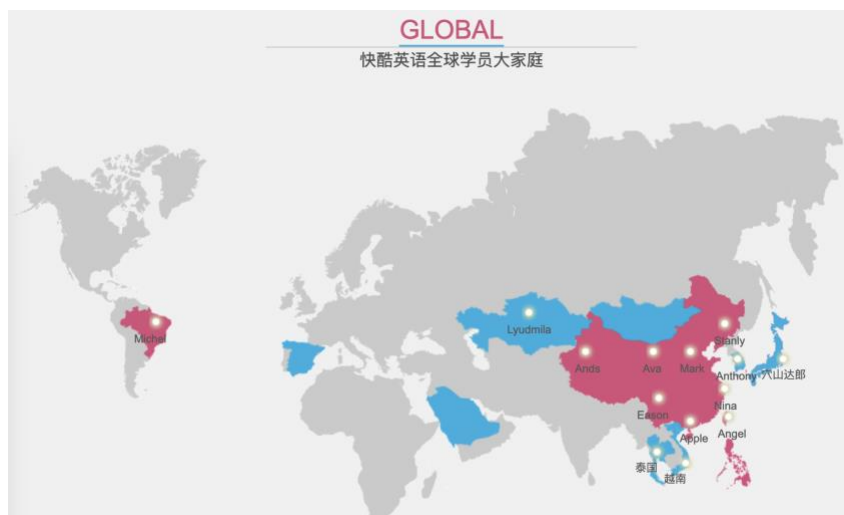
they were talking with on the other side of the screen. We would not have known what their roles were at first sight, but the big sized texts on the center of the banner told us as such, “China/Japan/Brazil/Russia/Thailand/Vietnam. The choice of English learners all over the world” (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Therefore, these Asian people were supposedly the learners of Kuaiku. Meanwhile, with these learners being the protagonists, the motion pictures only spent a brief moment capturing a female Filipino on one learner’s computer screen. It is hence implied that the subject concern of these promotions was the learners, in comparison to the central place of the foreign teachers as promoted on other ELT websites such as Likeshuo and Hellokid.

In one of the course introductions on the homepage, it defined the international nature of the program by saying, “An international school which you can attend without traveling, your classmates are from all over the world. More communications, expanded visions, yet more economic than one-on-one classes.” (n. p.). Here, it is the students from around the globe that was equated with “international” and “expanded visions.” By contrast, Hellokid projected this formula onto the European and American foreign teachers, as mentioned previously.

Second, Asian-centered representation of the World. There was a world map on the Kuaiku homepage (see Figure 18). It was entitled “GLOBAL” (English and capital original). Following up, as the subtitle in Chinese indicated, this world map demonstrated “The global family of Kuaiku students” (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.), highlighting the country origins of the learners.

Figure 18

Screenshot of the World Map on Kuaiku Homepage



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.kuaikuenglish.com/>

With a floating mouse, some of the pinpoints would pop up a short testimonial from the student, either in English or Chinese, as described and translated below:

Ands: (Uyghur, university student, female): “I was only able to deal with tests before my enrolment, and I was only talking the talk. After learning (with Kuaiku), I can orally express myself and apply English into practices. Both my pronunciation and grammar have improved” (Chinese original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Anthony (South Korea, worker, male): “I really like to attend my class. My teacher is very professional. Now I can feel that my English is better than before” (English original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Lyudmila (Hsakistan, worker, female): “It may seem hard at first but later, you will be astonished of how fast your progress is” (English original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Tatsuro Ketsusann (name in Chinese original, Japan, University student, male): “I couldn’t follow my teacher in the beginning. After five lessons, I gradually got used to it and it clicked. Improving your oral English in a short time, the Callan method used by Kuaiku is really nice!” (Chinese original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Angel (Taiwan, working, female): “the Callan Method emphasizes imitating the pace and tone of native speakers; therefore, the classes are really fast paced. The first lesson to me was a shock” (Chinese original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Nina (Shanghai, working, female): “After learning for one year, I feel that I have not only improved my business English, but I have made progress in other aspects” (Chinese original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Taya (Thailand, worker, female): “My teachers are very kind and friendly. The environment is very convenient for studying” (English original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Sophia (Vietnam, teenager, female): “Kuaiku English and what I learned here always will be a beautiful memory in my life journey” (English original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Michel: (Brazil, worker, male): “I started taking Callan Method online every day. I fall in love with studying English again” (English original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Apple (Canton, China, worker, female): “Online teaching is convenient in terms of both time and location. The teachers also take it seriously. It is an English-only environment. I have benefited a lot. Hope my English will improve even more” (Chinese original, Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

As such, the internationalized nature was illustrated by students’ backgrounds, rather than that of the foreign teachers. And this was also manifested elsewhere on Kuaiku through a text stating, “Diverse student nationalities: Students come from all around the world such as Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Thailand, and Russia. Chinese students take up only 15 percentage. The multi-nationality context opens a window of international communication for students” (Kuaiku, 2021, Foreign Teaching Resource, n.p.).

Among the 8 ELT websites within my investigation, apart from Kuaiku, Lisheshuo website also displayed a world map. By contrast to the world map offered by Kuaiku, however, the Lisheshuo world map represented a different perspective.

The Lisheshuo Teaching Resource Page (<https://www.lisheshuo.com/general/teacher>) displayed a world map titled “Lisheshuo Foreign Teacher Distribution Map” (See Figure 19 below) with a textual explanation, “Euro-American foreign teachers recruited from around the globe, every lesson is a conversation with the world” (Lisheshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.). As we could see, these following countries and regions were labeled out on the map: the UK, Europe, Canada, the US, and Australia, indicating the main areas where the Lisheshuo foreign teachers were from. This contrast would be further analyzed in Chapter 6.

Figure 19

Screenshot of Likeshuo Foreign Teacher Distribution Map



Retrieved July 10, 2021, from <https://www.likeshuo.com/general/teacher>

The third feature of Kuaiku website is predominantly representing Filipino teachers. For instance, there were 5 foreign teachers appearing on the homepage promotions (including the one briefly portrayed in the motion pictures in the banner), and they were all female Filipinos. And on the bottom of the homepage, there were one Filipino female featured in the “Full-time Qualified foreign teacher” section, and one Asian male featured in the “Convenient learning experience” section.

On the Foreign Teaching Resource page (https://www2.kuaikuenglish.com/pages/about_teacher.html), the head banner contained two images. The first image illustrated a Filipino female in front of a big black board. She was in a white shirt, smiling at the camera and holding a textbook in her hands. Behind her, on the black board, some texts were in hand-written font, reading: “The foreign teacher has something to say,” which was followed by three points: “a) English is our official language; b) We know better the second language acquisition regulations; and c) We are compassionate by nature and energetic in teaching” (Kuaiku, 2021, Foreign Teaching Recourse, n.p.). When combining the texts and the image, it is most likely that this female figure was precisely “the foreign teacher” in the text. The second image depicted the teaching scenes of three Filipino teachers, including two female teachers next to each other

working on their computers on the left side and a male teacher with an exaggerated facial expression to his screen. These visual and textual promotions proposed the advantages of second language learners as English teachers and this point has been emphasized several times throughout the Kuaiku website. Particularly, when introducing the educational travel program, QQ English, there was a few paragraphs narrating the lived experience of the CEO of QQ English, Raiko Fujioka (<https://cn.qqeng.net/spirit/>), who said explicitly,

I think Filipinos are the most successful English learners in the world. Precisely because they are passionate and are suitable for learning English, they know the methods of English learning well, and students may learn English better from Filipinos. QQ English has hired British lecturers to conduct TESOL training for Filipino teachers. All teachers at QQ English are long-term full-time workers with TESOL certificates. This guarantees the high quality of the teachers. (QQ English, 2021, Our Passion, n.p.)

Then, again, a text on a different spot of the QQ English page mentioned that,

Learn English with Filipino teachers with TESOL certificates ... it is precisely because English is not their native language, Filipinos know the secrets and methods of English language learning. It is fair to say that they are the most successful English learners in the world. After the foreign teachers pass the interview, they will go through training organized by Cambridge MBA trainers and professional English teachers. All foreign teachers have TESOL certificates, students can rest assured study with these professional English teachers. (QQ English, 2021, Our Passion, n.p.)

It needs to note that Kuaiku was still largely following the British/American English standard framework. For instance, the major teaching method, as mentioned on the homepage, was originated from England. And as I will show later, the Filipino teachers were acknowledged by Chinese students of their professionalism thanks to their standard American accent. However, the case of Kuaiku and 51 Talk have nonetheless offered a boundary moment in the representations in my analysis.

In this chapter, I have presented the thick descriptions of the 8 ELT websites of my investigation. In the following chapter, I shall present my analysis and findings based on the descriptions.

Chapter 6

Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, I further develop the critical discourse analysis based on the themes extracted in Chapter 5 which resulted in my major findings. In what follows, I first elaborate how the ELT organizations establish themselves as leaders of the profession, then I explicate representations of three categories of teachers portrayed on these websites as well as the attributes attached to them respectively. To illustrate each finding, I take excerpts from the thick description in the last chapter as examples.

Leader of the ELT Profession Speaking with Authority

To start with, these ELT organizations used texts and numbers to build up themselves as the leading role of the ELT field and constructed their professionalism and authority through exploiting European and American English language frameworks.

First, some introduced the long history of the organization's development to indicate their rich experience in English language education. For example:

EF China: Over the **past 50 years**, EF has become famous for opening the world to students. [English original]

EF China: Supported and served seven Olympic games since 1988 ... [English original]

Omeida: **20 years of experience** in ELT, we will take charge of your English learning all the way.

Decades of experience in English education first exhibits a professional impression on the audience. Especially, EF sold its role as the Official Language Training Services Exclusive Supplier of Beijing 2022 to promote its status and authority. Moreover, some organizations employed positive adjectives and nouns to enhance their unique status in the field of ELT. For instance, we can frequently come across these phrases listed below when reading through the description of the websites:

EF China: ... an **outstanding** English language training organization in China ... [English original] (EF China, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

EF China: ...a **globally renowned** private English language education organization... [English original] (EF China, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Omeida: **Trailblazer** of full-time English training. (Omeida, 2021, About Us, n.p.)

Omeida: ... always in **the front tier of** spoken English training profession. (Omeida, 2021, Premium Courses, n.p.)

Spiiker: **Unique Leader** in English study. (Spiiker, 2021, Course Customization, n.p.)

As such, every ELT organization tended to boast their leading role in or the trailblazing contribution to the profession. Then, commonly, the figures suggesting the school history were followed by numbers representing teaching resource and student groups, some examples from the thick description are as following:

Spiiker: **more than 3 million** students' choice, the number **increases by 300%** each year; **800,000** students have registered; **100 %** purely North American foreign teachers; and over **70,000** high quality teachers. (Spiiker, 2021, n.p.)

VipKid: **63** countries and regions of the world have our students; **over 800,000** paid students, **100%** purely North American foreign teachers, **over 70,000** quality teachers. (VIPKID, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Omeida: **20 years** of history, **30+** high quality foreign teachers, and **30,000 students** from all around the globe. (Omeida, 2021, About Us, n.p.)

51 Talk Adult English: **more than 30,000** high quality foreign teachers from around the globe are at your disposal; **more than 10 million** students have made incredible progress at 51 Talk! (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Foreign Teachers, n.p.)

However, these statistics are not easily verifiable because, as VIPKID indicated in a smaller text, the figures were retrieved from internal statistics which were not publicly accessible. These figures were usually placed at the most outstanding spots, such as immediately under the head banner of the homepage (e. g. 51 Talk Adult English, VIPKID), printed in bright colors and big fonts. They are among the first few things that jumped into audiences' sight when browsing the websites. Written in the form of a series of zeros, such as "800,000 students have registered" and "over 70,000 quality teachers," the digits can create a strong visual and mental effect on audience at first glance. Phrases like "the number increases by 300% each year" intensified the impression even more. Though the phenomenal increase may be explained by the speed and convenience of online platforms, one still cannot help but be amazed, or even astonished at the scale of the organization and an almost pyramid scheme growth of the number.

Moreover, ELT organizations would emphasize the specialty, high standard and professionalism of their curriculum through the lens of internationalization. Some examples included:

Omeida: **Internationalized** teaching resource, scientific curriculum, as well as well-rounded, wholesome instruction. (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Kuaiku: **Global professional** teaching and researching development team. (Kuaiku, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.)

Spiiker: Developed by **a global professional** teaching and researching team which has **over 10 years'** teaching experience. (Spiiker, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.)

As can be indicated from my thick description, no one organization has offered a true definition of internationalization, but this internationalized nature was pinned down by a series of European and American English language frameworks and standards, such as the examples below:

EF China: the teaching materials are developed by **an international professional team** based on **the CEFR framework**... (EF, 2021, High Flyers, n.p.)

Hellokid: The Hellokid curriculum is based on **American and Canadian education systems**, in line with the needs of Chinese students, connected with the Cambridge International Children's English system and **the CEFR framework** and in alignment with the **North American English level**. (Hellokid, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.)

Hellokid: Self-developed based on **international standard**, connecting with **the European and American education**. (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Spiiker: Expert teaching and researching team – linguistics graduates **from Europe and America**. (Spiiker, 2021, Business English, n.p.)

Meanwhile, in some cases, the effectiveness and productivity of the curriculum was promoted through downplaying the difficulty of learning English with the organizations. For example, the following excerpts from the thick description:

Spiiker: Refuse Rote Learning, It Is So Easy to Get Command of Speaking English. (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.)

51 Talk Adult English: Join in 51 Talk and everything becomes **so easy!** (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Homepage, n.p.).

Likeshuo: ... study is **no longer boring** but something pleasing... (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.)

They first framed the English language learning as difficult and challenging, usually by listing a series of problems that learners have frequently confronted, such as “not able to persist” and “too busy with work” (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.). Then, with a series of strategies that aimed at tackling these issues one by one, such as “making use of fragmented time” (Likeshuo, 2021, Learning Philosophy, n.p.), “study managers track progress all along” (Spiiker, 2021, Learning Philosophy, n.p.), as well as what Rivers (2011) calls a “fun and games” pedagogical style, the English learning has been transformed into something of an entertaining nature, a weight off students’ shoulders. Just as the slogan indicated, “Your English learning is on us!” (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.) as if it is not the students’ responsibility but totally that of the organizations.

Last but not least, the websites also indicated that such an effective and professional teaching can be available immediately, right here right now, through statements such as “Come and experience the 51 Talk learning philosophy right away” (51 Talk, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). Routinely, there were buttons on these websites suggesting that audience who are attracted by the promotions can instantly book a trial lesson for free at one click.

As such, through the employment of texts and numbers, these organizations rhetorically established an experienced and authoritative image within the ELT profession in China, whose internationalised resources and professionalism can be accessed immediately by anyone interested in and/or have stumbled on English learning before.

From the get-go, these ELT organizations have been speaking with an authorized voice from the authorized space of their official websites. In the remainder of this chapter, I will show, there were three categories of teachers being constructed on these ELT websites with this authoritative voice. I first demonstrate their common feature, which is that they are all selected through strict processes and high standards. I then illustrate the attributes to the three categories of teachers respectively.

Carefully Selected Teachers

Within my critical investigation of the 8 websites described in Chapter 5, the images of three categories of teachers gradually emerged. Respectively the categories are predominantly White foreign teachers (EF, Hellokid, Likeshuo, Omeida, Spiiker and VIPKID), then Filipino

foreign teachers (Kuaiku, 51 Talk) and local Chinese teachers (as represented on all 8 websites). Noteworthy is that none of the websites have offered a definition of the ‘native speaker,’ but ‘native speakers’ existed in between the portrayals of these teachers.

Before illustrating the attributes of three categories of teachers respectively, there is a common characteristic which runs through all 8 websites. That is, no matter their country of origin, foreign teachers were said to be carefully selected with strict standards from around the globe, and that they all held teaching certificates such as TEFL and TESOL and had rich experience in English teaching.

As we can see from the theme “General Claims about Teacher Qualifications” in Chapter 5, all 8 organizations emphasized that their teachers were equipped with international teaching certificates and had previous teaching experience. For instance, some textual promotions are as follows:

Spiiker: Strictly selected quality Euro-American teachers from around the world; Spiiker guarantees that foreign teachers are 100% from native-speaking countries; Spiiker retains only teachers with over 98% satisfaction.

... equipped with professional teacher certificates and rich teaching experiences; one-on-one teaching with foreign teachers makes learning more joyful. (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Likeshuo: (We) select highly attractive Euro-American foreign teachers from around the globe, who have acquired professional teaching certificates and have teaching experiences. This will make your learning process more joyful. (Likeshuo, 2021, European and North American Foreign Teachers, n.p.)

VIPKID: Strictly Selected Teachers, Trustworthy Teaching Quality. (VIPKID, 2021, Curriculum, n.p.)

Hellokid: Strict selection at each level, stringent recruitment standard. (Hellokid, 2021, Euro-American Teaching Resource, n.p.)

On top of the requirement about professional certificates, some websites also attached a process chart illustrating all the steps that a qualified teacher should go through to be recruited and keep their position in the organization. For example, Hellokid demonstrated a seven-step recruitment process on its website and claimed to keep only the top talents, evidencing the strictness of its recruitment system. Spiiker used a pyramid to demonstrate a total of ten steps of assessments before and after official employment, with an even higher threshold, keeping only

the top 2% talents. They involved complicated assessments and evaluations, to the degree that one can hardly imagine. Immediately, audience can even be surprised at how many barriers a prospective foreign teacher needs to get over. It looks like that the recruitment process of these organizations are just as they promised, strict, or even stringent.

Some of them (e.g., Kuaiku, Lishuo and Hellokid) would also display photocopies of the certificates on their webpages, in order to strengthen the reliability of the teachers' qualifications. Meanwhile, some websites included a special link for the recruitment page in English targeted at potential foreign candidates. For example, Lishuo and VIPKID both had an English page detailing the requirements for employment, and on their Chinese websites there were only brief statements like the ones listed above.

In a glimpse, with all these strategies of promoting the qualifications of the teachers, it seems that the ELT organizations in the current study pay much attention to the professional ability of the foreign teachers. However, things can become a little bit curious when we compare the website promotions (targeted at Chinese stakeholders) with the actual recruitment requirements (targeted at foreign teachers), which I shall explain in short.

In what follows, I elaborate the three categories of English teachers being represented on the 8 websites, respectively they are, European and North American foreign teachers, Filipino foreign teachers and local Chinese teachers.

European and North American Foreign Teachers

In this section, I analyze the representations of foreign teachers from Europe and North America on six ELT websites I have previously described in the thick description chapter, including EF China, Hellokid, Lishuo, Spiker, VIPKID and Omeida.

Flexible Criteria with Competitive Payment

Although among the 8 websites, only two have attached their recruitment requirements (Lishuo and VIPKID), they could still shed light on what kind of professional qualities the organizations look for on foreign teachers.

In terms of the employment criteria, in contrast to the promotions mentioned above, teaching certificates were not strictly required on either of the websites. The VIPKID teacher recruitment page did not mention it at all. And on Lishuo teacher recruitment page, as I have summarized in Chapter 5, there were four lines of courses that teachers could apply to, namely General, Junior, Overseas Test and Professionals (Table 1). All except the Overseas Test line

required applicants to be ‘native speakers’ first and foremost. However, none of the four lines put teaching certificates as priority. It was mentioned at last and not strictly required but considered as an asset, “TESOL or TEFL certificate, previous teaching experience or training experience is preferred” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.). The last two lines of courses did not mention certificates at all. Therefore, it is not impossible that the foreign teachers were recruited without professional corticates. As for the promotions previously analyzed, which boasted that all teachers are teaching certificates holders, one has reason to suspect that part of the teachers only gained their qualifications after being employed.

Moreover, the English teaching position was portrayed as an add-on of life but not a profession for most of the targeted foreign teachers. From the perspective of website layout, both Likeshuo and VIPKID websites put forward the bonus and benefits of the teaching position before listing recruitment requirements. With the case of Likeshuo, statements such as “earn extra money” “make new friends” and “get bonus rewards from students” (Likeshuo, 2021, n.p.) suggested that teaching English at Likeshuo is something that brings them extra income, including getting tips and monetary reward directly from students, and afforded a flexible schedule. Such comments directly indicated the attractive payment of these teaching positions.

Furthermore, these recruitment pages did not ask foreign ‘native speaker’ teachers for an English education degree, but that their expertise in other fields was considered an asset. It was clearly stated on the Likeshuo website that “rich experience in many different fields of industry is preferred” (Likeshuo, 2021, n. p.). As we saw in the thick description of Likeshuo website, many foreign teachers from Western origins mentioned that they have other major, full-time duties, such as the CEO of a company, opening a store or doing legal consultations. For example. In Table 6, these teachers being introduced in the “High Face Value Teaching Team” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.) section included a professional musician, a still model and a businessman. Most of them also indicated in their introductions that they have been living in an expat lifestyle, traveling for many years over different places. In the public class videos, the teachers were teaching from Turkey, Thailand and Cambodia, and many of them have been to China. One can assume that their multiple years of teaching experience as shown in the biographies is a result of many years teaching traveling around the globe while having other professional roles as their prime responsibility.

The rest of the criteria for employment on Lishuo and VIPKID also implied an attempt to reduce the burden for teachers as much as possible. For both VIPKID and Lishuo, teachers do not need to prepare lesson plans but teach along the materials which are already designed. VIPKID reasoned that “Our curriculum team has already designed materials for every class, so you don’t have to. Just one less thing for you to worry about” (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirements, n.p.). That is, teachers only needed to review the course slides beforehand and then teach along.

Although it is not explicitly stated on Lishuo website, in its public class recordings, it appeared many times that the teacher said something like, “it says here that”, “the PPT tells us that,” etc. (Full transcripts see Appendix F) The third-person perspective used by teachers to refer to the course slides suggested a distance from the speaker. In one class where Chinese and Western cuisines were compared, the White British male teacher, Luke Poulson, directly claimed, the PPT is wrong! Ruecker and Ives (2015) describe this phenomenon as a lack of professionalism. There is little academic effort required in a teaching position with a competitive pay. However, it is contradicting that on the Lishuo recruitment page, of the four types of courses, the third one about overseas tests, which was clearly targeted at Chinese teachers, indeed required candidates to be able to “provide a comprehensive curriculum and be able to engage in the teaching and research work” (Lishuo, 2021, n.p.). Here, both teaching and research ability are required, and the curriculum is also on the shoulder of the Chinese teachers. I will come back to this point shortly.

