

# Teacher Identity Construction of Non-Local English-Speaking EFL Teachers in the Intercultural Adaptation Process<sup>\*</sup>

Li Yi

Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China

Ling Meng<sup>1</sup>

South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China

**Abstract**—Non-local English-speaking EFL teachers are increasingly employed in the outer or expanding circle of English-speaking countries, but little is known about how these non-local EFL teachers construct their language teacher identity while they go through the intercultural adaptation process. Employing the narrative analysis, this study analysed the data of the in-depth interviews with three non-local English-speaking EFL teachers in one Chinese university and explored their teacher identity construction in the process of intercultural adaptation. Three major types of intercultural challenges were identified in their cross-cultural work in Chinese tertiary education. It was also found that the non-local EFL teachers strategically shift their teacher identities and instrumentalize their non-local identity to adapt to their intercultural teaching work and to empower themselves professionally in the language classes. This study contributes to the understanding of identity making in the intercultural adaptation process and provides implications for the adaptive policymaking and training for non-local teachers.

**Index Terms**—non-local English-speaking EFL teachers, intercultural adaptation, language teacher identity, Chinese tertiary education

## I. INTRODUCTION

With English becoming the Lingua Franca and EFL teachers mobilizing globally, non-local English-speaking EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers are increasingly employed in the outer or expanding circle of the English-speaking countries over these two decades. For instance, more than 400,000 teachers from English-speaking or other western countries were working in the Chinese educational field in the year of 2019, with about 20,000 in government-funded or private higher education institutions (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2018). Most of non-local English-speaking teachers are employed as EFL teachers in Chinese tertiary education where English is taught as a compulsory course and functions as a stepping-stone to a university diploma (Gil & Adamson, 2011).

As employing non-local EFL teachers has become growingly popular in these outer or expanding circle countries, controversial issues around hiring the non-local EFL teachers are also arising. These non-local EFL teachers are sojourners staying in the local places for a few months or several years, and they have the feature of high mobility in the education market and enjoy more legitimacy as language teachers because they are native speakers, but they also face cultural challenges working as guest teachers in diverse host culture. They are “backpack teacher” playing foreignness for transnational capital (Stanley, 2013, p.152), and their qualification as EFL teachers with limited short-term TESOL/TEFL training furthermore puts their teacher-in-the-making identity into question.

When they enter the Chinese classroom facing the local Chinese students, they have to adapt to their teaching work emotionally, behaviourally, and cognitively as well as to renegotiate and reconstruct their teacher identities (Ting-Toomy, 2007). How these sojourn EFL teachers construct their teacher identity in a culturally shifting educational setting is a topic that deserves further academic scrutiny. This study therefore aims to use the non-local EFL teachers in China as examples to explore the non-local EFL teachers’ identity construction in the process of their adaptation to the local educational culture. This study could be of both theoretical and practical significance. By shedding light on the understanding of intercultural adaptation in the specific educational context, this study can contribute new knowledge to uncover the complexity of identity making of non-local EFL teachers in the intercultural setting and thus adaptive policy-making and pedagogical practice from both government and universities could be made in accordance with the needs and characteristics of these non-local teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

When a growing number of the non-local native English-speaking EFL teachers are hired in the outer or expanding circle of the English-speaking countries, the intercultural adaptation, their life and their work have been gradually put under the academic spotlight. Abundant research has focused on their intercultural adaptation in the teaching (eg. Hu & Ma, 2018, Ma, 2007; Liu, 2014), but little attention has been paid to how the intercultural challenges that they meet in the classes would influence the construction of their language teacher identity.

### A. *Teacher Identity and EFL Teacher Identity*

Teacher identity is widely acknowledged as being multifaceted and multidimensional, developing through on-going progresses, and being shaped and negotiated in social contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004). Teachers gradually develop their teacher identity in a boarder socio-cultural context considering their relationships with others and contextual identity forming within socio-cultural and historical context (Rodgers & Scott, 2008), and they derive their professional identity from (mostly the combination of) their perception about themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts (Beijaard et al., 2000).

Language teacher identity has its subject-specific features. Firstly, language teacher identity is defined by their subject-specific roles or their competence in class. Farrell (2011) distinguishes 16 main role identities of EFL teachers in the language classes and concludes three major role identity clusters: teacher as a manager to manage what happens in class, teacher as a professional who are devoted to work, and teacher as an “acculturator” engaging in activities to help students adapt to local culture. Furthermore, language teacher identity is featured by their core knowledge and skills that they are supposed to have, including the fundamental skills of language itself, discipline knowledge, teaching techniques, and awareness of self and students and advanced competences of adaptive teaching, theorizing from teaching, and membership in community of practice (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

The formation process of EFL teacher identity is highly complex, which involves an experimental period of reifying oneself as a member of community, obtaining legitimate access to practice, and developing the required competence (Tsui, 2007). Their sociocultural identity is the constant negotiation of their personal histories as well as the changing contextual elements (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Meanwhile, researchers (see Varghese et al., 2005) also noticed some problematic issues in the language teacher identity both inside and outside the classroom, including their professional or social marginalization, the disputing relationship between the native and non-native speaker teachers, the questioned status of the language teaching work in general as a profession, and the salient instability and vulnerability in their work and life.