Most prominently, the online teaching platforms (e.g., Lishuo, VIPKID) emphasized that foreign teachers could have the complete ownership to their schedule. Lishuo required teachers to invest at least 30 hours per month, but at VIPKID, there was even no minimum hour commitment. As can be seen in the thick descriptions (see Table 2 for example), it was repeatedly stated by VIPKID that teachers can fully manage their schedule, with messages such as “You set your own schedule, you can teach as many hours as you like.” “VIPKID sets no limit on how much a teacher can teach - you have 100% control over your schedule” “Remember, you set your own schedule.” “You are your own boss,” and “The world is your oyster, and flexibility is one of the best perks when teaching with VIPKID.” “There is no commitment - you can work as much or as little as you’d like” (All English original, VIPKID, 2021, n.p.). In general, in the recruitment pages, this profession of ELT was depicted as something that did not require much

investment of energy or time and a field where teachers could enjoy a full autonomy of their schedule with little professional contribution.

At VIPKID, all the criteria for recruitment included, at least two years of teaching experience, legally eligible work authorizations in the US or Canada, as well as a 4-year degree from a university, but “great news is that this can be in any field or major” (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Recruitments, n.p.). Additionally, VIPKID made clear that teachers do not need to know Chinese to be employed, “Don’t speak Chinese? Not a problem. We offer full English immersion for our students, so there’s no need to know any Chinese. That said, your students might teach you a word or two” (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirement, n.p.). This statement had two indications. First, it framed the Chinese competency as not necessary for learning English as a foreign language, due to the English immersion learning style. However, in a few of course clips publicized by Lishuo, there were three courses which were taught by Chinese teachers, including two from the Boutique Public Classes page and one from the 18 Major Themes Class Review section of the Course Introduction page. These Chinese teachers all made use of Chinese to aid students’ learning experience which proved effective by students. For instance, in a public class taught by Carrie Zhao, a Chinese female teacher, some students commented in the middle of the class that they cannot fully comprehend her English-only class and asked for Chinese explanations. These examples showed that using Chinese as an aid of learning is useful and to some degree necessary for some beginner English learners. Not speaking students’ home language and promoting an immersive English learning environment can thus be read as discursively reducing the requirements for foreign English teachers in these organizations. Second, this statement also suggested that teachers can benefit more through this job. That is, not only do teachers take on an easy job, they also can acquire a new skill from it, namely learning Chinese. With the convenience of online teaching, the foreign teacher applicants “can almost teach from anywhere in the world,” “as long as you meet our basic requirements” (VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.) and that teachers can become their own boss regarding when, where and how much they want to teach.

In the case of Lishuo, as we could see in the thick description chapter, one teacher held a degree in Chinese literature from the renowned Nanjing University, and there were a few other foreign teachers who were familiar with China and Chinese culture. Some of them were able to utter a few Chinese phrases and words in their teaching to shorten the distance with the students.

One can even say that they are indeed highly qualified oral English teachers representing the ‘top tier standard’ in the ELT profession. However, this teaching opportunity seemed to overwhelmingly belong to racialized White teachers from European and American countries. I shall further illustrate the visual representations of teachers shortly.

Little to no commitment, great flexibility, no lesson plans, and no need to speak Chinese, plus a generous payment, anyone could sense that this is overall a plum job. This seems to contradict the seemingly stringent recruiting process presented on the Chinese pages of the ELT websites. With TESOL/TEFL certificates being only a preferred asset that was not strictly required, one cannot help but wonder if the certificates presented in teachers’ biographies was a result of packaging after their recruitment based on ‘native speaker’ status.

Pure, Authentic Spoken English, Neutral Accent

One of the characteristics of the foreign teachers is that they were represented to resemble a pure, authentic spoken English and a neutral, legitimate English accent which learners should aim at (The descriptions of websites in this respect were grouped under the theme “The Issue of Accent” in Chapter 5). This was indicated mostly through the promotional texts and slogans on the websites. Below are some examples.

In the thick description chapter, in the homepage section of Hellokid, the slogan on the top banner stated: “Euro-American native speaker foreign teachers provide children with pure and authentic spoken English” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). On the Omeida website, we could see that the promotion of ‘native-like English environment’ went hand in hand with its recruitment of foreign teachers. Towards the bottom of the page of its Children English Program, EF China presented an explicit equation of ‘native’ English speaking foreign teachers with a pure accent by stating: “Offline and online foreign teachers, speaking confidently in pure accent: (the foreign teachers) hold TEFL certificates, bachelor’s degrees and above, and come from native English-speaking countries” (EF China, 2021, High Flyers, n.p.). Likewise, the Spiiker website placed such slogans as “high quality Euro-American foreign teachers, pure accent;” and “native-speaker foreign teachers, more authentic speaking English” (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.) on outstanding spots.

Similarly, on its Curriculum Advantages page, as shown in the thick description chapter, VIPKID advanced that “High quality North American foreign teachers bring you authentic English language input” (VIPKID, 2021, North American Foreign Teacher Class, n.p.), as well

as a learning environment where “Children learn English in a native-like learning environment, picking up new language through practical applications, acquiring authentic English in a natural way” (VIPKID, 2021, Curriculum Advantages, n.p.).

The discussion about authentic and pure accent was especially exemplified through a few real class scenarios of Lishuo. On Lishuo website, all teachers were labeled as speaking either American or British accent, no matter where they were originally from. Here, the teacher profiles as summarized Chapter 5 were especially illustrative (see Table 7). For instance, Nina, a Chinese female teacher portrayed in the Boutique Public Classes section, wrote in her self-introduction that “I speak pure, authentic Standard American accent.” Likewise, in the case of another White male teacher, Matthew Allison, although he is originally from Canada, his speech was categorised as American accent by the website. Moreover, Kristy Hooper, a White Australian female teacher, was introduced as speaking in American accent on the website, whilst in her class, she actually taught English only in British accent (Full transcript see Appendix F). It looks like the Lishuo website was just randomly attributing either British or American accent to the teachers in their bios. In her recorded video, Kristy Hooper responded to a student’s (Lee. Li) comment on her accent as follows:

[Reading student’s comment] Lee, am I from the UK? You could feel my British accent. Actually, Lee, I’m not from the UK. Hahaha, I’m not [laughing]! But, if you detect British accent, that’s fine. I actually come from Australia. OK. Australia is my home country. OK. So, we do actually use the British English in Australia. (English original, Kristy Hooper from Lishuo, 2021, n.p.)

They also had a little discussion about English accents and ‘a neutral accent.’

Lee.Li: my colleagues in Melbourne have [**a**] **strong accent**...

Kristy Hooper: Alright. Uh, Lee, yes, your colleagues from Melbourne, they would have a strong accent, yeah. Um, I don’t use my Australian accent. I still can speak in the Australian accent, OK, but when I teach English, I don’t use it. it’s quite **a difficult accent to understand** when you’re learning English. So, I use more of **a neutral accent** when I teach. But very nice, Lee, thank you for that. (English original, Kristy Hooper from Lishuo, n. p. emphasis added)

Although everyone who speaks has an accent (Reagan, 2005), here, for both the teacher and the student, an Australia variation was regarded as strongly accented and “a difficult accent to understand,” whereas the British accent is considered neutral and legitimate for English

language teaching. As Reagan (2005) points out, judgements around accents are implicitly used to mark non membership of a community. In this case, when the student, Lee, commented on the heavy accent of Australian English, Kristy Hooper, as a White female teacher, did not deny but gave tacit consent to this idea. She further positioned the British accent as neutral, which contributed to and reproduced the marginalization of other accent varieties. In other words, the Australian accent was marked as deviant from the British accent norm.

As shown in the class video clips (see transcripts in Appendix F), Chinese students paid great attention to the accent and pronunciation of teachers in evaluating their teaching competency. The ELT platforms who claimed to employ only European and North American foreign teachers were precisely promoting these teachers' pure, authentic accent as their privilege, to cater to students' demands. As I will elaborate later in the analysis of Kuaiku, a Philippines-based ELT organization, students who signed up for English programs in the Philippines tended to hold doubts about the pronunciation of Filipino teachers. And even after testifying to the American accent spoken by their Filipino teachers, some students still expected to have teachers from England, so that they could learn British accent from them. As such, the learning of English language seemed to be morphed into pursuit of a specific type of accent.

At Lishuo, students also showed a strong interest in the 'standard accent' and acknowledged the legitimacy of British and American accents with a slight preference for British accent. In the video of Arsen's public class (see transcripts in Appendix F), students also expressed their perceptions about English accents. See below Arsen's comments:

Arsen: [reading students' comments] You speak American English, why you speak American English? ... Uh, why do I speak American English? Because I lived in California for most of my life. That is why. [switching to British accent] If you prefer [pronounced as /prɪ'fɜ:/] me to speak in British accent, I can do that as well. It's not a problem at all for me. Yes, totally fine, not a problem. OR, if you prefer the Russian accent, as some people here, then, you know, talk about Russia, about other countries, I can do that as well [imitating a stereotypical Russian accent, stressing the rolling tongued 'r' sound].

[Students commenting on his accent imitation].

Elle. Li: So funny.

Helen: Prefer British accent.

Lisa. Zhang: Prefer British English too.

Arsen [reading comments in British accent]: Prefer British accent. Okay, so, I'm gonna mix those accents throughout the class, because this class is designed to help you with your listening, ok? (English original, Arsen from Limeshuo, 2021, n.p.)

We could see from these two excerpts that, first, the Chinese students had a fixed perception which associated an English accent with a particular region. For example, when teacher Arsen, whose profile suggested he came from the UK, spoke in a standard American accent in class, students would have the question as 'Why [do] you speak American English?'

Second, the Chinese students in this case demonstrated a preference for British accent over American accent. When Arsen said that he managed both (British and American) accents and switched to a British accent, one student, Helen, commented that she preferred British accent, which was echoed by another student, Lisa Zhang. Although Arsen inserted the importance of listening to different accents to improve students' listening skills during this discussion, there was no follow-up on this point in the rest of this class, and the 'mixed accents' referred to only American and British accents. Whilst a stereotypical Russian accent was also put forward through imitation, Arsen did this imitation in a comical manner, which was indeed confirmed of its entertaining effect by another student with the comment: "So funny." And in a later episode where Arsen talked about Vodka and his visit to Russia, he mimicked the 'Russian accent' again in an exaggerated tone:

I have a very high tolerance for alcohol ... I never get drunk. [Switched to Russian accent with stressed 'r' sound] even when I go to Russia, my Russian friends tell me, Arsen, drink [stressed 'r' sound] Vodka, yes, it's good [stressed /ʊ/]. And I say, no, it's not good, I can't handle that. (English original, Arsen from Limeshuo, 2021, n.p.)

This anecdote delivered in a 'Russian accent' contained some degree of randomness and was not intended for pedagogical purposes, due to its self-contradictory nature and the fact that Arsen was quickly coming up with an example to explain the vocabulary, alcohol, on the course material. Arsen first boasted that he never gets drunk but then he said that Vodka is above his alcohol tolerance. And the focus of this speech was just to mimic the stressed 'r' sound and a rough voice, the perceived features of Russian speech, in a narrative that took place in a Russian context. We can see from the two excerpts that British and American accents were the legitimate

variations of English that can be used for formal purpose, whilst other diverse accent varieties were deemed to create a comedic effect.

The act of connecting one type of accent with a specific region was echoed elsewhere in the Frontrunner Program promotional video on EF China website. Based on the transcript of this video offered in the thick description chapter, we can see, this EF China video essentialized a type of English with a specific way of expression, such as Australia with ‘How are you, mate.’ Meanwhile, in this promotional video featuring the imagined English communications between a Chinese high school student and different English speakers, this expression was spoken by a local Australian White male in Australian accent. Whereas on the EF China website, all the teachers represented in real class video clips were speaking in either British or American accent, but no Australian accent (see Table 3). This could be read as another example of marginalizing the Australian accent as a speech for informal, colloquial contexts but not formal contexts, especially not as a model for English language teaching.

Coming back to Lishuo website, below is another place where Arsen dealt with the accent issue.

[Responding to one student comment] You want to see my maximum speed. [Switching to British accent and talking really fast] OK. No problem. That’s totally OK. This is basically the way I talk to my wife, most of the time I talk to my wife like this, and she can clearly understand me. I’m just mumbling. I speak pretty fast in my normal life. People can’t understand me, actually. Yeah, especially if I speak in my British accent. Yeah, say, you know, if I’m trying to imitate my British accent, go back to my British accent... speaking quickly with my British accent, it’s totally messed up. I just sound I’m not from London, I just sound I’m from midlands. Sorry. (English original, Arsen from Lishuo, 2021, n.p.)

In this intense, fast speech, Arsen was indeed, just like he said, mumbling, and listeners could hardly follow him. What is curious is his ending remark, “... speaking quickly with my British accent, it’s totally messed up. I just sound I’m not from London, I just sound I’m from Midlands.” Although this was an informal and random speech, this comment still indicated the equivalent of British accent with London and a ‘messed up’ speech with midlands of England. Underlying this comment was actually a hierarchy of accents from different geographical contexts, where the British accent spoken in London was the superior and the accents from other areas of the UK was incomprehensible and almost ineffective.

Furthermore, in contrast with the authentic English and standard accent represented by ‘native’ foreign teachers, there was another variety, Chinglish, being represented on the ELT websites. And Chinglish was undoubtedly being refuted of legitimacy. First, let us look at the following statements taken from the thick description chapter:

A perfect accent: Native English-Speaking teachers from Euro-America help you **get rid of Chinglish accent**. (Spiiker, 2021, Learning System, n.p.)

Having practiced repeatedly but still speak Chinglish? ... Missed the opportunity to place an order because of **non-standard** inquiry responses in your emails? ... Not able to communicate effectively with clients because of Chinglish? (Spiiker, 2021, Foreign Trade Speaking English, n.p.)

Pure foreign teachers provide you with an immersive native language environment and help you **get rid of Chinglish** and build up an English mindset. (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Learning Philosophy, n.p.)

The learning method from London Callan English School, fast, intense, producing fluent oral expressions, **getting rid of Chinglish mindset** completely. (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Here, the unified use of the term “get rid of” in all of the three excerpts explicitly declared the intolerance of Chinglish. Regardless of the precise definition of Chinglish, everything that could possibly relate to it was already condemned as unacceptable, be it an accent or a mindset of speaking English. Meanwhile, Chinglish had its twin sister on the websites, “Mute English” (*yaba yingyu* 哑巴英语) or “Deaf and Dumb English” (*longya yingyu* 聋哑英语). For example:

Especially designed for English application ability. Through immersive English contexts, students can **get rid of Mute English** and get command of truly practical oral competency. (Likeshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Join Kuaiku, **say goodbye to Mute English**. (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

... Multi-nationally developed courses integrated with advanced oral English theories, **bringing the awkward Mute English era to an end**. (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Internationalized teaching resource, scientific curriculum, as well as well-rounded, wholesome instruction, help students to **break through their ‘Deaf and Dumb English’** and achieve success. (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Omeida helps you **break through the ‘Deaf and Dumb English’!** (Omeida, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)

Omeida Specialty Teaching Helps You **Conquer Mute English!** (Omeida, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.)

From the series of quotes above, we could see that like Chinglish, Mute English was also something to be abandoned. These terms were all referring to the dilemma of Chinese students learning English for multiple years without achieving communicative fluency, especially English speaking and listening comprehension, in real life contexts. Chinglish was referring to an accent and a way of thinking which were “awkward,” nothing like the “truly practical oral competency.” It was considered “non-standard” and unintelligible, which potentially caused failure in one’s career, almost a demon that needed to be conquered and put to an end.

And the coping strategies for battling against and eventually removing Chinglish and Mute English was by the savior ‘native speaker’ and ‘pure’ foreign teachers from European and American countries. These foreign teachers bring along with them “immersive English contexts” which could result in “authentic English expressions with ease ” (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Oral English, n.p.).

The Chinglish accent, or Chinese way of talking, as opposed to the pure, authentic accent and an English way of thinking, is a binary throughout the investigation of the 8 websites. Moreover, beyond simply reference to language fluency as a variant from the standard English norms, Chinglish on these websites was associated with a symbolic value that was considered impoverished and low-profile. By contrast, the authentic and ‘native’ accent was seen to signal a sense of superiority. In this sense, the label of Chinglish is more like an ideological judgement on whose English is more appropriate and privileged along the social ladder and whose is not. This devaluation of Chinglish manifested itself more exhaustively on the Spiiker website.

Traveling around the globe with speaking English, you are already **posh without pretences**. (Spiiker, 2021, Travel Speaking English, n.p.)

Add some ‘**poshness**’ (*bige 逼格*) to my business speaking English ... How can newbies make a fancy comeback (*huali nixi 华丽逆袭*)? This is a circle, and learning is the only option! Let English become my workplace competency. (Spiiker, 2021, Workplace Speaking English, n.p.)

Systematically learn speaking English ... immediately switch into **a fancy, Euro-American style** when you speak (original Chinese reads: *Kaiko miaobian yangqi oumeifan'er* 开口秒变洋气欧美范儿, in which 洋气 *yangqi* literally means an ostentatious Western style, similar to fancy in daily context; and *oumeifan'er* 欧美范儿 refers to a Euro-American style). (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Speaking English, n.p.)

Hotel English: Speak **Native** English to serve **Distinguished Guests** (original text was mixed with Chinese and English: “用 Native 的英语, 接待 Distinguished Guest,” *yong Native de yingyu jiedai Distinguished Guest.*). (Spiiker, 2021, Hotel English, n.p.)

These slogans put forth some equations about the English language. The first one equated the act of speaking English with being genuinely posh without pretences; the second one suggested that English skills can increase one's career prospect, enabling a novice to reverse its disadvantage in the 'circle.' The third one once again linked the Euro-American English with fanciness. The 'native accent,' typically that of the Western, European American style, therefore embodied great social capital which exclusively belongs to the elite class worldwide. And the last one used code-mixing to associate 'native English' with 'distinguished guest' in a service context, indicating that only the 'native English' deserves to serve a distinguished guest. Moreover, this code-mixing linguistic usage here in itself can be read as an attempt to demonstrate that a regular Chinese text could be elevated by mixing with some English linguistic elements, no matter whether it makes grammatical sense or not. One could still go one step further, not only the pure existence of English words has signified the distinctiveness of the speaker, but the 'nativeness' in using these English words has further enhanced the superior status of the speaker.

To conclude this section, by reviewing and re-examining the statements and excerpts from the thick description chapter, we can see that the ELT websites represented 'native speakers' as owners of a pure, authentic and neutral accent which was exclusively categorized into either British or American accent. These two types of accents were the standard and model against which other varieties are measured and thus marked as 'accented.' The ELT organizations promoted these accents as a way of catering to the students' desire, turning the English language learning into a desire for the native accent. Interestingly, and as I shall also mention in the next section, while Australia was included as an English native-speaking country, the Australian accent was only acceptable in colloquial contexts but not taken as a model for English language teaching. What's more, the authentic accents and the European American

‘native speakers’ were attributed with the role of the “savor” of a deviant and deficient category, Chinglish. On the ELT websites, while this vague concept of Chinglish and Mute English were deemed as a failure of English learning, the ‘native’ English norm was a representation of poshness and elitism.

Furthermore, as it has been illuded a little bit in this section, Chinglish was associated with a way of thinking which was deemed to prevent Chinese students from authentic English expressions. In the next section I shall demonstrate, the ‘native’ English standard was also perceived to represent an authentic English way of thinking.

The World, Global Vision & an Authentic English Way of Thinking

In this section, I discuss the ideological indications attached to ‘native speakers.’ On these websites, ‘native speakers’ and the English spoken by them were associated with the world outside of China, a global vision, an authentic English way of thinking and a high-profile educational experience, which was further represented with White figures. Below I describe some examples.

The VIPKID homepage, as I have described in Figure 10 in Chapter 5, featured a White male with headphones in an orange shirt with the VIPKID label who was greeting a Chinese little boy. The two characters waved at each other from a square frame which resembled a computer screen. This visual representation indicated the communication across screens and, as the English text on the side suggested, “global communication.” Here, the idea of global was represented by the act of having a conversation with a White male teacher figure from VIPKID.

Similarly, the Hellokid Specialty page had a slogan on the banner reading: “Breaking Through Language Barrier, Let Children Converse with the World” (Hellokid, 2021, Hellokid Specialty, n.p.). In this case, The China/World division was bridged by the English language, particularly the English language from native-speaking countries in Europe and America. Meanwhile, ‘the world’ was essentialized as the English-speaking West, which was further pinned down with two images of White females on the webpage. The interaction between the images and the text suggested that the language spoken by these White females was the language that connects Chinese children with the world which was represented by White people alike. Elsewhere, Omeida exploited the similar discourse in its website representation, encouraging students to “Converse with the World and Learn About Chinese and Western Culture” (Omeida, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.) which again set up the China vs. the West division bridged by

English language. Although Omeida claimed to invite foreign teachers from around the globe, the visual representations of foreign figures were still predominantly White (see Table 14).

As my thick description showed, Hellokid also went one step further to promote the North American education as a superior system through such statements as “Let China enjoy synchronized American and Canadian high-profile lessons” and “not only listen, speak, read, and write in English, but cultivate an English-as-native-language way of thinking” (Hellokid, 2021, Hellokid Specialty, n.p.). As such, these online English teaching organizations positioned the European and North American speakers as a symbol of the wider world essentialized as the English West and as embodying an upscale educational experience which promises an authentic way of English thinking.

The Hellokid teaching philosophy was worth quoting below since it was representative of the logic the ELT organizations promoting Western ‘native speaker’ foreign teachers (that is, except two Philippines-based organizations, Kuaiku and 51 Talk Adult English, as I shall explicate later).

Imitating native-language acquisition process.
 Learning with Euro-American native English speakers.
 Imitating standard pronunciations and authentic expressions.
 Accumulating the expressions frequently used by European and American countries.
 Making English a native-like language. (Hellokid, 2021, Hellokid Specialty, n.p.)

This excerpt was a succinct summary of what the ELT websites claimed to achieve for students. ELT organizations representing European and American ‘native speaker’ English teachers, including EF China, Hellokid, Likeshuo, Omeida, Spiiker and VIPKID, all tended to borrow this logic of promotion. The ‘Euro-American native English speakers’ would provide a ‘native language’ environment where students could pick up the standard and authentic accents and expressions.

Moreover, from the excerpt above, we can notice that except for advancing the ‘native speaker’ model, Hellokid presumed the target interlocutors of English communication as only Europeans and Americans. And to speak English as a ‘native-like’ language was to be able to converse fluently with speakers from European and American countries. Xiong and Yuan (2018) once analyzed that Chinese English textbook series “orient learners to an imagined monolingual community, in which English is spoken between either native speaking people or between

learners and native speaking people” (p. 9). Here, we see the same pattern on the websites of spoken English organizations. On Lishuo Adult English website, when introducing its courses and programs which navigate all aspects of life, work, entertainment, and study in the Course Introduction Page, all the visual illustrations were filled by White figures (as summarized in Table 13). Moreover, where there was a need to speak English, there were White protagonists as the future interlocutors. A great illustration of this point is Table 5, which summarized all the teachers featured in the 16 demo class video clips on Lishuo. There were in total 16 teachers, with 15 being White and 1 Chinese. On top of that, each video clip was attached with a cover image of a high-face-value White male teacher. This act contributed and reinforced an imagination or construction of the monolingual community predominantly represented by White figures, a point I shall substantially develop in a later section. Students of these organizations were thus guided to learn only the expressions used in European and American countries and equate the English variations of these regions as the native English language.

More specifically, this Euro-centric impression was anchored with such geographic locations as New York, Sydney and London on these websites. Take EF China website, the Study While Traveling Abroad (*youxue* 游学) program was illustrated with a photo of an excited Chinese young female laughing while clapping hands. The Liberty Statue in the background suggested that she was in New York. In the course introduction video of High Flyers, which is a program targeted at children, the students were learning with a White female teacher in a classroom where the walls were decorated with posters featuring the Big Ben in London and the Sydney Opera House in Sydney. Contradictory here is that, as my analysis of Lishuo public classes above indicated, the Australian accent was considered deviant from the British and American standards; but Sydney was nevertheless associated with ‘native English speaking’ areas.

As already described in the previous chapter, the most illuminating representation was the EF Trailblazer promotional video, which depicted a Chinese high school student’s dream about her future visit at the Buckingham Palace, the street of New York and the golden coastline of Australia. Especially, in her dream of having tea with the Queen Elizabeth II in front of the Beckingham Palace, the ‘Queen’ says, “Splendid! Our country is filled with glorious history!” (English original, EF China, 2021, Frontrunner Program, n.p.) This comment surely ignored the colonialism on which the ‘glorious’ history of the UK was established. Even though it seems that

this video was portraying the female student's impression of the UK, as part of the EF campaign, it also indicated how EF perceived the English language and the history and culture it related to. Here, English was associated with England, Queen Elizabeth II and the 'glorious' history, the posh afternoon tea culture and the accent that she represented. An English program integrating such cultural elements as mentioned was thus considered by EF and other ELT organizations alike as high-profile and world-class.

With representational strategies as above discussed, the websites (except the two Philippines-based websites, 51 Talk Adult English and Kuaiku) have thus created for Chinese students an imagined monolingual speech community, which was cosmopolitan, posh and more advanced, as the contexts where future communication through English might take place. This speech community was associated exclusively with traditionally English-speaking countries through stereotypical cultural landmarks. As we shall see next, it was further defined by racialized White foreign teachers.

Whiteness and Its Omnipresence

Within the thick description around the theme of "physicality" in previous chapter, except for two Filipino-oriented organizations (namely Kuaiku and 51 Talk, as will be analyzed in a separate section), the 'native speaking' foreign teachers promoted in the textual content of the other six ELT websites (namely EF China, Hellokid, Lishuo, Omeida, Spiiker and VIPKID) were complemented by images of predominantly young, blonde and racialized White figures. In this section, based on the textual descriptions as well as the tables under the "physicality" themes in Chapter 5, I first demonstrate the tabulated results of the teacher profiles on the six websites to show the predominance of Whiteness in the representations of 'native speaking' foreign teachers. I then show the tabulated results of the foreign characters (that is, non-Chinese human figures other than officially identified foreign teachers) which were employed by the websites for marketing purpose, to demonstrate the omnipresence of Whiteness on these ELT websites. I also address two aspects that further complicated the issue of Whiteness.

First, below is a demonstration of the representations of teacher profiles on five of the ELT websites. The Spiiker website was not tabulated but would be explained after the table.

Table 19

Summary of Teacher Profiles on 5 ELT Organizations' Chinese Websites

Website	Racialized Foreign Teachers	Other Information
EF China	6 White teachers; 3 Chinese teachers. (see Table 3)	3 British accent; 5 American accent; 1 not specified.
Hellokid	5 White teachers. (see Table 4)	1 from UK; 3 from US; 1 from Canada; 1 from China.
Likeshuo	15 White teachers; 1 Chinese teachers. (see Table 5)	5 British accent; 11 American accent.
	7 White teachers; 2 Chinese teachers. (see Table 6)	2 from UK; 1 from Australia; 1 from Canada; 3 from US; 2 from China. 3 British accent; 6 American accent.
	4 White teachers; 2 Chinese teachers. (see Table 7)	2 from UK; 1 from Canada; 1 from Australia; 2 from China. 1 British accent; 5 American accent. (Note: One teacher actually spoke British accent but was labeled as American accent on the website. Here counted as American accent)
Omeida	4 White teachers; 4 Chinese teachers; 1 Malaysian teacher. (see Table 8)	2 from UK, 1 from US, 1 from South Africa; 4 from China; 1 from Malaysia.
VIPKID	2 White teachers; 2 Chinese teachers. (see Table 9)	2 from North America; 2 from China.
Summary	43 White teachers; 14 Chinese teachers; 1 Malaysian teacher.	

From the tabulated results shown above, we could see that, almost all the foreign teachers represented on these ELT websites were racialized White teachers, with only one from Asian origin. The teacher information of Spiiker was not tabulated in the table above due to the extreme big volume and that most of them were not attached with profile images. However, as I did mention in Chapter 5, among all the teacher profiles, there were only 53 attached with teachers' photos, and 51 of them were racialized White people, with the other 2 being Asians. And as previously mentioned, all of these websites promoted their foreign teachers as 'native speakers' from European and American countries. Therefore, the predominance of Whiteness in the representations of 'native speaking' foreign teachers was clear and intact.

Following up, the representations of foreign characters represented on the 6 ELT websites were summarised as below. For details for each website's representations, readers could refer back to the respective tables in Chapter 5 as cited below.

Table 20*Summary of Representations of Foreign Characters on 6 ELT Websites*

Website	Times of Representing Foreign Characters
EF China	13 times of White characters. (see Table 11)
Hellokid	15 times of White characters, 1 time of a Black character. (see Table 12)
Likeshuo	42 times of White characters. (see Table 13)
Omeida	109 times of White characters; 1 time of a Black character. (see Table 14)
Spiiker	43 times of White characters; 1 time of an Asian character; 1 time of a Black character. (see Table 15)
VIPKID	53 times of White characters. 3 times of Black characters (on the English-only Teacher Recruitment website). 1 time of an Asian character (on the English-only Teacher Recruitment website). (see Table 16)
Summary	275 times of White characters. 6 times of Black characters; 2 times of Asian characters.

From the numbers shown above, it is clear that the White characters were overwhelmingly represented on the six ELT websites. There are more subtleties within these representations. I shall deliberate below.

First, the VIPKID website posed an interesting contrast between the diversity of their English-version websites and the dominantly White representations on their Chinese websites. On the recruitment page of VIPKID, which was fully in English, we could see a diverse and inclusive representation of teachers and employees. Specifically, VIPKID issued a statement on diversity and inclusion (VIPKID, 2021). It said that VIPKID have worked to address equity and inclusion issues of the students and families, teacher community, and their employee team. VIPKID held it significant to have a diverse representation of employees and teachers and recognizes that the work is ongoing. And VIPKID claimed to create global classrooms and cultivate global citizens by inviting a diverse community of teachers.

Even at a post George Floyd moment, this act was rare to see among ELT organizations in China, based on my corpus. However, it is quite confusing as to why the talk about diversity and inclusion only appeared on its English recruitment site and the representations on its Chinese website targeted at Chinese students and families were still dominated by White foreign teachers.

The English-only site was not targeted at students nor students' parents in China but the foreign teachers. It is hence hard to know if Chinese parents were aware of this statement and the

anti-discriminatory recruitment policy which VIPKID called for. The English-version webpage employed female teachers of different racial backgrounds, namely Latino, Black and White (as summarized in Table 10), as well as an inclusive representation in its illustration and promotional video (as can be shown in Table 16 above). One cannot help but wonder where the diverse teacher groups have gone when it comes to the Chinese market?

Meanwhile, in the few representations of non-White characters on the other ELT websites, these figures were portrayed as supporting roles in the visual content. For instance, on the Hellokid homepage, a Black figure was depicted among three other White figures. Although the text accompanying this image said, “Pure and authentic European and American foreign teachers” (Hellokid, 2021, Homepage, n.p.), which suggested that he might also be considered as one member of this group of teachers. However, there was no other representations on the Hellokid website which could further prove this presumption. Likewise, the Black character on the Spiiker website, as described in Table 15, was also a silent supporting actor to the other White protagonist on the same image.

This silence of the racialized Black and other minority figures on these ELT websites was particularly true on the Omeida website. As I have suggested in Chapter 5, this was demonstrated through two contrasting images placed immediately next to each other (recall Figure 8). In this screenshot, the racialized Black female would easily go unnoticeable among a big group of local Chinese and White foreigners, whereas the racialized White male, who appeared also other outstanding spots of the website as one of the official foreign teachers, can hardly be missed by anyone browsing the Omeida website. His crossed arms and calm expression against a plain background all suggested a sense of authority. The bright red text next to him, “Speak English! (English original)” in almost the same as this White male figure, was a powerful statement of his image. In other words, the text spoke for him, and his image was a sound testimonial to the text. The pure existence of this White male figure in an authoritative gesture has indicated to the readers his power and authority regarding the act of “speak English.” As such, the non-White characters on the ELT websites were the silenced minority, whereas the White characters were the powerful protagonists who ‘spoke’ about the English language and English language learning.

Moreover, Likeshuo offered a slightly curious case. Its teacher recruitment page introduced four lines of courses for applicants to apply, where both General and Professional

lines were represented with White figures. The Junior and Professional product lines narrowed down the category of ‘native speakers’ with only British, Americans or Canadians. Then, at the bottom of this recruitment page, Likeshuo illustrated what a ‘native speaker’ is with a section called “Gorgeous Native Speakers Here!” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.). This section featured three gorgeous ‘native speaker’ teachers which have also appeared on the Likeshuo Chinese website. Interesting enough though, except for the two White male teachers, one of them was a Chinese female teacher named Leia. Coming from Xinjiang, China, Leia’s appearance somewhat resembled the Caucasian physical features, with a wide forehead, big eyes, high nose bones, and Brunette, wavy hair. Meanwhile, from her self-introduction video we could know, she spoke in what is called a Standard American accent and she was acclaimed with the label “the walking VOA (Voice of America) in China” by the Likeshuo website (see Figure 12).

At this point, building as well on what was outlined in the previous Thick Description chapter, we can see that while other ELT websites generally referred to ‘native speakers’ through Whiteness, Likeshuo website offered a more detailed portrayal of this term. At Likeshuo, ‘native speakers’ were defined firstly by one’s race and nationality (namely White people from traditionally English-speaking countries, especially the UK, the US, and Canada), and furthermore by one’s gorgeous physical appearance. In the case of Leia, the gorgeous look, also known as ‘high face value,’ as coined by the website (which I shall elaborate on shortly) can weigh so much that the racial boundary is blurred and disrupted. In this sense, as long as you look like a gorgeous Caucasian and speak a standard variation of English (i.e., either British or American English), you are a ‘native speaker.’ Whiteness is no longer simply a racial category but a reference to an accent, a way of talking. And more specifically, it represents how ‘native speaker’ English teachers should perform the English speech.

Taking all six websites together, we would notice another intriguing phenomenon, which is a random association of the concept of English with Whiteness regardless of contexts. It seems that Whiteness is an omnipotent index for whatever it has to do with English.

First, each organization website seemed to have one particular figure that has been represented throughout the website, as if they were the representative image of the website. For instance, as we saw in the previous chapter, the white female figure in a white blouse on the Hellokid website (see Figure 4) and the young, White male in a light denim shirt on the Likeshuo

website (see Figure 13). However, these White figures were randomly exploited from stock image resource sites, featuring professional actors and choreography, simply for marketing an English language organization. An example can best demonstrate this randomness. In my translation and description process, I noticed that the blonde, White female repeated featured on the Hellokid website (see Figure 4 and Figure 14), also appeared on the Spiiker homepage (see Figure 9), albeit in a small corner but not an outstanding place. The same White female in a same blouse but different hair style was used to represent ‘native speaker’ foreign teachers of two different English learning organizations. The intention of this marketing strategy revealed once again the association of ‘native speakers’ and English language teaching with Whiteness.

Second, as it was shown in the Thick Description chapter, even though on other places of websites, there are appearances of Chinese teachers, the dominant representations in outstanding places are that of White figures, as if White images are more convincing than anything else in terms of promoting an English language organization. For instance, all six ELT websites examined in this section have represented White figures as foreign teachers, instead of Chinese professionals, on their homepage head banners. Meanwhile, wherever it was about promoting business English and enterprise English training, the websites always depicted individuals or groups of White actors in formal wear as professionals that Chinese workers would be working with in the future scenario (see, for example, the “Course Introduction” of Lisheshuo website in Table 13). Generally, from the perspective of photography, sometimes the protagonist White businessman and businesswoman were portrayed from a lower angle, for instance, as I have described in the text before Table 13, an image represented on the Course Introduction Page of Lisheshuo website featured a confident white-collar, White female looking upward. Since image angle can indicate power distance and relations (van Leeuwen, 2008), an image that asked audience to look up to a successful businesswoman with the background of CBD area indicated a sense of authority and respect toward that White female figure. This female was an exemplar of the imaginary coworkers that business English learners were looking forward to. Both phenomena analyzed above seemed to suggest a random yet omnipresent connection of Whiteness with the English language.

In this section, I have demonstrated the predominant Whiteness in representations of ‘native speaker’ as well as the omnipresence of this Whiteness whenever it comes to English language learning on the six ELT websites. Particularly, although the Lisheshuo website anchored

‘native speakers’ with White foreigners from the UK, the US and Canada, occasionally one’s physical appearance can transgress the racial and national boundaries, making Whiteness an index for a particular type of beauty and way of speaking. Next, I talk about the high face value of ‘native speakers.’

High Face Value ‘Native Speakers’ Like Stars

One notable description about foreign teachers was the emphasis on their gorgeous appearance, as demonstrated in the theme of “Physicality – High Face Value” in the Thick Description Chapter. The promotional phrase, high face value, was used on the Likeshuo, Hellokid and Spiiker websites, for example:

High face value online teachers. (Hellokid, 2021, Contact Us, n.p.)
 High face value teachers, one-on-one online teaching, customizing your exclusive courses. (Spiiker, 2021, Adult Speaking English, n.p.)
 High face value Euro-American foreign teachers teach you authentic pronunciations, speak English confidently! (Spiiker, 2021, Workplace English, n.p.)

High face value is the literal translation of the Chinese phrase 高颜值 (*gaoyanzhi*) used on the ELT websites. It is a popular phrase on the Chinese internet which refers to one’s gorgeous look as having a high value (*Chinese Buzzword: 颜值 (yánzhí) The Prettiness Index*, n.d.). If one’s beauty can be scored, those who are called ‘high face value’ are the ones with the highest score. Among all 8 ELT websites, the Likeshuo Adult English website was particularly illustrative of this point. The leading slogan on its website was exactly this: “Selecting Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value from around the globe” (Likeshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.), with the accompanied text reading, “(We) select Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value from around the globe, who have acquired professional teaching certificates and teaching experiences. This will make your learning process more joyful” (Likeshuo, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). With these statements, the visual information presented on the head banner of the Likeshuo homepage was a White male wearing a pair of black-framed glasses with a calm and smiley expression (see Figure 6 in Chapter 5).

Moreover, on the Teaching Philosophy page of Likeshuo website, the phrase, “high face value,” was repeated and stressed multiple times. First, in a section called Choose Freely, Speak Immediately, one of the statements indicated, “Choose your teachers freely: Euro-American

foreign teachers from around the world with high face value as well as Chinese teachers, choose whatever you like” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). We can notice that throughout the Likeshuo website, the foreign teachers were always attached with the descriptive phrase: “high face value,” whereas the Chinese teachers were put forth without any adjectives. Meanwhile, statements like this posited teachers, especially foreign English teachers, passively as a product with the value of attractive appearance who awaited being picked by the customers, namely customer students.

To revisit what I have described in the previous chapter, the same thing happened again on the same page in the section called “High Face Value, Fast Progress,” where the texts read: “Experience matters the most for online studies! At Likeshuo, study is no longer boring but something pleasing to both the eye and the mind. With joyful learning experience naturally comes fast progress” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). Then, three aspects of the high face value were listed, including: “High-face-value Teachers, High-face-value Courses, and High-face-value Platform.” It was therefore indicated that the teacher, the course slides (which were not developed by the teachers) and the platform, all together, guaranteed a high face value hence visually pleasing experience for students. This was enhanced in the teacher biographies section, where the leading statement read: “High face value is a necessary criterion of our teacher recruitment, making each of your lessons a beautiful encounter” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.). Here, instead of any academic factors like high teaching quality, it was the teacher’s physical feature that was guaranteeing an effective learning which is accomplished through the manner of ‘a beautiful encounter.’ Framed this way, the act of English learning has become something of an entertaining nature added with a visually pleasing value for students. Combining the admiration of a ‘native accent’ as analyzed previously, then the learning of English can be said as picking up a posh accent through a beautiful encounter with gorgeous instructors. As later I shall address, this encounter was even spiced with a romantic flavor.

Specifically, regarding the high-face-value teachers, a White male in a light denim shirt with a charming smile appeared as an illustration (See Figure 11). And the caption for this image read: “... selecting good-looking Euro-American foreign teachers from around the globe” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Philosophy, n.p.). Therefore, this White male was assumably considered good looking by the Likeshuo website and all the teachers featured on Likeshuo websites were beautiful alike. Additionally, when promoting the “High Face Value Courses” and

“High Face Value Platform,” the two images respectively featured a White female and a White male as teachers. These figures were unexceptionally young, attractive, small and White, and high face value on Likeshuo seems to be a hegemonic concept. As aforementioned, this beauty standard sometimes can go beyond racial categories, as in Leia’s case.

In the section called This Is How We Select Our Teachers, it was clearly listed as a recruitment criterion that, “Euro-American foreign teachers with high face value. Attracted by their appearances at first and ended up fallen for their talents. Selected good-looking Euro-American foreign teachers will bring authentic American (British) ways of thinking to your lessons” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.). That said, it makes the audience wonder if the ‘stringent standard’ and ‘strict selecting process’ as mentioned in the first finding above referred to physical appearance or to professional qualities. This text also implied a direct association of the good-looking European or American teachers with the British or American way of thinking.

It is very clear, now, that the recruitment process involved two core criteria, good-looking and Euro-American origins. Not only would the gorgeous appearance bring students a joyful learning experience, but it also kind of promised an authentic British/American way of thinking and naturally a satisfying English learning outcome. So far, we can see a formula established by the Likeshuo website: High face value = joyful experience = authentic British/American way of thinking = Whiteness. As such, the professional qualifications such as teaching experience and teaching certificates were laid aside as an added value on top of one’s attractive look. The same phrase also appeared on other websites (Hellokid, Spiiker), but Likeshuo was the only one website which promoted the appearance of foreign teachers as a major advantage in a most explicit manner.

Moreover, these teachers with gorgeous looks were glossed like stars to some degree. Also taking Likeshuo, there was a section which demonstrated three screenshots of its online platform, where both the teachers’ and the students’ profiles were shown on the screen. These three teachers included: Nick GC, a handsome, sporty White male in a tank shirt; Daria Malikova, a very fashion-forward, young, White female featured in a black-and-white portrait, and Mary Chen, a dark-haired female in tanned skin, wearing an American-style makeup (bronzer, contour, etc.). All three photos were more than just a professional portrait but closer to fashion photography. For instance, in Daria Malikova’s photo, she did not look at the audience,

instead, her eyes were closed, and her chin slightly raised, showing only one side of her face; Mary Chen also revealed half of her face, with the other half covered by her voluminous dark hair. The same glamouring effect applied to other teacher profiles on Likeshuo website. Elsewhere, when introducing the course genres, it was explicitly advanced: “Attractive star teachers and trendy, heated and headline topics, cheering up for your English studies!” (Likeshuo, 2021, Course Introduction, n.p.). It seemed that all the elements at Likeshuo were visually appealing and voguish for the purpose of enhancing learning experience. Like this line suggested, the teachers were like pop stars. The example below is illustrative of this point.

In the teacher profile section, “High Face Value Teaching Team,” teachers were promoted like idols through images and labels (see Table 6 in Chapter 5). First, all foreign teachers were White people from dominantly English-speaking countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia. They all had a “high face value,” unexceptionally looking gorgeous and stylish in a formal wear. Male teachers were typically in tie and suit. Female teachers were usually dressed more delightful, feminine and decent. Second, on top of their self-introduction videos, the website attached some labels to each teacher in their bio. These labels are worth of noting, since they are somewhat opaque in its original Chinese and even hard to find a proper, literal translation in English. Meanwhile, these descriptions were sometimes irrelevant to the English teaching activity but more of a promotion of a popular idol.

For example, a White male teacher, Craig Wasahlo, was described as “*huatigan shizu* 话题感十足,” a phrase that can hardly make sense in Chinese and let alone has a proper translation in English. The literal translation was this: Full of sense of topics. The only plausible connection one could make is newsjacking or hyping, which is usually a tag for celebrities or stars. A White male teacher from Australia, Nathan Sewoff, was introduced as “a handsome millennial,” a phrase which echoed the high face value slogan but indicated no relevance to the activity of teaching and would rarely be used to describe a schoolteacher. Nathan was also introduced as someone who “teaches through communication,” which is ill-logic, since teaching itself is an act of communication. Another nonsensical phrase was “teaching English in a unique experiential style,” which was used to describe a White female teacher, Ewelina. More examples included a White British female teacher, Katrina, being described as full of charm and a horoscopes lover. And in her self-introduction, she actually said, ‘I am born and raised in London,’ which grammatically should be “I was born.” This was an obvious error made by a British ‘native

speaker,’ but it remained undetected on the Likeshuo website. In the case of Kathy Vitali, a White American female teacher, the phrase “beautiful face and voice” was listed as one of her specialties. Other labels as such included but not limited to “the Chinese version of VOA,” “a Zodiac sign lover,” “a gifted musician” and “a charity pioneer.”