### B. *Teaching Across Borders and the Complexity of Identities*

EFL teachers teaching across borders, an intertwining process of cultural adaptation and teacher identity construction, are explored from different perspectives. It is on the one hand explained as an intercultural adaption process and regarded as a two-way reciprocal adaptation between teachers and students (Zhou & Todman, 2008); as a self-adjustment process of going through puzzlement, endeavour, and empowerment (Liu, 2001); and as a transforming period to adapt professional identity including both a reciprocal intercultural learner and an adaptive agent in the increasingly internationalized classroom (Tran & Nguyen, 2015).

Researchers are also interested in the complex and tangling identity making process of the language teachers who teach in other cultures (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Menard-Warwick, 2008; Shim, 2019), especially the complexity caused by the dichotomy between native and non-native speakerism. How the non-native speaking English teachers strive for professional legitimacy is well researched, particularly about the teachers from outer circle of the English-speaking countries like China, such as the research about the language teachers who teach English in the US (Park, 2012), in Singapore (Zhang & Zhang, 2014), in Hong Kong (Benson, 2012), etc. But conversely how the native speakers seek professional development as sojourn teacher in non-English speaking countries is relatively under-researched.

### C. *Non-Local Language Teachers in China and Their Identities*

China has an almost “insatiable appetite” for English teachers from western countries (Wolff, 2009, p.5) because of the importance that has been attached to the English language in the era of economic globalization. Both L1 (native) and L2 (non-native) English speakers are widely recruited and the overwhelming volume of non-local EFL teachers in China (about 20,000 in tertiary education) starts attracting scholarly attention.

In her one-of-a-kind research, Stanley presents a kaleidoscope view of the English teaching work of nine westerners in a Chinese university from a critical ethnographic perspective. The seller’s market provides EFL teaching positions for these backpack teachers (2013, p.211). They conveniently perform foreignness to get legitimacy and are thus “trapped” or “Shanghaiied” in the EFL teaching work (p.155). Unavoidably, they suffer emotional and professional struggles (p.209) because they feel that they are like clowns or “foreign monkeys” in the classes and their EFL teaching job is like “baby-sitting” or “grunt work” (pp.212-215). Her authentic account of the western EFL teachers in China echoes with the description of the work of the non-local English teachers by Wolff (2009), and they argue that this remains and will always remain problematic in China if it is still the seller’s market. When the unpromising and paradoxical situation is discussed, the teacher-in-the-making process is not yet quite well addressed through the lens of intercultural adaptation.

Chinese researchers care about how these non-local teachers adapt to local Chinese culture (Ma, 2007; Liu, 2014) and the effectiveness of their teaching methods and strategies (Ai, 2014; Huang, 2015, Lu & Dong, 2015; Chen, 2018). By problematizing their life and work in China, most of these studies offer remedies to their intercultural adaptation or provide managerial suggestions for universities. But little work has been done on the adaptation or the struggling in the language teacher identity construction of those non-local EFL teachers.

As “becoming a teacher” is a process of identity formation (Danielewics, 2001, p.3), it is therefore of vital importance to know how these non-local EFL teachers learn and adapt to become a language teacher in monolingual and monocultural China. The identity of the non-local EFL teachers in the classroom is tentatively probed by Hu and Ma (2018), and by means of conversation analysis they find that the non-local EFL teachers construct three role identities in the classes, namely the identity as communicators, lecturers, and learners. This study attempts to shift the perspective and goes one-step further to examine the non-local EFL teacher identity construction in the process of intercultural adaptation. Two research questions are addressed:

- 1) What intercultural challenges do the non-local EFL teachers experience when they teach in the EFL classes in Chinese tertiary education?
- 2) How do the non-local EFL teachers construct their language teacher identity in the process of intercultural adaptation in Chinese tertiary education?

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study took in-depth semi-structured interviews as the data collection method and employed the narrative analysis to explore the language teacher identity construction of the non-local English-speaking EFL teachers in their intercultural adaptation process in Chinese tertiary education.

#### A. Participants

The participants were three non-local native English-speaking EFL teachers from the Faculty of English Education in S University. There were 56 local teachers and 14 non-local teachers (only 6 were in-service in the semester when the interview was conducted, and all of them were male) in this department. They taught fundamental English courses, advanced ESP course, and English-mediated liberal art courses.