The tags and phrases were focused on these aspects of the teachers: nationality, accent, physical features (appearance, voice, etc.), hobbies and other professional roles than an English teacher. These are descriptions barely deemed appropriate to introduce a teacher in an academic context. Moreover, some descriptions for the White teachers seemed repetitive and random, for example, all of them were tagged as “silly but amusing (*dou bi* 逗比)” and “interactive,” even though they were not confirmed by the teachers themselves. Also, as mentioned previously, even though Kristy Hooper, who especially claimed in her lesson that she taught in British accent, she was introduced as speaking in American accent.

These awkward and nonsensical labels were randomly attributed just to bring about a ‘star teacher’ image which did not necessarily match the teachers. This promoted teacher image was a result of intentional packaging to cater to the hegemonic standard of beauty brought up by the website.

Additionally, it was also mentioned at Likeshuo that these celebrity-like or star teachers were evaluated and assessed through a monetary rewarding system exclusively belonging to the customer students. The text went as follows:

Assessing teachers with real money: Encountering a teacher that really suits you is the most important thing! Scores and reviews are not always objective. With the gratuity system (*dashang* 打赏) exclusively to our students, teachers and their teachings are examined by real money. (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.)

The original word coined by the website, “*dashang* 打赏” (gratuity), when used in the Chinese internet context, refers to the act of tipping by users, readers or audiences of online platforms such as blogs, short video platforms and live streaming on social media. Although other websites like Kuaiku also mentioned about students’ evaluation as a means of teacher assessment, Likeshuo’s use of real money has somewhat turned the teaching activity into a sort of a performance of commercial nature.

Thus far, building on the previous chapter and what is discussed above in this chapter, I want to argue that the representations of ‘native speakers’ pointed towards Occidental Romanticism.

A Touch of Romantic flavour

In promoting the ‘native speaker’ foreign teachers, the ELT websites seemed to be delivering a hint of what Appleby (2017) terms Occidental romanticism, a term I have explained in the literature review and will revisit below. Lishuo offered a most typical example here.

In the course recording videos on Lishuo website, all 16 class video clips began with the same cover image which demonstrated a handsome White male teacher looking straight into the camera with a bright and warm smile (see Figure 13 in Chapter 5). The texts to the left of his chin respectively were: first on the top was the Chinese title of Lishuo, which, as I discussed in the beginning of Chapter 5, literally translated into this: “immediately speak”; second, on the middle were the two iconic phrases that can be seen almost on every page of the website: “High face-value, Euro-American foreign teachers”; and third, on the bottom, the text read: “24 hours online, waiting for you to date” (Lishuo, 2021, Course Introduction, n.p.). The slogan in the third line echoed that of the head banner on the Lishuo homepage: “Choose freely, Date gorgeously, Speak immediately”. These statements seemed to deliver some ambiguous intimacy to the audience.

The original Chinese read: “*dengnilai yue* 等你来约”. The usage of “*yue* 约” is worth of note. This character as a verb contains two layers of meanings in daily Chinese contexts. First, it means to ask someone out with romantic connotations. Second, in a more formal sense, it also means to make an appointment with someone. The first meaning, when used informally, usually conveys a seductive flavor. Especially in colloquial Chinese, it can suggest hooking up with someone. The ambiguity of this Chinese character used on an ELT website can be strengthened when put together with an image of an attractive White male. As we can see so far, Lishuo has been promoting the attractive appearance of its teachers as a major selling point, and the slogan framed as such has made the online English learning platform somewhat like a dating app. As such, it implied a hint of what Appleby (2017) coins Occidental romanticism in ELT industry. Appleby (2017) defines occidental romanticism as “the projection of a racialized, and gendered ideal onto the body of the Western English language teacher” (p. 249). In the context of Japan, Appleby (2017) observes that White male bodies are a selling point for commercial conversation

schools as embodiment of an idealized and racialized fantasy of the West, and the same logic is at work here on ELT websites in China.

The framing of the contact between Chinese (mostly female) students with European or American white males as a romantic encounter was also manifested in the EF Frontrunner Program promotional video. As I have described in the previous chapter, in the video, a Chinese high school girl was dreaming about herself travelling to overseas countries and having local encounters. One such contact happened on the golden coastline of Australia, where the girl was dazzled by a young White man with wet hair who held a surfing board, looking like he has just come back to the beach from surfing (see Figure 2). Here, the young, dazzling and masculine White male was depicted as a potentially attractive figure who a young Chinese female can easily fall for.

When we come back to the Lishuo website and take a closer examination of its boutique public classes (Full transcript in Appendix F), we see that one of the teachers, Arsen, in the public course videos especially could feed into this romantic idealisation.

Arsen was a White male teacher who originally came from England but spent most of his life in the US. He has traveled substantially around China. At Lishuo, he was apparently a most popular teacher among students. Many female students commented about his appearance, inquiring his age and marriage status in class, albeit in an informal, joking manner. For example, towards the end of his public class, Arsen posed a question for students to discuss freely: “So, you have a choice tonight for dinner ... what would you choose” (English original, Arsen, 2021, n.p.)? Among the many replies from students, there was one student, whose profile name was Jane.He, who responded:

Jane.He: I want to choose you [.]

Arsen: You want to choose me, for dinner? [making a flattering face, raising his eyebrows]. It’s nice. You’re gonna talk to my wife first, if she lets you do that [winking eyes, sticking out the tongue and laughing].

...

Jane.He: I’m just kidding you know [.]

Arsen: You’re kidding!? You’re kidding, Jane! That’s sad [making an expression as if he is hurt]. I thought you’re not [winking, making a flattering face]. (English original, Arsen’s Public Class Video, 2021)

Although it was a joke, the student's first comment in itself already connoted a romantic, flirtatious intention. The teacher, Arsen, however, did not feel offended, rather he was comfortable in dealing with such comments and his facial expression, be it faked or not, implied to the student that he was flattered by the affection. Apparently, he was very aware of his charm, and possibly he had been frequently receiving students' praises and knew well how to respond. Given his familiarity with Chinese culture, he then made an excuse with his wife, portraying his wife as a serious character who would 'dapigu' (spanking) if he performed undesirably. Along with this, he would employ rich facial expressions when interacting with the class, including funny and cute faces, winks and pouts, as well as finger hearts, which is a very popular hand gesture made by crossing the index finger and thumb in Asian pop culture for expressing affection and love between friends or fans and stars.

This kind of ambiguous jokes and casual interactions in general would not be possible between students with schoolteachers in the Chinese education system where teachers are usually authoritative and serious. In comparison, the online English teachers at Lishuo were more approachable and casual. The male teachers also tended to be sexualized and receive feedback that were not central to English learning. For instance, in these public online classes, comments about the male teachers' appearance were common to see:

Simon. Zhang (student): you look so young.

Arsen (teacher): Thank you very much, I drink a lot of hot water. (English original, Arsen's Public Class Video, 2021)

Matthew Allison (teacher): I decided everything's gonna be white today, except for me, haha. I try to get some color outside. The tan, right?

Elle Li (student): You are handsome in every colours. (English original, Matthew Allison's Public Class Video, 2021)

Moreover, under each teacher's public class, there was a comment area. Not many students left comments here, but one comment to Arsen left by a student named Suzy is quite interesting: "Can't wait to see you" (English original, Suzy, 2021). It can be read as a normal greeting to show intimacy between friends and family or to teachers who students feel closely connected to. However, based on the student gender connotated by the name and the conversations mentioned above, one can also speculate that there was a layer of sexualized adoration embedded in the eagerness to see the male teacher. It does not necessarily guarantee

that female teachers were not sexualized at all, but such phenomenon was indeed much less prominent within my investigation. Throughout the Thick Description chapter, there were no prime examples from students that could indicate the romanticism towards female English teachers as that of the White male teachers. An interesting comparison was that among the six boutique public courses at Likeshuo (including three by female teachers and three by White male teachers, see transcripts in Appendix F), no students except for one commented about a female teacher as a beautiful girl, let alone any romanticised exchanges.

As many of the foreign teachers featured in the course recordings on Likeshuo, Arsen has gained a great familiarity with the Chinese context; furthermore, he navigated it particularly astute like a fish to water when it comes to romantic engagement. He did not avoid the flirtatious engagements, but also did not confront them squarely. Arsen shrewdly hid behind his actual marriage while discursively dealing with the jokes with wicked intelligence, usually by borrowing stereotyped Chinese mores. Another example was when a student praised his youthful look, he attributed it to drinking a lot of hot water, a stereotypical impression about how Chinese people stay healthy.

In general, Arsen performed as such an ideal teacher from Likeshuo, a gorgeous White male teacher who was waiting for students to ‘date’ and get a pleasing encounter. Although not all foreign teachers were like Arsen, he exemplified the image that was being promoted on Likeshuo.

Overall, the ELT websites, with Likeshuo being a representative, demonstrated a tendency to exploit White male bodies as manifestation of a racialized and romanticised fantasy about the English language and the world it related to. Teachers like Arsen fell perfectly into this idealization.

So far, based on the thick descriptions in the previous chapter, I have analyzed the attributes attached to foreign English teachers on six of the ELT websites. On the other hand, the representations of local Chinese English teachers on these websites are interesting, which I turn to next.

Chinese Teachers

The privilege of racialized White foreign teachers was reinforced through the representations of and job requirements for their counterpart Chinese teachers. To make this argument, I will look at Spiiker, VIPKID, Hellokid and Likeshuo websites.

To begin, these websites differentiated the professional qualities required for Chinese and foreign teachers. First, to continue with the point in the previous section, Likeshuo required all ‘native speakers’ for its different course lines, except for the overseas tests category (see Table 1). This tests preparation category was targeted at Chinese teachers, and it specifically required Chinese teachers to be able to develop comprehensive curricula, which was something not mentioned in all other three types of courses targeting at foreign teachers. Another example was Spiiker, which required its Chinese tutors to have TEM-8 competency. Note that TEM-8, short for Test for English Majors-Band 8, is the most difficult English language test in China which is for English majors only. It means that at these ELT organizations, even a teaching assistant whose responsibility is mainly to monitor and mentor students’ progress requires the highest English language competency in China. In comparison, the educational background of the foreign teachers is much less emphasized, if at all.

Second, some organizations put differentiated emphasis on the educational background of the two types of teachers. As can be seen in the Thick Description chapter, some organizations made clear that all their foreign teachers held at least bachelor’s degree, some also indicated that the foreign teachers graduated from esteemed universities such as Cambridge University (for instance, LikeShuo). But when Chinese teachers and foreign teachers were put together in display, then there was a specific emphasis on the education background of the Chinese teachers. For example, on VIPKID website, when introducing Chinese teachers and foreign teachers together under a section called “Strictly Selected Teachers, Trustworthy Teaching Quality,” there was a subtitle which specified: “Chinese teachers are strictly selected through 6 rounds of examinations” (VIPKID, 2021, Chinese and Foreign Teacher Class, n. p.). Meanwhile, when displaying the information of these teachers, the two Chinese teachers were specificized with their alma maters, degrees and their majors, both having achieved master’s and their alma maters were all top universities, as summarized in Table 9. When it comes to the two female foreign teachers, who were both White, they were not identified with alma maters, but their teaching qualifications displayed were much simpler. One cannot say that these two White teachers at VIPKID were not professional, however, when comparing the respective requirements for White teachers and Chinese teachers, one could say that for these ELT organizations in China, Whiteness was in and of itself credible, whereas Chinese needed additional credentials to prove their credibility in this profession.

What's more, the requirement of bachelor's degree for foreign teachers was sometimes posited as not a demand by the ELT organizations but by students and parents. For instance, on the Q&A section of VIPKID Recruitment page, there was one frequently asked question: "Can I apply if I don't have a bachelor's degree?" (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirements, n.p.) and the official answer on the website was this: "We are very strict about applicants' education level and require you to have at least a bachelor's degree" (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirements, n.p.). But it was then immediately complemented that "We require this because this is something that the parents of the children in China that we teach care about and trust that we are maintaining" (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Requirements, n.p.). As such, the strict benchmark of foreign teachers' educational background was simply catering to students' and parents' demands but not necessarily that of the organization. Combining the previously mentioned statement "great news is that this can be in any field or major" (English original, VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.), it seemed that the recruiter was trying to self-present a gentle and welcoming image to the foreign teacher candidates while maintaining a higher standard for Chinese teachers.

Another aspect of portraying Chinese teachers on these websites was to position them as an assisting role to the foreign teachers, most typically in the combination of Chinese tutors and foreign teachers. This was a pattern that appeared repetitively on Hellokid (Figure 15), VIPKID and Spiiker (Figure 16 and Figure 17) websites. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the visual representations employed on these websites were very illustrative of this unequal status. Typically, in these pictures, Chinese female figures were labeled as "tutor" or "study managers," while White figures would be labeled as "teachers."

Even though there were also Chinese bilingual teachers, such as on Lishuo, 51 Talk, Spiiker and VIPKID websites, the slogans accompanied them usually were like "joint effort of both Chinese and foreign teachers can bring about better learning results (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.)." Such an arrangement seemed thoughtful for students, but the responsibilities assigning to the bilingual teachers tended to be restricted with basic-levels, entrance levels, and mostly typically, overseas test preparations. For instance, as I have mentioned in the Thick Description chapter, on 51 Talk Adult English website, when introducing its learning system where a Chinese female teacher was featured, a text read: "Basic courses targeted at beginner learners" (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Learning System, n.p.). Likewise, the dual-teachers

combination on Spiiker homepage was introduced as: “Chinese teacher and foreign teachers joining efforts, Chinese teachers lay foundations for beginner learners, foreign teachers provide practical skills and training” (Spiiker, 2021, Homepage, n.p.). The representations on these websites thus gave out the impression that Chinese English teachers were not able enough to instruct advanced-level courses independently except for test preparations.

The picture on the Spiiker website was most elaborative of the hierarchy among different categories of teachers (Figure 17), which featured four teachers in a line with labels attached to each of them. From left to right, the first was a Chinese female wearing headphones who was labeled as customer representative, the second was a Chinese female labeled as tutor. The third was also a Chinese female appearing as a bilingual teacher. Last but not least, a White male teacher with a pair of headphones was labeled as foreign teacher. Chinese female teachers were positioned as assisting roles whereas the White male foreigner took the lead. The absolute dominant power of Whiteness was reinforced here.

Additionally, it is prevalent that all the Chinese teachers in these ELT organizations were addressed by their English names rather than their original Chinese names. Particularly, these names tended to be White names. For instance, on the Bilingual Teachers page of Spiiker website, the bilingual Chinese teachers were named such as Abby, Samantha and Emma; even the study managers (tutors) had such names as Fanny, April and Curtis. It was as though anyone who learnt English would need to pick up a Western identity which was most directly manifested in an English name.

Overall, this section showed that the Chinese teachers represented on the ELT websites were highly professional English majors who were employed for entrance lower-level courses or as teaching assistants. This formed a contrast against and reinforced the privilege of the European and North American foreign teachers who were at the top of the hierarchy with relatively lower professional threshold.

Now, I shall turn to the third group of teachers, the Filipinos foreign teachers, whose representations contrasted that of the White ‘native speakers.’

Legitimacy of Filipinos Foreign Teachers

At this point, it is necessary to take a close look at two other organizations, Kuaiku and 51 Talk Adult English, who offered a stark contrast to the six organizations which recruited only foreign teachers from Western countries. The promotions about strict selection of foreign

teachers remained intact on both 51 Talk Adult English and Kuaiku. Kuaiku demonstrated a series of evaluations involving CV filtration, three rounds of interviews, recruitment, which was followed by an internal training and a 2–5-month TESOL training at the same time, during which only the qualified candidates can stay and move on to official online teaching. At both Kuaiku and 51 Talk Adult English, there were also periodical assessments afterwards, where poor performance would lead to firings as 51 Talk Adult English advanced: “only the fittest survive” (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, Foreign Teachers, n.p.). What differed them from the other organizations within my analysis, as mentioned in the Thick Description chapter, was that the high-quality foreign teachers they referred to were predominantly represented by a group of Filipino English professionals. Below I elaborate the features of these two websites and the different attributes attached to Filipino teachers.

Student-Centered Representations

Before anything, audience of the Thick Description chapter can notice that compared to the organizations employing Western foreign teachers, Kuaiku employed representations that were student oriented.

Kuaiku website used images that posited the learners as protagonists at obvious spots, whilst other websites (e.g., Likeshuo, Hellokid and VIPKID) mainly posited gorgeous White figures as protagonists. For instance, the top banner on the Kuaiku homepage depicted students at the fore front and teachers at the background; there was a line of text that indicated the country of origin of their students, who were mainly from China, Japan, Brazil, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam. Meanwhile, like Likeshuo website, the main page of Kuaiku also displayed a world map with indexes of several countries. However, one may notice that this map was an Asian-centered world map, on which the geographic origins of the students were labeled out, such as Shanghai, South Korea, Vietnam and Thailand.

Comparing the Likeshuo map Figure 19 and the Kuaiku map Figure 18 we can see that Likeshuo represented a Euro-centric world map, a typical Western depiction of a world map, and it was teacher-centred, labeling the traditionally English-speaking countries (e.g., UK, US, Canada, and Australia).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, all the ELT websites boasted that students could connect with the outside world and gain a global vision. Likeshuo used a teacher-centered map to demonstrate its internationalized nature, accompanied with a text saying that learning with

“Euro-American foreign teachers recruited from around the globe, every lesson is a conversation with the world” (Likeshuo, 2021, Teaching Resource, n. p.). By contrast, Kuaiku lied its stance in the students and demonstrated its definition of global by saying that it was “an international school which you can attend without traveling, your classmates are from all over the world” (Kuaiku, 2021, Homepage, n. p.). The intentions of the two websites are evident through this comparison.

Next, although they were not ‘native speakers,’ Filipino teachers were viewed as the best English learners precisely because of their ‘non-native’ status.

The Best English Learners

On one of the head banners of Kuaiku’s Teaching Resource page (https://www2.kuaikuenglish.com/pages/about_teacher.html), there were three statements accompanying an image of a Pilipino female teacher: “a) English is our official language; b) We know better the second language acquisition regulations; c) We are compassionate by nature and energetic in teaching” (Kuaiku, 2021, Teaching Resource, n.p.) These statements astutely pointed out the advantages of non-native speaker English teachers (Medgyes, 1992).

Fundamentally, the advocacy for Filipino English-language teachers is embedded in the establishment of Kuaiku, which is something that has never appeared in the detailed descriptions of other websites I have examined in previous chapter. For instance, the founder of QQ English, Raiko Fujioka, testified in his narrative of founding the QQ English school, “I think Filipinos are the most successful English learners in the world. Precisely because they are passionate and are suitable for learning English, they know the methods of English learning well, and students may learn English better from Filipinos” (QQ English, 2021, Our Passion, n.p.). The idea that successful second language learners can make the best second language teachers sat at the core of Kuaiku.

From the students’ perspective, though, not everyone recognized the competence of Filipino English teachers in the beginning and doubts existed, mainly considering the accent issue. For instance, a 25 years’ old Chinese female student who attended the QQ English program reflected on her assumptions before registration: “... this country is relatively less developed, among all countries that take English as official language, [teachers from] the Philippines may have some accents” (Kuaiku, 2021, Students’ Stories, n.p.). Nevertheless, their attitudes would see a shift after their actual experiences in the Philippines. For instance, student

Bonnie commented, “Teachers are energetic, their English pronunciations are authentic” (Kuaiku, 2021, Students’ Stories, n.p.). Even the founder himself was not exceptional when he first learned English in the Philippines. Reiko Fujioka wrote in an external link that “unlike what I initially thought about the Philippines, the Filipino’s English ability was high, their pronunciation was clear and accurate, and their teaching skill was good (English original)” (Fujioka, 2015 Jan 22, n. p.). A 38-year-old learner also commented on her change of impression, “But since I came to QQ English school, at least the nearly ten teachers I have been exposed to all have great pronunciations which sound clear to someone like me whose English listening is not so good” (Kuaiku, 2021, Students’ Stories, n.p.). Not only the pronunciation and accent of Filipino English teachers but also their teaching effectiveness were acknowledged.

On the introduction page of QQ English, it was mentioned that British lecturers were hired to conduct TESOL training for the Filipino teachers, which meant that Kuaiku still did not escape the framework where British/American White professionals as authority. However, first, this was not promoted as a key attraction of the organization, the protagonists have always been the Filipino teachers; second, the British instructors were not the only professional authority figure being represented here to examine and evaluate the professionalism of Kuaiku. Among the many testimonials displayed on the QQ English website, there was one written by Xiangjun Zhang, an ELT professor scholar from Taiwan, who confirmed, Based on my many years’ professional experience in English teaching, I think the accents of Filipino teachers are basically Standard American accent, with clear pronunciation and fluent speech!” and that “the learning method employed by QQ English is indeed an effective method needed by English learners” (Kuaiku, 2021, Students’ Stories, n.p.).

Despite that Zhang also used the so-called Standard American accent as an evaluation framework, the fact that a Chinese non-native speaking English teacher was invited to testify the professionalism of Kuaiku English is already a breakthrough in this profession. In what follows, we can see that the professionalism of Filipino teachers was also acknowledged by Chinese learners.

Testified Teaching Effectiveness

At Kuaiku, the effectiveness of Filipino teachers was testified by students and parents, especially when they are placed in contrast with their Euro-American ‘native speaker’ counterparts. One student, Lina, reflected quite frankly:

The teachers here teach systematically. I used to attend classes given by pure European-American teachers, as well as one-to-one lessons with European and American teachers. But honestly speaking, I did not make much progress. The only advantage may be that their accent is better. But actually, Europeans and Americans teach in a scattered and unorganized manner. It is difficult to learn in depth. However, Kuaiku teachers teach systematically, and so there is always room for improvement. (Kuaiku, 2021, Students' Stories, n.p.).

Here, Lina confessed that she made little progress when learning with European and American teachers, which was echoed by another student, Jenny, as shown below. In fact, Lina thought that the 'native' accent may be their only advantage, among all professional qualities expected from an English teacher. This was an intriguing twist in comparison with the positive representations on other websites such as Hellokid and Lishuo where White foreign teachers were privileged because of their pure, authentic and standard accent. Some students also mentioned their previous learning experiences at other ELT organizations in China and reported various issues and dissatisfactions about them, such as disorganized, not making progress, not systematic teaching or in-depth learning and poor services at a higher cost. Student Jenny offered a great example:

I have attended other online ELT organizations and found out that they have really poor after-sale service. So, I wanted to change an organization.

I have taken classes at the Hujiang Online School, as well as some other online ELT organizations, where you just chat randomly with the teachers and do not make much progress. (Kuaiku, 2021, Students' Stories, n.p.)

As mentioned, at Kuaiku, a few students had concerns regarding pronunciation or accents before signing up the courses, but they reported change of opinion after taking classes with them.

Even though the accent of Filipino teachers was satisfactory, some students still implied their preference for American or British teachers as well as the desire for learning British accent, the reason being "Students may have more options if there are British and American teachers. And we can learn the British accent" (Kuaiku, 2021, Students' Stories, n.p.). And the response given by Kuaiku is worth quoting here: "Most teachers at Kuaiku speak the American English. Some teachers can teach both American and British accents. If students have demands in this

aspect, they can contact the customer representatives to sign up lessons with these teachers” (Kuaiku, 2021, Students’ Stories, n.p.). In this response, the Kuaiku representative did not make any preferences between the Filipino teachers and the British or American teachers requested by students. Instead, Kuaiku put forth the capability of Filipino teachers to teach both accent variations.

Building on the previous chapter and on the analysis earlier in this chapter, one may notice that accent mattered a great deal to Chinese students, and students’ reviews of Kuaiku programs further reinforced this impression. Accent was one important and most direct index which Chinese students used to evaluate teachers’ teaching competency, and this index was largely tied into the standard varieties from traditionally English-speaking countries, which was further pinned down to the British and American accents. The students not only had concerns about accents when deciding whether to learn with Filipino teachers, but still desired to learn British accent after testifying the legitimacy of Filipino teachers’ pronunciation. Accent was the central issue of English learning before anything, and it is fair to say that the learning of English language was niched down to learning of a particular, ‘native’ accent at this point.

What is the native English accent like? One teacher from the QQ English program, Teacher Edward, virtually advanced his strength in English pronunciation. He said: “To be able to talk with native speakers, you have to speak as fast as they do” (QQ English, 2021, Teacher Profiles, n.p.). Edward further emphasized the significance of accent as such, “In fact, in IELTS speaking tests, if your pronunciation is excellent, the examiners will pay more attention to your pronunciation and ignore some of your grammatical mistakes” (QQ English, 2021, Teacher Profiles, n.p.). That is, to speak like a ‘native speaker,’ one has to meet the criteria of standard pronunciation, speaking fast and being confident. Here, accent alone can signal one’s English competency to the point that grammar can be seen as secondary or even omitted, not only to non-native speakers but to the ‘native’ authority as the IELTS examiner. To this point, learning English is becoming a performance, if you have mastered the performance of speaking English, you have mastered English.

Coming back to Kuaiku, although Kuaiku teachers believed that there was a naturalized category called ‘native speaker’ which the Filipinos did not belong to, teacher Edward’s comment as well as the students’ responses above demonstrated that authentic and standard accents do not exclusively belong to British and American ‘native speakers.’

A mother who joined the summer camp together with her nine-year-old daughter particularly shared the following:

Nowadays in China, parents tend to pursue a noble and high-end experience when it comes to educational travel programs. They feel that the educational travels are only authentic when the destinations are the US, Europe, or Australia. Choosing to study and travel abroad in the Philippines always makes you feel low-end or concerned about the accents of Filipinos teachers. Thus, I have only told a few friends about my study trip to the Philippines. I feel that this whole experience is worth it, after all it is so much more economic than [those programs in] Europe and America. The Filipinos teachers learn English since primary school and most of them graduated from the English major. Accent is only a minor issue with few teachers. (Kuaiku, 2021, Students' Stories, n.p.)

This parent's reflection shed light on several points. First, she astutely revealed the dominant ideology about educational travel programs in China, that is, the 'inner circle' English-speaking countries (Kachru, 1985) in the Europe and America represented a noble and high-end cultural and educational experience, and that only educational travel programs in these countries were considered 'authentic.' This ideology was indeed demonstrated on websites such as Spiiker, VIPKID and Likeshuo, who promoted their curriculum based on the North American educational standard as high-profile. Second, the predominance of this ideology has brought up negative effects on some Chinese parents and learners, which is that the perceived low profile of countries as Philippines made them feel unwilling to publicize their choices of English learning programs. Third, this parent confirmed again the effectiveness of Filipinos teachers who get command of the English language successfully, and that accent did not make a major concern as many would have supposed to. Particularly, she mentioned that most of these Filipino teachers were graduates of English majors, which enhanced the sense of professionalism in comparison with Euro-American teachers of any majors. This professional quality was also shared by 51 Talk teachers. What's more, on 51 Talk Adult English, the teacher biographies (see a summary in Table 17) appeared more formal without the introduction of leisure hobbies or extra labels, which was in contrast with teachers' star effect produced by Likeshuo (see Table 6).

To summarize the case of Kuaiku, students attested to the professionalism and effectiveness of Filipino English teachers with their own experiences. And for some students who had taken courses with multiple ELT organizations in China, pronunciation and accent was perhaps the only advantage of the Western 'native speaker' teachers. It is noteworthy that the

authority of traditionally English-speaking countries, particularly England, in ELT learning remained on Kuaiku website. For instance, they adopted a teaching method originated from the UK, and the founder mentioned that they would invite British expert to conduct teacher training. However, the arbitrator authority of the UK was disrupted by the fact that Kuaiku and 51 Talk Adult English acknowledged the proficiency and professionalism of Filipino teachers and the appearance of a Taiwanese ELT professor who was invited to assess this professionalism. Meanwhile, that their teaching quality was recognized by the students and parents was something unique among all 8 websites in my micro investigation.

Conclusion of the Chapter

In this chapter, I have analyzed the discourses and representations of ‘native speakers’ on the 8 ELT websites based on information in the Thick Description chapter through a critical discourse perspective. I have closely examined the texts, images, videos, digits, transcripts and so on, being employed on the websites, which I call ‘representational strategies,’ and found emerging themes.

To begin, I demonstrated that these ELT organizations first established themselves as the leader and authority of the field through texts and digits on their introduction section. This has allowed them to speak about the English language teaching with authority from an authorized space. That is, without offering any clear definitions about the ‘native speakers,’ they have taken it as given and talked about it. Then, I identified three categories of teachers which have emerged from my critical investigation, respectively they are, European and North American foreign teachers, Chinese teachers and Filipino foreign teachers. The category of the ‘native speakers’ has been constructed in between the textual, verbal and visual representations of these teachers. Following up, I examined the attributes to these three categories of teachers by the ELT websites. In general, the ‘native speaking’ European and North American foreign teachers were predominantly represented by a group of young and gorgeous White people who speak a pure, authentic and neutral English and represent the advanced outside world from which spring an authentic English way of thinking. Meanwhile, I demonstrated the omnipresence of Whiteness in promoting the ‘native speakers’ from the West, yet this racial and ethnic edges was occasionally disrupted by one’s physical appearance. Furthermore, the positioning of White males as a major selling point on some ELT websites indicated a hint of sexualized romanticism.

In terms of the Chinese teachers, they were required of higher and stricter professional benchmark to be admitted the teaching position compared to their White counterpart colleagues, and they were usually posited as assisting roles to the White foreign teachers. Last but not least, my analysis of the Filipino foreign teachers demonstrated a sharp contrast to the White ‘native speaker,’ that is, the legitimacy and professionalism of Filipino foreign teachers were not only accepted and testified by Chinese students and parents but were spoken higher of than the European-American White teachers in some contexts. In and through this analysis, I also pointed out that accent was a significant index for Chinese English learners to judge one’s English (teaching) competency to the degree that English learning was morphed into picking up a specific ‘native’ accent.

In the next chapter, I shall discuss what these analyses mean to the subject of my study.

Chapter 7

Discussion: Hegemonic Representations of ‘Native Speakers’

In this section, I respond to the essential problem, how are ‘native speakers’ represented on these ELT websites? and answer the sub-questions of my research. As I have argued in the literature review, ‘native speaker’ is a problematic term without a precise definition. However, the 8 ELT websites within my investigation not only employed it as a ready, naturalized category but attributed to it different characteristics.

From the get go, all the ELT organizations claimed to be the leader and authority in this field through slogans on outstanding spots on their websites and complemented with numbers and digits as proof. Therefore, a short answer to the second sub-question, *What is the relationship, if any, between these strategies and power?* is this: The organizations were the ones who had power to choose the strategies to represent their imagined or perceived ‘native speakers’ on their websites. I shall discuss the issue of power with greater detail in the ending section of this chapter.

Especially, the six websites which recruited foreign teachers from European and American countries, including Likeshuo Adult English, VIPKID, Omeida, EF China, Spiiker and Hellokid, all together put forth a ‘native speaker’ defined by hegemonic representations, that is, an assumed definition of the term. In this section, I discuss the attributes to these ‘native speakers’ on the six websites by way of answering the third sub-question, *What do these representational strategies assume and at the same time create about the category of ‘native speaker’?*

In general, representations of ‘native speakers’ are predominantly governed by figures of White foreign English teachers from Europe and America, which is reinforced by the marginalization of Chinese English teachers as well as other racialized minority figures on the websites; however, the absolute authority of White ‘native speakers’ is disrupted by a group of Filipino English teachers. In what follows, I first delineate the attributes to White ‘native speakers,’ which included lower threshold with decent payment, the global vision, high face value, Occidental romanticism, pure and standard accent and predominant and omnipresent Whiteness. I argue that the last two aspects, accent and Whiteness, have significant implications for understanding the native speaker issue in ELT in China. I also discuss the counter representations of the Filipino English teachers and link back to the theoretical framework and its

relevance to this study. I end this chapter by providing answers to all my sub questions as well as the leading research question: *How is 'native speaker' represented on a purposeful sample of ELT websites in China?*

The Global and the International

First, the ELT organizations promoted themselves as experts and leaders of English language which can bridge the students in China with the outside, global world. One of the major reasons of this ascribed to the internationalized teaching resources and curriculum. The internationalized resource, however, was largely associated with images of foreign 'native speakers' from Europe and North American countries. The websites established the foreign teachers as speaking a pure, authentic accent which can promise an immersive 'native' English environment hence an authentic input for Chinese students. Their accent, however, despite the true original countries of the teachers, were unexceptionally categorized into two dominant varieties, British accent and American accent. I shall particularly elucidate on the issue of accent later. Moreover, these 'native' English teachers were perceived to also represent an advanced outside world essentialized as the West, in contrast to China, a more advantaged education system and a better English learning outcome. On the ELT websites, this imaginary was further represented with stereotypical cultural landmarks of the English-speaking world, some of which, such as the Buckingham Palace in London and the Opera House in Sydney, were implicitly selling a vision of participating in the world at the highest levels.

Through visual and textual languages, the targeted customers of these organizations, namely students and parents, were indicated that they were confidently bridged with the global world, more specifically, the Western world, through a standard English spoken by a foreign 'native speaker.' This assumption not only attached to 'native speaker' a superior meaning but indicated an imagined monolingual speech community where Europeans and Americans were the sole target interlocutors for Chinese students in the 'outside world.' Xiong and Yuan (2018) once analyzed Chinese English textbook series and illuminate that these course materials "orient learners to an imagined monolingual community, in which English is spoken between either native speaking people or between learners and native speaking people" (p. 9). This finding echo that of previous studies (Henry, 2010, 2013, 2016; Jenks, 2019; Ruecker & Ives, 2015) but contradicts the reality of the global English speech community, since the majority of English communications nowadays take place between L2 speakers (Seidholfer, 2005, 2009).

The perceived superiority of ‘native speakers’ was also materialized in recruitment requirements, as I shall illustrate next.

Lower Threshold with Decent Payment

Based on the teacher recruitment requirements posted on the ELT websites, the ‘native speaker’ teacher was recruited with lower benchmarks than Chinese teachers. On their Chinese websites, ELT organizations claimed to filter teacher candidates with restrict standards through multiple rounds, strict with educational background and professional certificates. In this respect, the ELT organizations in current research were indeed stricter regarding teachers’ professional qualifications than that of previous studies which reported the phenomenon that as long as one is a White English speaker in China, one can be recruited as English teachers with a decent salary which is usually higher than the Chinese counterparts (Lan, 2011; Leonard, 2019; Stanley, 2013). However, differentiated requirements still existed between these two types of teachers. For foreign teachers predominantly represented by White people, teaching English was framed as an add-on of their daily life which would bring about extra income and benefits. Ruecker and Ives (2015), in analyzing ELT recruitment sites, note that a common theme running through these advertisements is promoting English teaching as “making and saving money abroad while escaping the daily grind of a ‘normal’ job” (p. 745). Although we are not sure if the foreign teachers within the current investigation needed an ‘escape’ from their regular jobs, the critical analysis suggested that teaching English for them was indeed a means to gaining extra income through a low threshold. Meanwhile, although an above-bachelor’s degree was required by websites, this degree can be from any majors. And the organizations would shift the duty of this requirement to Chinese parents, implying that it was not the true intention of the organizations themselves. To push this argument to its ultimate logic, the organizations were virtually telling prospective foreign teachers that we would have recruited you without any educational benchmark, if it were not for the demand of the Chinese parents.

On top of this, the foreign teachers were also taking less responsibility than regular schoolteachers. For instance, it was clearly stated on the VIPKID websites that they do not need to prepare the course materials beforehand, rather, all is readily made, and the teachers just need to deliver them to students, which is ‘just one less thing for you to worry about’ (VIPKID, 2021, Teacher Recruitment, n.p.).

All in all, for foreign teachers, the teaching positions posted on the ELT websites in China were portrayed as something achievable through flexible educational requirements and minimal responsibility, as an add-on interest apart from daily life to make extra money, low time cost and a full control of schedule, as well as negligible professionalism. It echoes the previous studies which argue that “Teaching experiences for foreigners were typically advertised as adventures rather than serious employment” (Henry, 2013, p. 217). Even though on the websites within my investigation, the ELT organizations all put an emphasis on the professional experience and qualifications of teacher applicants, there were, first, differentiated standards for foreigners and Chinese, and second, for the foreign teachers with certificates, it is suspect whether their certificates were a result of packaging offered by the ELT organizations or not, the answer to this doubt cannot be settled so far.

Chinese teachers were a sharp contrast. Their degrees were limited to English major only. Moreover, in the case of Lishuo, Chinese teachers not only needed to compose course syllabi and prepare course materials, they also were expected to acquire research ability. In some cases (e.g., Spiker), even Chinese tutors, as assistant but not official teachers, were expected to acquire TEM-8 competence, the most difficult English as a foreign language test for English majors in China. One can arguably claim that to these ELT organizations in China, Whiteness/foreignness is credible, whereas being Chinese would need extra credentials to prove their credibility.

Furthermore, Chinese teachers were positioned as assisting roles to their White, foreign, if not always male, counterparts. This was most illustrated by the Spiker promotional image. This image may also contain the hidden message that the man leads, and the women follow, however, the White figure as “academic instructor” in the Hellokid promotion may serve to counter this point. Overall, the gender issue was lack of more sufficient data and is beyond my current investigation. It may serve as a post-doctoral research project. Chinese teachers were also portrayed as the patterners accompanying the protagonist foreign teachers and were limited to teaching basic level courses and tests preparation courses. There seemed to be a fixed impression that foreign teachers are better at improving students’ practical skills at a more advanced level while Chinese teachers can only be effective with beginners. Henry (2013) observes the similar marginalization of Chinese English teachers when talking to an experienced Chinese teacher of English at an English school in Shenyang, China:

Despite her expertise, however, her position as a Chinese teacher of English, and therefore a non-native speaker, meant that she was often overshadowed at the school by “foreign” teachers, the often-youthful native speakers from Western countries who come to China for several years to travel and teach. (Henry, 2013, p. 216)

Indeed, the halo of foreign teachers at ELT organizations in China in the current research tended to overshadow that of the local Chinese teachers.

A Homogenous Beauty and A Hint of Occidental Romanticism

As the random labels and nonsensical phrases used to introduce foreign native speaker teachers at Likeshuo, these textual elements were randomly attributed just to bring about a ‘star teacher’ image which did not necessarily reflect the real person behind the labels. Leonard (2019) has portrayed a group of expatriate teachers who were recruited by Chinese ELT organizations merely to meet the expectations of students and their parents. It could be said that the created profiles of English teachers on the websites in my study were also feeding into a performance of what a ‘native speaker’ English teachers should look like. This performance was further evaluated by students and in some cases, even assessed with monetary rewards.

As well, the ‘native speakers’ were attributed with high face value, a gorgeous physical appearance which is actually a homogeneous standard of beauty. That is, they were predominantly small, young, with gorgeous appearance and packaged like stars. There was little diversity in terms of shape, size and age. The factor of male and female seemed to be the only diversity. This was only slightly touched upon in previous studies on the ‘native speaker’ issue (for instance, Ruecker & Ives, 2015, Jenks, 2019) but not discussed as a significant issue. However, in my investigation, appearance was one of the defining characteristics of ‘native speaking’ English teachers. Most importantly, they were all represented with Whiteness, which was not simply restricted by racial boundaries but a reference to beauty, and I shall elaborate in short. The example of this came from Leia at Likeshuo. This female teacher originally from Xinjiang province in China, with brunette hair, a high forehead, big eyes and a sharp nose, was listed as one of the ‘native speakers’ among the teacher biographies. Along with this, her accent was also included as the Standard American accent and her English competency recognized as the top level, granted with the title “the Walking VOA (Voice of America) in China.” The power of her appearance in this case can be said as tremendous in that it bestowed her the native status.

Among the hegemonic representations of Whiteness on these websites, as I shall address later, VIPKID also posed a curious case. As already discussed, VIPKID posted a statement of equity, inclusion and diversity in its English version website, including representations of Black and Hispanic figures however, none of these was represented on its Chinese website facing Chinese student customers and parents. The absence of these diverse representations simply enhanced the hegemony of Whiteness. I shall detail Whiteness in short. Let us now look at the Occidental Romanticism manifested in the ‘native speaker’ representations.

Following the promotion of high face value, these ELT websites also implied an intention to promote White males as a commodity and a major selling point to attract potential student customers. The usage of the character, ‘*yue* 约,’ in the Likeshuo slogan was a typical example. Promotional slogans framed as such, i.e., “High face value foreign teachers waiting for you to date” (Likeshuo, 2021, n. p.), made the online English learning platform somewhat resemble a dating app and the English course an opportunity for a romantic engagement. Following this line of logic, one could argue that the ELT organizations delivered a hint of Occidental romanticism, which has also been discussed in previous studies in other contexts in Asia (Appleby, 2017; Ke & Lai, 2018), in its representations of ‘native speakers.’ To help the readers recall, Appleby (2017) first coins the term and defines it as “the projection of a racialized, and gendered ideal onto the body of the Western English language teacher” (p. 249). Drawing on Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, which portrays Middle East and Asian cultures as inferior and exotic from a Western perspective, Appleby (2017) inversely proposes Occidentalism as the ideology which essentializes and usually idealises the West from the viewpoint of the East. And romanticism “refers to a desire for an idealised, fantasy version of the West that may or may not be gendered or sexualised” (p. 249). This is exactly what is happening on the ELT websites represented by Likeshuo. The teachers were packaged and glossed as stars embodying a gorgeous appearance to symbolize an ideal of the “outside world,” which was largely defined by racialized Whiteness. Among them the males were positioned with a seducing flavor. In both existing studies (for example, Appleby, 2017 and Ke & Lai, 2018) and the current research, it was the male, instead of female bodies which were projected with a White Western fantasy.

It also needs to be noted that the male teachers were not necessarily innocent of this eroticised projection but knew it well and manipulated it in class. Arsen offered a perfect example catering to this idealisation. Arsen was young and handsome, knowing well about the

Chinese context to the degree that he could shrewdly navigate the ambiguous comments by some students during the online class.

To pick up the point I left before, I shall elaborate in the next section, the imagination of the West and ‘native speakers’ were predominantly associated with Whiteness.

Predominant and Omnipresent Whiteness

Whiteness in my investigation contained three layers of indications. First, as I have mentioned above, ‘native speakers’ on the six ELT websites were predominantly represented with White English teachers from European and American countries, specifically the UK and the US, with Canada and Australia in occasional cases. The connection between Whiteness and authority in the English language was also clearly stated through visual languages such as Figure 8 from Omeida.

Second, this Whiteness, however, sometimes was not solely restricted with racial categories but a criterion of beauty. The female teacher Leia on Likeshuo is a case of point. This female teacher from Xinjiang had physical features resembling that of the Caucasians and was listed among two other White male teachers in a section titled “Gorgeous Native Speakers Here!” on the Likeshuo website, a site where high face value was the most significant attribute of the foreign English teachers. Whiteness in here is a symbol for beauty based on the Caucasian physical appearances and can go beyond racial boundaries. Under the cover of Whiteness, the high face value as promoted by Likeshuo refers to a hegemonic standard of beauty, namely small, young and appealing. Anyone with this physical characteristic can be referenced as ‘White,’ and if this person speaks in a standard variety of English accent, in the case of Likeshuo, the Standard American accent, then, this person, one may argue, is an “honorary native speaker.” Compared to dark skin or Blackness, which is associated with lower class position (Cai, 2023), racialized Whiteness has always been a signifier for modernity and beauty in contemporary Chinese popular culture (Schein, 1994). Particularly, White foreign bodies are ubiquitously exploited as commodities in diverse consumption areas, acting as consumer fetishes and directing to what Louisa Schein terms an “imagined cosmopolitan” which even the impoverished Chinese would desire and dream of participating (Schein, 1994, p. 149).

Third, the findings also indicated what I call an omnipresence of Whiteness. On the ELT websites, Whiteness seemed to be randomly associated with the English language and everything it related to. It appeared that as long as it was an English learning website in question and/or a

spot with presence of the English language, there must be visuals of racialized White people. This was tangibly demonstrated through a tabulated result of the White characters represented on the ELT websites. Meanwhile, these images of White protagonists in diverse scenarios were unexceptionally situated in a modern and cosmopolitan context outside China which is mediated by the English language. For instance, whenever business English courses were promoted on the websites, there would be, for sure, White foreigners featured as protagonists, whether it is a white-collar office lady on the street with a coffee in hand or a White male giving a lecture in front of a white board. The dominance of Whiteness was also reinforced through the silencing of racialized non-White figures on the websites. Specifically, the racialized Black figures were not only rarely captured or vapoured in the background, but they were positioned as the supporting role to the White figure or as “one of” a group of people like a drop of water in the ocean. Ruecker and Ives (2015) noticed the repeated White ‘native speakers’ on ELT recruitment websites of language schools and revealed that these marketing strategies targeted at potential students and their parents “are not simply marketing language education but a metonymic connection to the social and economic power that comes with Western, White, first-world subject positionality” (p. 752).

Following this line of logic, there is a sense of what Saraswati (2020) calls ‘cosmopolitan whiteness’ at work. Through investigating skin-whitening advertisements in the Indonesian Cosmopolitan magazines, Saraswati departs from the assumption that Whiteness is a national or racial category but goes one step further to propose a construction of ‘cosmopolitan whiteness.’ She refines the framing of White as racially Caucasian people, arguing that it is the affective and virtual quality of cosmopolitanism embodied in Whiteness that is produced, represented and circulated on these whitening ads. Likewise, the exploit of White images on the ELT websites in the current research also indicates to the potential English learners that once you have mastered English, you can enter this fancy, cosmopolitan world outside of China. And this world is essentialized as the Eurocentric West saturated with perceived monolingual White ‘native speakers’ speaking in a standard accent. Linking to the second point above, Whiteness functions on these ELT websites as both a desire and a commodity. This desire for connecting the outside world through English language is particularly true in a craze for standard and authentic English accents, which I shall illustrate next.

The Issue of Accent

In the analysis of all 8 ELT website, the issue of accent has been raised multiple times. Students at Kuaiku shared a major concern on the Filipino teachers' accent and pronunciation when they registered the learning programs in the Philippines. As discussed already, even after attending the classes and convinced of language competency of the Filipino teachers, students would still appeal to learn British accent. On the other hand, language organizations also promoted the pure, authentic accent of North American and European foreign teachers, claiming that this asset would promise an authentic input and produce confident English speech. As such, students harboured not just the desire to learn English, but the desire to learn a specific accent, and ELT organizations catered to this need by promoting the 'native speakers' who were perceived to offer students the desired American and British accents. English language learning was niched down to picking up a particular (standard) accent. Like Whiteness discussed above, everything associated with Whiteness becomes a cosmopolitanism; with English, if you have mastered the performance of speaking English, then you have mastered English and you can become 'cosmopolitan white.' Building on this, I venture to assert that, if accent was not a central concern for Chinese students, this whole ascription of 'native speaking' teachers being White wouldn't be an issue; but because English learning is closely tied with having a native English accent and the ideological connotations it signifies, the whole discussion of 'native speakers' becomes a complex story that brings together race (Whiteness), language (especially accent), native status and even sex/sexuality (Occidental romanticism).

Here, the remarks about accent on the 8 websites respectively pointed to these aspects of accent, what is a pure and native, or standard accent? Who speaks this standard accent and who can judge whether an accent is standard or not? Why is Chinglish strongly denied of its legitimacy? And above all, what is accent? Previous studies on the 'native speaker' question did not seem to make comprehensive connections with accent (Lengeling & Pablo, 2012; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Mahboob et al., 2004; Clark & Paran, 2007; Selvi, 2010; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Wang & Lin, 2013; Jenks, 2019). Studies in China's contexts have dealt solely with students' attitudes towards different accent varieties and, in line with my finding in the current investigation, suggest an overwhelming preference for the native accent (Fang, 2016). In what follows, I address the questions raised here and bridge them with the representations of 'native speakers' on the ELT websites.

What is Accent?

In linguistic studies, accent can refer to pitch or stress from phonetic or orthographic perspectives (Lippi-green, 1994). However, the ordinary usages of accent contain great ambiguity, it is a loose term without a definite meaning (Matsuda, 1991) but refers to “sects of distinctive differences over geographic or social space, most usually phonological and intonation features” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 165). That is, everyone who speaks, no matter where they come from, has an accent, and all ways of speaking a language should be valued on an equal term. Following this logic, when we say someone “has an accent” in ordinary contexts, it is meant “to mark difference from some unstated norm of non-accent, as though only some foreign few have accents” (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1330). This statement has two layers of indications. First, accent is a mark of difference against a hidden norm, non-accent is simply impossible (Matsuda, 1991). As pointed out by Atkinson, Kilby and Roca (2014), the perceived differences between various languages rests on nothing else than prestige. The norm, or standard language, is a social construction through the work of power relations. It is defined by speech of social actors in power/dominance.

Second, the differentiating function of accent means that it works as a means of exclusion and inclusion, separating the Us from the Other. For most people, as Lippi-Green reveals, accent is “the first diagnostic for identification of geographic or social outsiders” (p. 165). Moreover, accent is an indication of one’s identity, “when people reject an accent, they also reject the identity of the person speaking: his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 165). Likewise, as I shall illustrate next, on the websites which I have examined, the standard, native English accent in China was considered posh and distinguish, representing a membership of the modern community and the urban, whereas, although not asserted explicitly, Chinglish was paled into something backward, denying one’s intelligibility in communication hence further participation of this modernized and global world mediated through English competency. Standard American accent and British accent were the only two varieties considered legitimate both by the ELT organizations and Chinese learners.

Standard American Accent

Just like accent, the so-called Standard American accent is also a vague concept without a precise definition (Lippi-Green, 2012) but a variety spoken by only a minority of American citizens (Matsuda, 1991). Lippi-Green (2012) describes Standard American English as a unicorn which average people pick up the mental image along the line as part of the shared cultural

heritage, which no one can trace its exact origins and testify its truthfulness. This reminds us of the term ‘native speaker,’ which is also considered by linguists a myth-like existence.

As mentioned above, accent norm is constructed in line with the speech of people in power. As Matsuda (1991) contends, “People in power are perceived as speaking normal, unaccented English. Any speech that is different from that constructed norm is called an accent” (p. 1361). The Standard American accent is made a ‘standard’ based on the linguistic styles and habits of the dominant race, class and gender (Smitherman, 2022); and British accent can directly refer to the speech by the British royals.

Linking it into the current research, the ELT websites in my investigation embraced the ‘native speakers’ perceived to be speaking standard varieties as the model, the norm and learning target for English learners in China. These standards were exclusively categorized into either British accent or American accent, regardless of the country of origin of the teachers. Even though some studies report that Canadian accent is actually considered ‘more neutral’ than British and American accents (Heller & Duchêne, 2012), in my investigation, it is not really included as a standard. And despite that Australia was included in the website representations as a member of the West, the Australian accent was excluded from the standard category. Indeed, as Kubota (2015) suggests, North American and British varieties of English are deemed superior in many parts of the world, and China is undoubtedly a prime example. Moreover, these ELT websites equated the standard accents to poshness and an elite status, for instance, promotional lines such as “Speak native English to serve distinguished guests” (Spiiker, 2021, Hotel English, n.p.), and “adding some poshness to my business speaking English” (Spiiker, 2021, Workplace Speaking English, n.p.) have elevated the ‘native’ accent as perfect and top tier. In addition, this symbolic capital was pinned down to an accent in European and American style, “... switch into a fancy, Euro-American style when you speak” (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Speaking English, n.p.). This standard accent can also bring more symbolic capitals to those who command it, for example, “How can newbies make a fancy comeback? ... Let English become my workplace competency!” (Spiiker, 2021, Workplace Speaking English, n.p.), which suggested that elimination of one’s English accents to neutral can increase one’s career prospect.

By contrast, Chinglish was positioned as the definite opposite of the standard variations by the ELT websites, I shall next explain.

Stigmatizing Chinglish

ELT organizations put forward two titles, Chinglish and Mute English (or Deaf and Dumb English) as the symbol of ill English competency which Chinese students needed to get rid of. These terms all pointed toward the dilemma of Chinese students learning English for years without achieving fluency. However, more than simply a barrier to effective linguistic communications, Chinglish was attached with ideological connotations.

ELT positioned Chinglish as the total opposite to being fancy and moving upward along the social ladder. For instance, the promotional line, “Having practiced repeatedly but still speak Chinglish?” (Spiiker, 2021, Daily Speaking English, n.p.) posited Chinglish as a deviation of the target English which needs correction; “Not able to communicate effectively with clients because of Chinglish?” (Spiiker, 2021, Foreign Trade Speaking English, n.p.) reckoned that Chinglish is incomprehensible in English communication; “Pure foreign teachers provide you with an immersive native language environment and help you get rid of Chinglish and build up an English mindset” (51 Talk Adult English, 2021, n.p.) and a similar comment by Spiiker, “A perfect accent: Native English-Speaking teachers from Euro-America help you get rid of Chinglish accent” (Spiiker, 2021, Foreign Trade Speaking English, n.p.), indicated that Chinglish is in need of salvation of pure foreign teachers both in terms of a perfect accent and an authentic way of thinking. This stigmatization of Chinglish echoes that of previous studies (Pan, 2015, Henry, 2010, 2013, 2016), which enhances the absolute privilege of ‘native’ English norms.

Students of these ELT organizations also consented to this view of Chinglish. For example, a past student of Kuaiku, Lecter, mentioned in his written testimonial “I have gradually got rid of Chinglish and developed correct pronunciations” (Kuaiku, 2021, Students’ Stories, n.p.). Here, Chinglish is obviously devalued and seen as imperfect, incorrect and unacceptable for English learning. As Hall (1997) points out, stereotyping in itself is an attempt to fix meanings in its flow. Henry’s (2010) extensive ethnographic observation sheds light on this issue significantly.

In analyzing what Chinglish means to different stakeholders in China’s English as a second language industry, Henry (2010) holds that Chinglish is not a coherent system of non-standard English since it lacks ontological status for a distinct English variety. He argues that rather, Chinglish is an ideological judgment on the English utterances of others by someone with perceived expertise and authority in English. That is, it depends on the authorized listener who interprets the other’s speech to arbitrate whether an English speech is appropriate English or

degraded to Chinglish. Such authority in English maintains and reinforces the hierarchy between ‘native speakers,’ Chinese foreign language professionals and students (Henry, 2010). In the case of the 8 ELT websites in my research, the ELT organizations have positioned themselves as authorities and experts to establish American and British accent as the pure, native and authentic while Chinglish as the sub-standard, and in parallel, the ‘native speaker’ foreign teachers were also positioned as the saviors to Chinese students in need of salvations.

Meanwhile, as revealed in the literature review, the English language has a fundamental relevance to China’s modernization progress and aspire for globalization (Bolton & Botha, 2015; Pan, 2015; Gil, 2016). Master of English is a ticket to participate in China’s modernization, whereas “Chinglish is thus a kind of failed modernity ... a denial that can be offered by any of those groups ‘authorized to speak’” (Henry, 2010, p. 685). English speakers are revealed of their identity, social capital and membership of “a class of globally competent Chinese citizens as signified through English fluency” (Henry, 2016, p. 188). To quote Henry (2010) at length, in China,

Chinglish acts, within the Chinese English speech community, as a sorting mechanism of inclusion or exclusion where those who can participate in China’s globalizing project (the educated, the urban, the cosmopolitan) are separated from those who cannot (the poor, the rural, the backward). (Henry, 2010, p. 686)

Just as the construct of Standard accent, the counter construct of Chinglish is also intertwined with power, authority and social capital. The naturalized constructs such as ‘native speakers,’ accent, Chinglish and Standard American accent are signifiers of unequal power relations and uneven social capital between the elite and the disadvantaged groups, the ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers, and the standard accent and strong accented. In doing so, the ELT websites included the ‘native’ speakers and the standard varieties spoken by them as the cosmopolitan, the distinguished, and contaminantly, they excluded the ‘non-native’ speakers and the stigmatized Chinglish as backward and low-profile. Given the predominance of Whiteness in the representations of ‘native speakers’ and standard English varieties associated with them, I am in line with Henry (2010) that “Chinglish underwrites a racialized perception of the Chinese English language user, doomed to never participate as equal partner in a new global milieu” (p. 686). At the same time, the category of ‘native speaker’ and the Standard English varieties are also racialized constructs.

Last but not least, throughout the discussion around accent, there was a subtle equation of accent with the English language. That is, when promoting English language programs, both the ELT websites and students essentialized it with learning a standard form of English accent. The pursuit of English language was subtly morphed into picking up an accent. Likewise, when emphasizing English teachers' competency, accent became the main concern on the websites and particularly by students. The English teaching competency has to some degree been reduced to the ability of speaking British or American accent.

Additionally, from my analysis stems another symbol for modernity through English, an English name. To explain, every English learner and teacher in China has an English name. For instance, the Chinese teachers appeared on the ELT websites were all introduced with their English names. Henry (2012) points out that "An English name in China becomes a key component of an emerging international and cosmopolitan identity, one shaped by the demands of China's emerging modernity" (p. 108). For a Chinese to become an English teacher, it only seems credible to have an English name. Whereas for foreigners, their white face is a ready credential before anything.

To summarize this section, I have delineated the attributes to 'native speakers' on the ELT websites. Self-positioning as authorities in English language education and speaking from an authorized space, these ELT websites have naturalized the category of 'native speakers' and fixed the way of talking about it despite its problematic nature. Especially on 6 of the ELT websites, they featured the 'native speakers' as a group of White, European and American originated foreign teachers from whom sprung a perceived global vision and cosmopolitan advantage, hence promising a better English learning results. I have argued that Whiteness and accent were two central issues in constructing the discourse of 'native speakers' on these ELT websites. The predominance and omnipresence of Whiteness was not only established through an overwhelmingly large numbers of White figures, but enhanced and reproduced through the silenced and marginalized representations of non-White characters. The speech by these White 'native speakers' were perceived as the 'native accent' and the norm of the English language, representing a posh, fancy and elite status. On the contrary, Chinglish was a stigmatized category whose speakers were in need of salvations and enlightenment to enter a modernized and cosmopolitan world.

English as a Proxy for Cultural Hegemony

Beyond the findings discussed above, by representing White ‘native speakers’ on their marketing websites, the ELT organizations in China were essentially constructing the English language as a proxy for the global cultural hegemony of first British and later American cultural forms.

The concept of cultural hegemony first developed by Karl Marx and later by Antonio Gramsci (1935) is about how domination or rule is maintained through ideological or cultural control, such as by socializing the dominated class into the values, norms, beliefs and behaviour of the ruling class. It is usually achieved through social institutions such as schools, courts and the media, by making the dominated group believe that the worldview of the ruling class, and the social and economic structures that embody it are natural, legitimate, and designed for the benefit of all. Translating this concept into my analysis, the tacit agreement and naturalizing of ‘native speaker’ privilege is part and parcel of the cultural hegemony of English language and the culture it embodies.

In my understanding, the influence of British and American cultural hegemony on China could be attributed to two factors. First, as I have illustrated in the literature review, the desire for Western culture and English language initiated from the sense of inferiority brought by the defeat in the first Opium War in 1840. Although under a “controlled appropriation,” the English language teaching was endorsed by Chinese government owing to China’s internal need for regaining the state power by learning from the West. The pursuit for English language education in China has historically been triggered by practical needs for the nation’s development, despite the ups and downs of its status in a long period of time. Second, the colonial legacy of first the expansion of the British empire in the late 19th century and later the United State as the leading economic power in the world in the 20th century has set the foundation for the global dominance of the English language. This external environment, combined with the Open Door Policy in 1978 for the modernization and globalization projects, further boost the contact with and impact of Western ideologies and culture in China. However, under the new world order, as Smith (1999) argues, globalization tends to become the disguise of what is actually manifestation of colonialism.

In my study, the ELT website representations were an example of following the logics of colonality. The exploiting of cultural landmarks in the representations, such as having tea with

the Queen of England in front of the Buckingham Palace and the possibility of visiting the Opera House, are essentially selling to the readers the idea of engaging the Western world at the highest levels. It is not feeding animals in the zoo, or going for groceries, and mundane activities as such that were promoted but only the “high culture” of the traditionally English-speaking countries. The English language was thus perceived as a sort of privilege particularly ascribed to the upper class and the world outside of China, essentialized as the English-speaking West, was positioned as the superior. As Asante (2006) explains, colonization takes place not only by physically occupying the land of peoples, but it also occurs through colonizing the minds. That is, colonialism operates not only in material forms but also exerts continuous impact in Cultural knowledge and ideological forms even after the colonizers have left the land. Part of the results is the belief that the cultural values of the colonizer are inherently superior to one’s own, where Western knowledge is considered as universal, neutral and apolitical (Ignolo & Walsh, 2018). And the ELT websites’ representations were an epitome of this ideology.

Furthermore, the desire invoked by these representations was mediated by English language competency, prominently that of the Standard English. According to the ELT websites, the British and American English varieties were exclusively pinned down as the superior and standard norm. By contrast, Chinglish was typically labelled as inferior and non-standard, other English varieties like Indian English were not valued, and Canadian and Australian teachers were only valued in so far as the pass for American or British English. Irish, New Zealand and South African Englishes were not mentioned. Smith (1999) illuminates that imperial and colonial practices have constructed the colonizers stories and gazes as universal truths, marginalizing the narratives of the Other. The privileging of Standard English on the ELT websites in my analysis can be read as an internalization of this colonizing gaze, with the “regime of knowledge” about the English language and ‘native speakers’ being produced and reinscribed in the representations.

Additionally, my analysis of the ELT websites suggested the tendency of commodification of the English language. To explain, the global imperialism of the English language in contemporary society has benefited from the British and America maintaining control over it with national organizations and ELT industry (Pennycook, 1994, 1998). The hegemonic status of English means that, “whether or not individuals, institutions or states ‘choose’ (seemingly freely) to learn, teach or facilitate English, the spread of English is part and

parcel of unequal power relationships” (Ives, 2009, p. 662). And this has resulted in commodification of English where “English is seen as an economic resource, a commodity that can be exchanged in the market for material profit” (Park & Wee, 2012, p. 124). The popularity of ELT organizations is precisely the outcome of the perceived pragmatic benefit brought by English language competency (Botton, 2002). When language becomes commodified, Heller (2010) argues, it “acts as a resource to be produced, controlled, distributed, valued, and constrained” and language teaching increasingly attempts to “control what counts as legitimate language and who counts as legitimate speakers of any given language” (p. 108). In my analysis, in constructing the discourse of ‘native speakers,’ the ELT websites were precisely making an effort to outline the Standard English and Whiteness as the legitimate ‘native speakers’ of the English language. Moreover, exploiting charming White male bodies embedded with a sense of romanticism to “sell” to learners is a further proof of commodification. It is not just the language, but its speakers and the superiority of their social and cultural identity that are commodified by these websites, all of which invoked a desire in the audience that the promotions promised to fulfil.

Following up, I discuss the category of Filipino foreign teachers on two Philippines based ELT organization, which offers a counter representation of the White ‘native speakers.’

A Counter Representation: Filipino English Teachers

Previous empirical research investigating the foreign teacher recruitment ads have come to a united conclusion that the White ‘native speakers’ are predominantly represented as the ideal English teacher (Jenks, 2019; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Qin & Ibrahim, 2021; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). While my analysis has suggested similar results as above discussed, there are more complexities regarding who is a ‘native speaker’ in these websites and who are legitimate English teachers in the context of China. The representations of Filipino English teachers on two ELT websites have partially disrupted the Euro-American White dominant discourse.

The first crack on the canvas filled with European-American Whiteness was from the world map on the Kuaiku website, which is an Asia-centered map labeled with students’ country of origin. Compared with the Euro-centric world map with teachers’ home countries displayed on Likeshuo website, the Kuaiku map presented a vital difference in that it put the students to the forefront and did not embrace the Eurocentric ideology.

Meanwhile, although the Filipino teachers were only the alternative of Inner Circle countries for Chinese parents and students, they have proved their effectiveness in English teaching and received acknowledges from students and parents. Students who have attended English classes given by both White foreigners and Filipinos testified that ‘accent’ may have been the only advantage of the former, among all professional qualities required of an English teacher. In fact, ‘native speaking’ White foreigners and ‘non-native speaking’ Filipino teachers have the same credentials, the only thing different is that the former are White. The native accent may have been considered as the innate credential of the White foreign teachers, but accent is something that Filipino teachers can acquire just the same, and above all, as already discussed, they teach well.

The initial resistance and denial against Filipino teachers’ competency by students and parents indicated that the Euro- and American-centric beliefs were deeply ingrained in Chinese learners’ perceptions. As Kubota (2019) remarks, such beliefs can be “reflected in the destinations of study abroad. Inner circle countries are predominantly chosen as locations for intensive language study” (p. 353). Indeed, the Philippines has never been a priority among the list of the study abroad destinations, however, the economic save of studying in the Philippines has converted some parents and students to choose it as an alternative.

One parent astutely revealed in her testimonial that Chinese parents consider only study abroad destinations in European and North American countries as authentic English study trips, reflecting the common ideology that “Euro- and US-centric knowledge associated with the superiority of white native speakers of standardized English evokes the economic wealth attached to certain types of English and English speakers” (Kubota, 2019, p. 353).

Furthermore, although at Kuaiku, the ‘native speaker’ was still taken as a natural category, which the Filipinos did not belong to, the category of ideal English teachers was no longer hegemonically represented by White people from the West thanks to the recognized legitimacy of Filipino teachers. Just as the founder of QQ English at Kuaiku, Raiko Fujioka, has confirmed, precisely because they are the best English learners, the Filipino teachers know well the rules of second language acquisition. Here, the fact that the ‘non-native’ status becomes the strength of an effective English teacher makes a powerful challenge to the dominant structure identified in my analysis. Likewise, although the framework of the British/American standard English remained intact and indeed the leader of its curriculum developing team was a White

male, another member of the team was a Japanese professional. And the fact that a Taiwanese non-native speaking English teacher was invited to testify the professionalism of Kuaiku English is already a breakthrough in this profession.

The success of Kuaiku English has eloquently showcased that Filipinos who have successfully commanded the English skills and gone through professional training can make successful and efficient ELT teachers. It thus poses a sound boundary moment in defining the ‘native speakers.’ Now, before a conclusion of the chapter, I shall link my analysis back to the theoretical framework.

Linking Back to Poststructuralism

My analysis in this study was informed by poststructuralism, particularly, I employed the lens of representation (Hall, 2013) to investigate who and what a ‘native speaker’ is and how it is represented. The concepts of language and meaning sit at the core of poststructuralist theories. Poststructuralism argues that meanings do not exist as pre-given but are constructed through the use of languages and that meanings are always in deferral (Derrida, 1976). However, power works exactly to fix meaning in its flow and produce discourses, or knowledge, about human activities (Foucault, 1972). And one great way to deconstruct the fixed knowledge is deconstruction (Derrida, 1976), which is to read closely into the text and locate the innate illogic of it, in order to challenge binary dichotomies such as ‘non-/native speaker’ and open them up for interpretations. Representational study does just that (Hall, 1997). In my study, as I have shown, the term ‘native speaker’ cannot be pinned down with a precise definition, and it is argued to be a ghost like being existing only in people’s stories (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991). However, the ‘native/non-native’ dichotomy persists as a solid regime in the ELT profession and exhibits materialised effects to ELT professionals. Within my critical analysis of a select of 8 ELT websites in China’s context, I have taken a close investigation into the languages, or representational strategies, employed on the ELT websites. As I have shown, these strategies included the use of images, texts, videos and so on to establish such aspects as authority, physicality and accent norm around the ‘native speaker.’ In and throughout this investigation, I have found several binaries such as native/non-native, White/non-White, and standard/non-standard. The ELT websites have constructed an esteemed status and authority of the White ‘native speakers’ who represented the standard and norm of the English language. This

predominant status was further reinforced by differentiated representations of the Chinese ‘non-native’ speakers as well as the marginalized representations of other racialized minority figures.

In Foucault’s (1972) phrase, there has been a whole ‘regime of knowledge’ about ‘native speakers’ constructed and circulating on these ELT websites in China. Below I shall explain the power relations behind this regime and what it closes and opens up as possibilities.

Inclusion While Exclusion: Concluding the Chapter

By way of summarizing this chapter, I shall give clear answers to the research questions I have posed in the beginning of this thesis. I first answer the five sub-questions in order, then conclude by answering the leading research question.

First, what are the strategies that are used to represent the category of ‘native speakers’ on ELT websites in China? The 8 ELT websites within my critical discourse analysis employed representational strategies including texts, images, slogans, videos, audios, numbers and digits and maps, which worked collectively to construct the category of the ‘native speaker.’

With respect to the second question, what is the relationship, if any, between these strategies and power? There are three layers of power relations at work. First and foremost, the power of the ELT organizations. In introducing their organizations, these ELT websites first established themselves as the pioneer, the leading character and the expert in this field. Therefore, they have been speaking as an authority about what and who a ‘native speaker’ is from an authorized space. This authority has granted them power to naturalize and normalize the category of ‘native speakers’ without offering any theoretical definitions. In other words, in talking about ‘native speakers’ and the English language (such as what is a native, standard accent), these ELT organizations are the ones ‘authorized to speak,’ producing and reproducing a discourse around ‘native speakers’ which is constructed as ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1972).

Following up, these organizations further employed texts, images, slogans and strategies as such to establish some binaries, such as ‘native/non-native,’ White/non-White, pure and authentic accent versus Chinglish and foreign teachers versus domestic Chinese teachers, which all contributed to the discource around and knowledge about the ‘native speakers.’ In and throughout this construction process, (White) ‘native speaker’ foreigners from Europe and America have been pinned at the superior pole and predominantly constructed as the ideal English teachers and were perceived to represent the standard of the English language. They were associated with authority, authenticity and cosmopolitanism in the way they speak and

perform the English language. To be specific, the British and American accents are established as the absolute standard against which other forms of English accents are arbitered. One of the results of this regime of truth is that Chinglish is deemed the opposite of the ‘native’ accent in every aspect, degraded as backward and low profile, and its speakers are doomed to be denied of entry to the cosmopolitan ‘outside world.’

Moreover, the students and parents were also attributed with power on the ELT websites. While White ‘native speakers’ were attributed with authority in teaching English and enjoyed privilege of star teachers due to their high face value, they were at the same time being evaluated and assessed by the customer students, sometimes through the form of tangible monetary rewards. Additionally, with the romanticism projected on the White male teachers, these White male bodies were likely positioned as some sort of product sold by ELT organizations like Lishuo Adult English.

In terms of the third sub question, what do these representational strategies assume and at the same time create about the category of ‘native speaker’? Overall, the ‘native speaker’ has been hegemonically constructed with the following attributes: A) ‘native speakers’ were predominantly represented by a group of White foreign teachers from traditionally English-speaking countries in Europe and America, mostly the UK and the US, with Canada and Australia in occasional cases. These ‘native’ teachers were perceived to bring about the global vision and connect students with the outside world, which are essentialized as the Eurocentric West, hence produce better English learning results. B) On these websites, ‘native speaking’ foreign teachers were required of lower professional threshold than Chinese English teachers to be recruited by the organizations. The ELT organizations positioned Whiteness as a ready credential of the foreign teachers which Chinese teachers needed extra professional and educational qualities to make up for. The assisting roles of Chinese teachers also reinforced the privileged status of ‘native speakers.’ C) ‘Native speakers’ were further defined with physical beauty. The ELT websites, typically the Lishuo website, attached a ‘high face value’ to the native speaking foreign teachers, a beauty standard which is pinned down with Whiteness, and these foreign teachers were likely haloed as celebrities. Occasionally, this beauty can go beyond racial and national boundaries to include anyone resembling the Caucasian physical features. D) On top of promoting the gorgeous star teachers, the Lishuo website tended to project a sense of Occidental romanticism onto the White, ‘native’ male teachers and position the online lessons

some sort of romantic encounters. Inversely, the White male ‘native speakers’ who buy in this romantic idealization could enjoy a great popularity among students. E) Apart from being predominantly associated with the native status, Whiteness makes an omnipresence on the ELT websites on every possible spot that has to do with English. I argue that this construct of Whiteness, especially the Whiteness of ‘native speakers,’ extended to the audience and English learners a possibility of becoming a part of the cosmopolitan, outside world mediated by English and exclusively represented by the White figures. On the contrary, non-White characters have been considerably marginalized in the representations of the ELT profession in China, and this again reiterated the dominance of Whiteness. F) Significantly, accent matters so much to both English learners and English language organizations in China, to the point that accent alone can signify one’s English (teaching) competency and that learning English is morphed into learning a specific type of Standard accent, either the British accent or the American accent which the ‘native speakers’ serve as the perceived gatekeeper. One may arguably say that if accent were not an issue, the whole discussion about ‘native speakers’ would not have been an issue on these ELT websites. G) With a deeper delve, I argue that the dominant White ‘native speaker’ status actually reflects the British/US cultural hegemony through the English language. The ELT industry circulates the ideology that the world outside of China, essentialized as the Anglophone West, is innately superior and that their language and culture is natural and neutral. In this logic, the discourse about who counts as the standard of English and what counts as legitimate speakers are constructed as a “regime of truth” through the gaze of the West.

Nevertheless, despite the hegemony of White ‘native speakers’ on six websites which promote Western foreign teachers, the representations of Filipino English teachers on two Philippines based ELT websites provided a counterpoint of discussion. The Filipinos were portrayed as the best English teachers precisely because they are successful second language learners. The testimonials from students and parents have confirmed the effectiveness and competency of these ‘non-native’ English teachers. At one point, in comparison with the responsible Filipino teachers, the ‘native’ accent and Whiteness may have become the only advantage of (some) White ‘native’ speaking teachers. The meaning of this boundary moment within the whole native speaker discourse is profound, since, although the Standard English framework remained intact, the Filipino teachers were positioned as protagonists at the two

organizations hence disrupting the absolute authority of ‘native speakers’ in English language teaching profession.

Now it is time to answer the fourth and fifth sub-questions of my research: In and throughout these representational strategies, who is included, and concomitantly, who is excluded from the category of ‘native speaker’? and Whether this category of ‘native speaker’ is racialized or not, and if so, how? From the answer to the third question, we can clearly see that ‘native speakers’ were predominantly represented as gorgeous White foreign teachers from the US and the UK who speak in Standard American accent or British accent and were perceived to bring the best pedagogy of English teaching. In a single case, though, a beautiful Chinese female whose physical features resembled that of racialized White people and who spoke the Standard American accent was also included in this category.

As such, the status of ‘native speakers’ were predominantly reserved for White people from traditionally English-speaking countries, which, in China, refer mostly to the UK and the US. Further, it exclusively referred to a constructed cosmopolitan Whiteness. On the other hand, the Chinese teachers and other racialized non-White people in the ELT field were excluded, or, to say the least, substantially marginalized, from the ‘native speaker’ category. In this sense, the ‘native speaker’ is definitely a racialized category where White people and Whiteness enjoy the priority and the racialized Other was paled as subsidiary. However, as my analysis showed, the presence of a group of legitimate Filipino teachers have demonstrated other possibilities than the absolute authority of White ‘native speakers.’ It can be seen as a resistance to the White supremacy in the ELT profession and encourages alternatives.

Now, I shall conclude and answer the leading research question, How is ‘native speaker’ represented on a purposeful sample of ELT websites in China? Through a critical discourse analysis, I have deconstructed the representations on 8 ELT websites in China and examined what has been naturalized as ‘truth’ about ‘native speakers’ through these representations. The 8 ELT websites first established themselves as authorities and experts in English teaching. Then, speaking from an authorized space, these websites not only naturalized the ‘native speaker’ as a ready category but constructed a complicated discourse about ‘native speakers’ through employing a series of representational strategies including texts, images, slogans, videos, audios, numbers and digits and maps. Meanwhile, the silhouettes of ‘native speakers’ have been filled up with predominantly White English teachers from traditionally English-speaking countries,

typically the UK and the US, who speak in British accent or Standard American accent. For these ‘native speakers,’ Whiteness is a ready credential for the professional position, while other teachers of the non-white category would need extra credentials to be admitted to the ELT organizations. The websites also attributed these White ‘native speakers’ with different features such as the global vision, an ideal pedagogy and a high face value. In promoting the gorgeous White appearances, the White male figures were also attached with a hint of romanticism.

As Derrida (1976) elucidates, any binary contains hierarchy and the relation of subordination. As I have shown, in the native/non-native binary constructed by these websites, the ‘native speakers’ were positioned as the superior whereas Chinese and other ‘non-native’ English teachers were defined as the inferior. The privilege of White people was reproduced through the assisting roles of and higher recruitment benchmarks for Chinese teachers. This is in line with what Solórzano (2012) describes as institutional racism, which deems non-White individuals essentially unqualified as English teachers. Along with that, the ‘native speech’ spoken by the White native speakers is elevated as the posh, standard accent, against which Chinglish is stigmatized as underdeveloped.

However, largely differed from previous studies, the supremacy of Whiteness in my analysis is fractured by two Philippines based organizations which bring to the forefront the legitimacy of Filipino English teachers.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this chapter, I start with an overview of the whole thesis, reviewing the main elements of my research. I then review the major findings of my analysis. Next, I reflect on the limitations of my study. Following up, I outline the implications of my study to different social actors as well as potential directions for future research on the issue of ‘native speakers.’ I end this chapter with concluding remarks.

Overview of the Dissertation

The Chomskyan concept of ‘native speaker’ is a long-debated issue in linguistic and language education realms. It is like a ghost which everyone talks about, yet no one has seen in reality (Cook, 1999). Theoretically, as I have shown, this term is problematic in nature. The native/non-native binary triggered by it has been employed in recruitment practices and brought about materialised discriminations. In these empirical efforts in investigating ‘native speakers,’ studies from a representational perspective, let alone representing ‘native speakers’ in China’s contexts, are lacking. Since ‘native speaker’ does not stand as a legitimate linguistic concept but is a social construct attached with political meanings, understanding the process of this construction becomes significant in dismantling and challenging this concept and mitigate its material influences in ELT profession.

The main purpose of my dissertation was to deconstruct the process by which the ‘native speaker’ is made and represented through examining representations on a group of selected English websites in China. My dissertation was informed by poststructuralism, specifically its focuses on language, discourse and power/knowledge. Poststructuralism holds that knowledge is constructed through signs governed by arbitrary and artificial rules created by human, and that meanings do not exist independently but are attached through human interpretations of language. Drawing on Derrida (1976) and Stuart Hall (2013), my contention was to look deeply inside the representations of ‘native speakers’ and deconstruct the discursive formation process of this category and the regime of knowledge it represented. Through a critical examination of the representational strategies, namely the images, texts, advertising and so on, I have worked to understand how ‘native speakers’ were talked about, defined and what meanings have been attached to this term through the work of power. Doing so has afforded us insights into the

producing, maintaining and reproducing process of ‘native speakers’ and hence the opportunity to open up its meaning for possibilities.

In this study, I employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) as both methodology and method. Through a critical analysis of the representations and discourses about ‘native speakers’ on ELT websites in China, I described, interpreted and explained the ways in which language is used to construct, maintain and legitimize the inequality and power relations of the non-/native dichotomy in ELT profession. In light of CDA, I have focused on not only what is present, but what is absent in the constructing process of the ‘native speaker’ through the website representations. CDA is diverse and flexible in its design, largely dependent on the specific context and research questions of the study. My data collection and analytical processes were partially informed by Ruecker and Ives (2015) since their study was close to mine.

In the data collection phase, I first created a corpus of ELT websites through general search of key words on two major Chinese sites, Baidu and Weibo, which resulted in a group of 47 English related organizations in China. I then conducted a second round of filtering by piloting each of the websites, eliminating ineffective websites and keeping only those of working ELT organizations, which resulted in my final corpus of 34 ELT websites. Lastly, I saved all pages of each website in the corpus using an online plug-in application, Fireshot, for analysis.

My analysis of the ELT websites aligned with the bottom-up and emergent nature of CDA method and involved several steps. First, I gained an initial impression of the ELT websites by browsing the pages I had saved, skimming through and taking notes of the layout and sections. Second, referencing Ruecker and Ives (2015) and based on the initial skimming, I created an analytical matrix orienting the general characteristics of both the ELT organizations and the teachers being represented on the websites. Therefore, my second round of reading involved documenting detailed information of these ELT in the matrix. Third, based on the matrix, I evaluated the 34 websites using three criteria, namely relevance to my research questions, the degree of user friendliness of the format and clarity of representations, based on a four-point rating scale, very close/well/clear, close/well/clear, less close/well/clear and not close/well/clear. With evaluation, I identified 8 websites which are rated very close/well/clear in all three criteria, which then became the data for my close investigation. Fourth, focusing on these 8 ELT websites made this doctoral research more manageable and afforded me a vertical perspective of the representations. In this stage, I created a document for each of the 8 websites,

translating, describing and explaining the content, including but not limit to texts, images, format, videos and audios. These elements are what I call ‘representational strategies’ employed by the ELT websites in representing ‘native speakers.’ I summarize the main findings of my critical analysis in next section.

Major Findings of My Study

The ELT websites were self-promoted as the pioneers and leaders of the field of ELT who have acquired expertise and experience through employment of Europe and America based, internationalized pedagogic frameworks, course materials and English teachers. These organizations hereby not only naturalized the term ‘native speakers’ without specific definitions but spoke from an authorized space about who and what is a ‘native speaker’ in and throughout representations of three categories of teachers, namely European and American foreign English teachers, Chinese English teachers and Filipino English teachers. My main argument is that while ‘native speaker’ is a problematic term whose meaning cannot be pinned down, these ELT websites has constructed a hegemonic category of ‘native speakers’ represented by a group of young and gorgeous White foreign English teachers of European and American origins who speak in either British or Standard American accent. However, the authority of White ‘native speaker’ English teachers was not inviolable in my analysis. I shall demonstrate this in my review of main findings.

First, the 8 ELT websites within my analysis all claimed to employ foreign teachers with strict standards and multiple rounds of selections. This initial impression slightly differs from that of previous studies that ELT schools and organizations randomly recruit foreign teachers without requiring professional qualities (Leonard, 2019; Stanley, 2013). However, a closer examination of the differentiated recruitment requirements respectively for foreign and Chinese English teachers suggests that foreign teachers of European and American origins enjoy a more flexible criteria with a competitive payment.

Second, the foreign teachers from Europe and North America, as promoted by the ELT websites, were predominantly White. These White ‘native speakers’ were symbolized as a pure, authentic and native accent; they are therefore positioned as bringing about an authentic ‘English’ mindset and a more advanced English teaching pedagogy, promising more efficient learning results. Contrast against this, Chinglish and the Chinese way of thinking along with it were denounced. The White ‘native speakers’ spoke posh, distinguished and perfect English and

were the ideal target. The perfect accent referred to either British accent or Standard American accent and were said to symbolize an authentic European and American mindset. Moreover, it resembled a more advanced outside world beyond China. In doing so, the ELT websites also constructed for learners an imagined monolingual speech community predominated by White ‘native speakers’ and standard English spoken by them.

Third, on portraying ‘native speakers,’ the ELT websites have put forth a homogenous standard of beauty which is termed high face value. This standard referred to anyone who is small, young and has gorgeous physical features resembling that of the Caucasians. These beautiful ‘White’ teachers were also attributed with halo of stars, attached with labels and descriptions irrelevant to language teaching. Meanwhile, at times, the gorgeous, young, White male bodies were commercialized as a selling point of the ELT organizations to attract (female) students and projected with a hint of Occidental romanticism.

Fourth, Whiteness made an omnipresence throughout the websites and went beyond a racial category at times. On the one hand, White figures were exploited by ELT organizations on random spots of their websites as long as it was about the English language. It seems that English was equated with Whiteness. Furthermore, this Whiteness was not restricted by national or racial boundaries but became a signifier for internationalization and modernization. Echoing the first finding, this Whiteness was used to signify an outside world beyond China which is more advanced and cosmopolitan, and which is mediated through the English language and likely consisted of a White monolingual speech community.

Fifth, in parallel with Whiteness, accent is another issue of essential concern of representing ‘native speakers’ on these ELT websites. Both Chinese students and ELT organizations put a strong emphasis on pursuing a pure, native and standard accent in terms of English learning. The ELT organizations catered precisely to this demand by promoting the European and North American ‘native speaker’ teachers. Like ‘native speakers,’ the terms accent and standard accent are also social constructs (Lippi-green, 1994; Matsuda, 1991). Everyone has an accent but the speech habit of those in dominant power and elite class was set as standard and norm, any speech different from it is considered accented (Matsuda, 1991; Reagan, 2005). Therefore, the craze for standard accent on the ELT websites, which referred exclusively to British accent and the Standard American accent, was at the price of denigrating the category of Chinglish and essentially a pursuit for an idealized identity. In China’s context, the English

language is significant for the country's modernizing and globalizing projects, and mastering English is a symbolic permit to participate in the modern and cosmopolitan world, Chinglish is therefore 'a failed modernity' (Henry, 2010). Here, English was essentialized as a certain accent, and learning English was niched down to picking up an accent. If you have mastered the performance of speaking English, you have mastered English and you can become modernized. Whiteness and standard accent worked in tango in constructing the regime of 'native speakers' on the ELT websites in my study.

Sixth, underlying the predominant status of White foreigners from the West as 'native' English speakers is a logic of coloniality. The colonializer's gaze naturalizes stories of the West as superior and norm, whereas other cultures and lands are inferior. My analysis can indicate the tendency that ELT industry internalizes this gaze and invokes the desire of its audience for engaging the Western world at the highest levels. The White 'native speaker' dominance and proxy of English language is a by-product of this colonial legacy and cultural hegemony. The ambiguity of English being both as a desire and something to despise of has existed since the government-led English language education in after China's defeat in the Opium War. It is interesting to know that in face of China's recent rapid economic growth, whether or not the English imperialism would still exert a significant impact on China.

Last but not least, in and throughout the representations of White 'native speakers,' Chinese English teachers were usually posited as assisting roles like tutors and administrative managers or stereotyped as teaching overseas tests preparation courses or entrance level courses. Such positioning contributed to perpetuating and reproducing the privilege and dominance of White 'native speakers.' However, the portrait of a group of Filipino English teachers on two Philippines based ELT websites challenged the absolute authority of White 'native speakers' as the ideal. Instead of Eurocentric representations, these two websites took an Asian-centred and student-centred position in its representations. Most significantly, the Filipino teachers became the protagonists in English teaching profession. In reverse to the privilege of 'native speakers,' the 'non-native' status of Filipino teachers precisely became their advantage, that is, they know the rules of second language learning as successful English learners. Therefore, being 'non-native' made them more professional and experienced English teachers and their effectiveness and professionalism were also acknowledged by Chinese students and parents. Although still inheriting the British/American Standard English framework, the fact that a Taiwanese non-

native speaking English teacher was invited to testify the professionalism of Kuaiku English is already a breakthrough in this profession. The success of Filipino English teachers eloquently showcased that ‘non-native speakers’ who have successfully commanded the English skills and gone through professional training can make successful and efficient ELT teachers.

Limitations of the Study

When it comes to the limitations of the study, first, my study focused on a close-up examination of 8 ELT websites, which is a small number in terms of representing the general trend of ELT market in China. However, considering the scale of a doctoral research, 8 websites are within manageable measure; meanwhile, these 8 websites were the results of multiple rounds of selection and evaluation out of a larger corpus from key words searching. In terms of relevance, format and clarity, the 8 websites are representative of the corpus. This being said, if future studies are also interested in this subject, a larger sample can indeed increase the credibility of the data.

Second, as a critical discourse analysis drawing upon mainly textual data, I recognize that there is a lack of ethnographic data on how people perceive the foreign English teachers and how the organizations use these teachers to satisfy their desires. Due to the nature of the methodology, CDA usually deals with non-human objects and focuses on how language is used in producing meanings. On the websites of my research, there have been authentic testimonials of students and parents, as well as video clips of real class scenarios, which afforded me a peak into the actual activities between students and teachers and provided valuable insights into the construct of ‘native speaker.’ Nonetheless, I acknowledge the possibility that the clients’ reflections were carefully selected by the ELT websites for marketing purpose. I also admit that my analysis would be enriched by ethnographic data about how the ‘native speaker’ teachers were assessed by students and parents, as well as how these websites was perceived by their consumers.

Third, in line with the common critiques of the methodology of critical discourse analysis (CDA), CDA researchers are often suspected of being “cherry-pick” in discourse analyses and lack of rigor in their conclusions. In my study, I recognize my subject positioning as an English as a foreign language learner from China who has experienced changed of views about ‘native speakers’ before and after her graduate studies in Canada. Meanwhile, my analysis was closely guided by the central problem of the research, how is the ‘native speaker’ represented on these

websites? That is, in my analytical process, I strictly kept in mind that this is a bottom-up work, meaning that it is not me who decides the meanings of the data but that the data guided me to understand the multiple layers in constructing the ‘native speaker.’

Contributions and Implications of the Study

First, my study contributes to a growing body of studies on the native speaker issue in the context of China. As I have shown in the literature review, the native speaker issue has only gained attention in ELT in China within the recent years, yet the native speaker construct is a contested terrain of race, language, gender and power (Kubota, 2020). Through a critical analysis of the discourse around ‘native speakers’ constructed by the ELT websites, I have demonstrated that it is an exclusive category reserved to predominantly White people from European and North American countries and speak either British or American varieties of standard accents. Although gender may complicate the issue, my main conclusion in this study is that the ‘native speaker’ construct is a hegemonic regime which racializes and includes White English teachers with certain features while contaminable excludes other groups.

Second, methodologically, by looking at the taken-for-granted nature of ‘native speaker’ category and examining the representations which construct this discourse, my study is already a first step of intervening and disrupting its fixed meaning. Meaning does not readily exist but is produced and circulated by human practices through language uses, and it is fixed by power in its eternal deferral (Hall, 2013). Therefore, ‘native speaker’ does not pre-exist before this category is socially constructed, circulated and reinforced by discourses and representations employed by ELT professionals, learners, as well as institutions and private organizations. My study has precisely worked to unveil this formation process and understand the power dynamics in this regime of truth (Foucault, 1972), which, according to Hall (1997), is the initial step of disrupting the representations and the discourse around ‘native speakers.’ The ELT websites not only naturalized this term as a ready concept, but they filled in this imagined category with predominantly White people from Europe and North America, mainly the UK and the US with Canada and Australia in occasional cases. Meanwhile, for future researchers interested in representations of ‘native speakers,’ different platforms such as TikTok and Snapchat can be a meaningful point of departure, just as Cai (2023) inspires us, “new ways and forms of representation are adding to the dynamics of and complexity of racial discourse worth investigating” (p. 374).

Third, on top of confirming the White supremacy in ELT as in previous studies (Amin, 1997, 2000, 2001; Amin & Kubota, 2004; Curtis & Romney, 2006; Doan, 2016; Faez, 2011; S. Jenkins, 2017; Kubota, 2019; Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009; Mahboob, 2003; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Romney, 2010; Ruecker, 2011; Ruecker & Ives, 2015; Selvi, 2010, 2018; Shuck, 2001, 2004, 2006), my study has revealed an important counter representation of ‘non-native speakers’ from the Philippines as legitimate English teachers. Although Filipino teachers were featured on only 2 of the 8 websites and far from overthrowing the privilege of White ‘native speakers,’ their existence and testified effectiveness by Chinese parents and students is already a powerful contention. Future research can be on the outlook for more boundary moments like this in studying the ‘native speaker’ issue since they play an important part in showing the nature of power.

Lastly, concerning the ELT profession and pedagogy, for pedagogical implications, I would like to highlight the craze for the standard accent by Chinese students and organizations, which is closely intertwined with Whiteness. The emphasis on English accent has to some degree overweighed learning English itself. On the one hand, the over emphasis on accent in ELT industry contributes to and reproduces the blind privileging of White ‘native speaker’ solely on an accent basis but overlooking the professional qualities which should be the real matter. At the same time, qualified Chinese English teachers are either marginalized or forced to meet the higher benchmark into the job. On the other hand, since English language has historically been closely associated with China’s development and relation with the modern West, mastering English is like a symbol of qualification for Chinese to participate in the modernizing project. English learning has been, as my analysis has shown, essentialized as picking up an accent and morphed into a semiotic Whiteness.

Here, the idea of White listening subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015, 2017) is illuminating. Although setting out from a U.S. context, a context which was much different from China’s, Flores and Rosa shift our attention from demanding language learners to acquire standardized language to examining the ideology which positions the White native speaker and listener as the norm. They highlight that “as with the White gaze, the White speaking and listening subject should be understood not as a biographical individual but as an ideological position and mode of perception that shapes our racialized society” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 151). As Flores and Rosa (2017) further illuminate, the White listening subject is supposed to be posited as part of “a

broad, racialized semiotics of White perceiving subjects” (p. 9). In other words, the White listening subject can be anyone who has internalized the hegemonic White English norms and who interprets and arbitrates others’ speeches with this standard. On this regard, Vijay Ramjattan’s (2024) tentative proposal of an anti-racist pronunciation pedagogy also calls for the joint responsibility of the speaker and the listener to achieve intelligibility.

Henry (2010) left us an ending note in his paper, “What will be interesting to observe, in the coming years, is whether the growing confidence of Chinese in the international arena translates into a re-evaluation of the legitimacy of Chinglish as linguistic code” (p. 686). Based on my observation, it seems that Chinglish remains the undesirable speech that should be eliminated; the pure, standard accent, Whiteness and English learning are intimately entangled with Chinese learners’ desire for cosmopolitan and globalization. Future research on ELT industry in China can dive deeper into this intricacy.

Another direction which future studies can probe into in China’s context is the dichotomy between China and the Western Cultural hegemony which is essentialized as the British and American English varieties. It is also curious to know more about the firsthand narratives about domestic Chinese English teachers and their perceptions about the ‘native/non-native speaker’ construct in today’s context.

Concluding Remarks

The persistence of ‘native speaker’ privilege is largely due to the continuous daily discourses which neutralize and naturalize it as a ready category and elevate it with different attributes. Therefore, the first step of challenging its supremacy is by problematizing, destabilizing and politicize this term. As Derrida (1997) reminds us, the aim of deconstruction is not only to immediately neutralize the hierarchy, but to loosen up the totalities and hegemonic categories and open it up for diversity. My study is exactly targeted at dismantling the myth of ‘native speakers’ through deconstructing its formation process and opening it up for more possibilities in the ELT profession.

Precisely because my study is likely the first comprehensive research into the constructing process of ‘native speakers’ through a poststructuralist, specifically a representational lens, it is almost unavoidable that there were limitations. However, it is my sincere hope that my original contribution could provoke more critical attention on the problematics of the category of ‘native speaker’ in ELT profession, especially in China, a context

where English language, Whiteness and accent are entangled and matter fundamentally to the nation's modernizing project. It is crucial to reflect on the common beliefs like privileging White 'native speaker' in ELT and look at the power relations imbedded within the intersection of race and language. I look forward to an ELT profession that is more diverse and inclusive in China.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Step 1: Keyword Searching Excel Sheet

<file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/PhD Data Excels/Data Collection Step 1 Keyword Search 2021.07.10.xlsx>

Screenshot of Part of Step 1 Excel Sheet

Colored cells are prepared for Step 2	Websites Resulted from Keyword Searching	
NO; inactive	李阳疯狂英语	/
NO	星火英语官方微博	/
NO; reported	新东方英语官方微博	https://www.xdf.cn/chengdu/
Yes	51Talk青少儿英语	https://51talk.ph/
NO; reported	DaDa英语	https://www.dadaabc.com/
Yes	剑桥大学英语考部	https://www.cambridgeenglish.cn/
NO; bankruptcy	韦博英语官方微博	bankruptcy
NO; reported	华尔街英语官方微博	https://wse.com.cn/zh
Yes	线活英语	http://www.linewow.com/
NO; closed	美联英语	http://www.meten.com/
Yes	必克英语	http://www.spiiker.com/
Yes	EF英孚教育说英语	https://center.ef.com.cn/
NO	美森商务英语	https://www.mison.cn/
Yes	瑞思英语官方微博	https://www.risecenter.com/
Yes	轻课潘多拉英语	https://www.starlight-edu.com/pandora.html
Yes	Hitalk英语口语	https://www.hitalk.com/
Yes	饥饿英语 (顾家北)	https://www.hungry-english.com
NO website	拔萃英语	/
Yes	魔力耳朵少儿英语	https://mobile.mmeas.com/index.html?rf=1903290010
Yes	【韦沃教育】成都英语	http://www.weiwoenglish.com/
Yes	环亚西文...	https://www.nicanilx.com/
Yes	桥吧教育	https://www.iqbar.net/index.html
Yes	LikeABC	https://www.likeabc.com/how.html
Yes	立刻说成人英语	https://www.likeshuo.com/general
NO; closed	汉普森英语	www.hampson.com/
Yes	Hellokid在线少儿	https://www.HelloKid.com/user/login/login.html
Yes	洛基英语 - 在线	https://www.rockyenglish.com/
Yes	欧美达英语培训	https://www.omeida.com/idea/
Yes	趣趣abc在线少儿	https://www.ququkid.com/
No, unstable access	企业商务英语 英耐官网	https://www.impact-edu.com/
Yes	沃尔得英语官网	http://www.365world.com/
Yes	郑州英语力美语	
Yes	新动力英语	http://www.newpower.org.cn/aboutus/
Yes	深圳龙华英语培训	https://www.victoredu.cn/
ineffective site; page not found	温州白金汉英语	http://www.wzkings.com/about/8.html
Yes	在线快酷英语	http://www.kuaikuenglish.com/
no video	鑫丁英语	http://www.reading-china.com/
NO	岱恩英语	http://www.dailyedu.com/#!team
Yes	能动英语	https://www.nd115.com/bymm.html
Yes	久伴英语 在线少儿	https://www.nicekid.com/tutor
Yes	朗阁教育	
No video; not clear	菲菲英语—在线	not clear
Yes	VIPKID-北美外教	https://www.vipkid.com.cn/
NO; reported	阿卡索外教网	https://www.acadsoc.ph/Teacher/AboutUs
Yes	British Council	https://www.britishcouncil.cn/
Yes	ETS	
Yes	Paragon Testing Enterprises	
	total	47

Appendix C

Data Collection Step 3: Preliminary Reading Excel Sheet

<file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/PhD Data Excels/Data Collection Step 3 Preliminary Reading 2021.09.03.xlsx>

Screenshot of Part of Step 3 Excel Sheet

Step 3: Preliminary reading of corpus and note taking based on step 2.												
Research Question: How is the 'native speaker' represented?												
Date: Sep 03, 2021												
Title	Website	Platform	Course Subject	Course Genre	Age Group	Teachers	Certificate	Country	Demo/audio /video	Overall	Other	Tool Bar
Chinese companies offering online programs for various age groups. Most of them focused on oral training with foreign teachers (online)												
快酷英语 Kuaku	http://www.1chinese.com	online real	English	diverse; phil	adult	foreign	Teaching Du	Chinese+Phi	外教 videos	not sure; Ph	Callan method: http://www.kuikuenglish.com/static/callan/	
洛基 - 在线 Rocky English	https://www.rockyenglish.com	online	English	oral	kids	foreign	All Chinese	All Chinese		not clear; not detailed enough		
咖啡在线 CaffeEnglish	http://www.caffeenglish.com	online	English	oral	not specified	foreign teach	/	/	/	no details	会员登录+选择外教+预约上课	
纳尼教育 Nani	https://www.nani.net/na	online	English	all types	adult	UK	Cambridge to UK					
HiTalk英语口语	not detailed	apps										
夸课网多拉 Qingclass Panda	https://www.qingclass.com/products/qandora.html									not detailed enough		
VIPKID 北美外教	https://www.vipkid.com	online	English + m	oral	3-15 teen	foreign teach	Background	purely North	ad video; 外	comprehens teacher recru	首页: 北美师资; 课程体系; 公开课; 如何上课;	
久伴在线 NiceKid	https://www.nicekid.com	online	English	oral	kids	foreign	+Chi pure natives	strictly asses	no videos	外教 video 公 recruitment	Foreign teachers+open demonstrations+Q&A+Englis	
趣趣ABC在线 QuquKid	https://www.ququkid.com	online	English	oral	kids	foreign	pure natives	strictly asses	many teacher	representative	foreign teaching team+curriculum+brand info+abou	
HelloKid 在线少儿	https://www.hellokid.com	online	English	oral	kids	foreign	pure natives; Certificate copies available			comprehens Recruitment	HelloKid specialties; Education philosophy; curricu	
LikeABC (link error)	https://www.likeabc.com	online	English	oral	kids	Foreign teach	ng good; ro/aking countries + Europe					
立刻说成人英语	https://www.likeshuo.com	online	English	oral	adult	Foreign	TED	English	many teacher v	comprehen	Recruitment: https://www.likeshuo.com/recruit/teacher	
魔力耳朵少儿英语	https://www.magicears.com	online	English	oral	kids	foreign	no mention	Euro-America; no		not detailed	CEFR Standard	
必克英语	https://www.spiiker.com	online	English	oral	teen+adult+b	Foreign+Chir	no mention	English nativ tons of audio	can be repre	free course: https://www.spiiker.com/kouyu/7qd-hyui		
线语英语	http://www.linewow.com	online	English	all types	all age group	foreign + Chi	no mention	North Ameri no		texts+imges	course levels+main cours adult English; Teenage English; Kid En	
51Talk 少儿英语 (link error)	https://www.51talk.com/	online	English	oral	teen + adult	foreign teach	Strictly Select	Philippine, gl	no		菲律宾分公 首页; 课程体系; 学习体系; 外教 shizi; 上课平	
51Talk 成人英语	https://adult.51talk.com/	online	English	oral					teacher videos		学习理念; 课程体系; 外教师资; 学习体系	
尚恩英语 Dailyedu	http://www.dailyedu.com	online	English	Business En	not specified		highly qualified trianers (typo original)			not sure; bu	专利教学	
English language schools founded in China which offer on-site English training programs of all types for all purposes at various level/age groups												
能动力英语 Nenedong	https://www.nd115.com/	on site	English	表音密码*	6-14 teens	All Chinese	Strict Trainin	china	no	interesting; not fit	能动力课程; 免费体验课; 能动力师资; 能动力品牌; f	
睿丁英语 Readline-China	http://www.readline-china.com	on site+onl	English + tra	Chinese Eng	primary sch	All Chinese	no mention	/		catering to C	专利教学	
温州白金汉 Wenzhou Kings	http://www.wzking.com	on site + or	English	all levels	adult	foreign+Chin	no mention	China+white	teacher info n	local specific; not general	关于白金汉; 明星学员; 品牌课程; 精彩活动;	
维特国际 Victoredu	https://www.victoredu.cn	on site + online	all languages	all types	all age all ty	foreign + Chi	detailed info+profiles		no videos; ha	comprehens well organiz	在线: https://victoredu.121learn.com/t?host=vict	
新动力 New Power	http://ena.newpower.org.cn/									not English specific; like New Oriental		
沃尔顿英语 365 World Engl	http://www.365world.co	on site	English	all types	adult	foreign+Chin claims	TESO	no checkabi	no videos	need to ask (lists Foreign	about us+curriculum+courses+special offers	
欧美达英语培训	https://www.omeida.com	on iste	English	all types	adult;	international		very diverse	videos	very diverse; unique case		
环亚西文 Canix NJ	https://www.canixnj.com/											
韦沃 Weivo English	http://www.weivoenglish.com/	on site										
郑州英语力美英语 Esli-zz	http://www.esli-zz.com/	on site	English	American En	all age all types			teacher info	no videos	quite well developed; student testimonials, classroom pics, well-rounded, q	local specific; not generalizable	
Mainly focused on English Test preparations												
ETS	https://www.ets.org/	no Chinese site		mainly tests								
朗阁教育 Longre	https://www.paragontest.com	no Chinese site		mainly tests								
朗阁教育 Longre	https://www.longre.com/		English	study abroa	students+adults					local specific; not generalizable		
创维英语 Hunery English	https://www.hunery-english.com/			mainly tests; IELTS		All Chinese						
International organizations who have a Chinese site and offer various types of programs												
British Council	https://www.britishcounc	website										
EF 英语教育	https://www.ef.com.cn/	on site	English		all age all types					recruitment: course+offices+about EF+Career development		
剑桥大学英语考试部	https://www.cambridgeesol	website										
雅思英语官方资源	https://www.risecenter.co	online+on	English	all levels	teen+kids	foreign +Chi	no mention	https://risecolab.com/abv		not really; emphasis on b home page+curriculum+teaching team+teaching pro		

Appendix D

Analytic Matrix

<file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/Doctoral Dissertation/Data Collection Analytic Matrix.xlsx>

Screenshot of Part of the Analytic Matrix

Evaluation														
	Title	Kuiku	LikeShuo	VIPKid	HelioKid	Spiker	S1 Talk	Omeida	EF	Rie	LineWow	Victor	wakings	Weiwu
Evaluation Criteria	Clear format?	very Clear	very Clear	very well	clear+straight forward	very clear	very clear	very clear	very clear	very clear	clear	clear	clear	very clear
	User Friendly?	very well	very well	very well	very well	very well	very well	very well	very well	very well	good	good + sufficient info	good but a bit simple	very well
	How close to answering my Qs? (Scale 1-5)	Very Close 5+ (relevant+clear)	Very Close 5+	Very close 5+ (with English recruitment page)	Very close 5	Very close 5+	Very close 5 (Philippines based)	Very close and Unique 5	Very close 5	Close 4.5 (Chinese & English)	Close 4	Close 4+	Close 4	Close 4
Analytic Matrix														
	Title	Kuiku	LikeShuo	VIPKid	HelioKid	Spiker	S1 Talk	Omeida	EF	Rie	LineWow	Victor	wakings	Weiwu
Website Layout	Location	The Philippines	China	North America + China	China	China	China + The Philippines	China	Global + China	Global + China	China	China	China	China
	Website	https://www.kuikuenglish.com/	https://www.lishuoweb.com/learn/	https://www.vipkid.com.cn/	http://www.heliodid.com/learn/online.html	https://www.spiker.com/learn/online.html	https://www.s1talk.com/learn/online.html	https://www.omeida.com/learn/online.html	https://www.ef.com.cn/learn/online.html	https://www.riewow.com/learn/online.html	https://www.victor.com/learn/online.html	https://www.wakings.com/learn/online.html	https://www.waiwuwu.com/learn/online.html	https://www.waiwuwu.com/learn/online.html
	Platform	One on One online foreign teachers	Online Oral	Online	Online	Online	Online	On site + online	Online + on site	online	Online through apps	On site (Shenzhen 深圳)	on site (Wenzhou 温州) + online	On site (Chengdu 成都)
	Course Subjects	English	English	English	English	Oral English	Oral English	English	English	English	English	English	English	English
	Course Types	General/IELTS/Business/TOEFL/Cat/Travel/Daily/TOEIC/etc.	18+ Course Themes: Business/Accounting/Interview/etc.	North American Teachers/Chinese and Foreign Teachers/Beginner English/Math/etc.	One on one online for children	17 Categories & 149 Course types	Oral English	Full Time/MP/5 Spring Festival/Winter Camp	Language Learning/Study Abroad English Preparation/Academic Courses				oral English/Test preparation/Travel English/etc.	Speaking English/Business/TOEIC/etc.
	Student Age Group	all	Adults	kids 3-15 yo	Children of 6-15 yrs old	adults	Adults	adults (mainly)	all	Teenagers	Adult+Teen+kid	adults	(young) adults	adults
	Tool Bar	Homepage/Curriculum/Foreign Teachers/Fees/Students Testimonials/QQ English	Adult English/Teaching Philosophy/Teaching Resource/	North American Teachers/Curriculum/Public Class/How To/Download Center		Homepage/Curriculum/Learning System/Customizing/Global Teachers/Students'	S1Talk Adult English/Learning Theories/Curriculum/Foreign	Homepage/Special courses/Collaboration/Teaching Philosophy/International	Course/Office/About EF/Career	/	Homepage/Adult English/Teenage English/Kid English/Special	Homepage/Special courses/Teaching philosophy/Activities/About Us	Homepage/Courses/Level/Teaching Staff/About Us/News	Homepage/Speaking/Business/More courses/Teaching Staff/Students stories
	Activities	Exchange Program in Philippines; English only one-on-one with foreign teachers; VIP										Speaking English Salon guided by Foreign Teachers; English corner, Halloween, etc.		
	Why Choose Us	Economic; great service; full time foreign teachers; on-site school; convenience.	18+ themes; flexible; high face-value foreign teachers from Europe and America; learning resources; free.	strictly selected North American teachers; self-developed course materials; All big data; one on one; internationalized.	Second language acquisition theories	17 diverse categories; flexibility; Chinese and foreign teachers joint effort; professional service; fixed foreign teachers etc.	pure foreign teachers; flexible; one on one; economy	SA national natural scenarios; converse with the foreigners; 20 years' experience; full time small class immersion.		one on one with North American foreign teachers; fixed foreign teachers; combination of audio and videos	Chinese and Foreign teachers joint effort; English only; interactive teaching; small class; student-centered.			
	Other Notes	One student expressed in the interview, "although I have always considered European and American countries as the study abroad destination, I surprised myself by choosing the Philippines eventually."	promoting high face value in all aspects	1. Emphasis on English immersion and 'native' environment; 2. Commitment to diversity & inclusion Statement on its English website https://www.vipkid.com/diversity-and-inclusion	Emphasis on Pure North American native speaker teachers	slogans emphasized on English can change one's life and expand career prospect	Philippine based	Full immersion, English Only	English site; diversity statement https://careers.ef.com/working-at-ef/ ; DEI B (diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging).	Immersion; native language teaching method; Pure speaking English	slogan: Better English, better job; better English, better life. (White face); English only immersion; Use English to communicate	/		"pronunciation class is authentic, standard and post-1 White teacher image
					private foreign		pure foreign teachers	foreign teachers mainly come from native						

Appendix E

Screenshots of Content of 8 ELT Websites

EF China	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/PhD Data 8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/1. EF China 英孚.zip
Hellokid	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/2. Hellokid.zip
Kuaiku	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/3. Kuaiku 快酷.zip
Likeshuo	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/4. Likeshuo 立刻说.zip
Omeida	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/5. Omeida.zip
Spiiker	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/6. Spiiker 必克.zip
VIPKID	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/7. VIPKID.zip
51 Talk	file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/8 ELT Websites_Screenshots/8. 51 Talk 成人英语.zip

Appendix F

Transcripts of 6 Boutique Public Classes at Likeshuo

[file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/PhD Data 8 ELT
websites Descriptions and Notes/Transcripts of Likeshuo Publis Classes.zip](file:///Users/irenaqlq/Library/CloudStorage/OneDrive-Personal/PhD Data 8 ELT websites Descriptions and Notes/Transcripts of Likeshuo Publis Classes.zip)