TABLE 1  
PARTICIPANTS – THREE NON-LOCAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING EFL TEACHERS IN S UNIVERSITY

Name	Gender	Country	Native language	Work experience
Aaron	Male	United Kingdom	English	1.5-year English major (China); 1.5-year EFL in S University (China)
Jade	Male	United States	English	1-year primary English teaching (Korea); 1-year adult English teaching in EF (China); 2-year EFL in S University (China)
Kevin	Male	United States	English	6-year high school history (America); 1-year English major (China); 1.5-year EFL in S University (China)

#### B. Data Collection

The data collection method was in-depth semi-structured interviews (guided by Richards, 2003; Wells, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Interview questions were designed on the theoretical premise that the non-local English-speaking EFL teachers would experience a process of stress-adaption-growth dynamic (Kim, 2001) in a cross-cultural educational setting in China. As illustrated by Liu’s (1999) personal teaching story, the experience of teaching abroad generally goes through three stages: the initial puzzlement facing different teaching culture, the endeavour to learn to fit in the culture, and the empowerment stage of becoming a professional in the field. Interview questions were thereby classified into three sub-categories: general questions, the questions about difficulties in teaching, the questions about the adaptation to the local culture. The interview was conducted by the first author and the interview process was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim with the assistance of the transcribing tool TEMI (available at <https://www.temi.com>).

#### C. Theoretical Backdrop

Farrell’s (2011) theory about EFL teacher role identity was utilized as the theoretical framework in this study. Two major types of teacher role identities were used to analyse the teacher identities that the non-local teachers construct in the language classes. The first one is the role identity of “teacher as a manager”, referring to the role identities that the EFL teachers construct when they manage the EFL classes. It includes seven sub-identities: the vendor to sell learning, the entertainer to amuse the class, the communication controller to control the class interaction dynamics, the juggler to do multi-tasks in classes, the motivator to keep students on tasks, the presenter to deliver information, and the arbitrator to offer feedbacks to the classes. The second one is the role identity of “teacher as a professional”, referring to the identities that teachers construct in their devotion to the work. There are three sub-identities (Farrell, 2011): the collaborator who works and shares with other teachers, the learners who seek the knowledge to improve their teaching work, and the teachers as the knowledgeable agent about teaching and subject matters.

#### D. Analytical Method

Narrative inquiry was used as the analytical method to explore these non-local teachers' identity construction in the Chinese EFL classes. Narratives are the means by which the people make sense of themselves and the world (Squire, see Wells, 2011, p.5), and it is also a way for people to construct and reconstruct their identities (Riessman, 2008, p.8). The stories of non-local EFL teachers narrated in interviews are one of the richest data for identity research (Vázquez, 2011), as teachers' identity is the "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.4). The data was analysed and coded by Farrell's (2011) teacher role identity categories and sub-identities with the assistance of NVIVO 11 (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp.101-142). Both authors independently analysed one third of the data and the discrepancies in the data analysis were then detected and discussed till the agreement was reached between the two authors. The first author then finished the analysis of the other two third of the data.

#### E. Research Ethics

Research ethics were carefully observed throughout the research. Before the interview, the participants were informed of the research purpose and research procedures. Consent forms were signed with them before the interviews. During the data analysing and interpreting process, the researchers constantly cross-checked with the participants about the data interpretation in order to maintain the research validity and to avoid the subjective projection of researcher's own values, emotions, and attitudes in the research process (Boyatzis, 1998, p.13) considering that the researcher is an insider who works in the same field and even in same the department with the participants.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of data showed that the non-local teachers in Chinese tertiary education have experienced frustrating moments when they faced students with different learning culture. These teachers strategically utilized different teacher role identities in the EFL classes and instrumentalized their non-local identity to adapt to their teaching work.

#### A. Intercultural Challenges in College English Classes in China

The analysis of the data demonstrated that there were three major types of intercultural challenges that the non-local teachers had experienced in the English classes in Chinese tertiary context.

##### (a). Students Who Are too Deferential and Teacher-Dependant

The participant non-local EFL teachers reported that the main difficulty was that the students were too deferential and teacher dependant. In the Chinese "Confucian-heritage" culture of learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006), teachers are the authoritative and knowledgeable model, and they receive sincere respect and concentrating attention in classes. The students are thus respectful and teacher-dependent, and the high regard held by students towards teachers could be a double-edged sword. It is helpful for them to conquer stage fright or make their work easier, and meanwhile too much attention on the teacher could be very stressful for teachers, as reported by the participants:

*"I think students were typically ... they held you in very high regard. So it almost felt like sillies to feel nervous just because... the students have very high opinion of you."* (Jade)

*"They're very obedient, very deferential. I like that. I do. It makes my job a lot easier."* (Aaron)

*"It was generally that they were a little quiet and it made me nervous, made me nervous because it's like so much more focuses is on me rather than some level of balance between what the students do and what I do."* (Kevin)

##### (b). Students Who Are Shy and Quiet, Reluctant to Talk, or Poor in English Communication Skills

The participants reported that they received enough respect but not much response from the students in classes and one of the biggest challenges for the language class was that the Chinese students were too quiet or shy, too reluctant to talk, or too inexpressive in English. The role expectations of a teacher differ across cultures (Stanley, 2011), and Chinese students expect to learn expert knowledge from their teachers whose role is an authority of knowledge. Students tend to listen quietly rather than to talk a lot in the classes, and thus their oral communication skill are not so well developed as reading or writing skills. The non-local teachers complained that they suffered from the conflict of learning and teaching styles and felt upset that their classes were usually quiet when they tried to implement student-centred communicative approach in the classes. For instance:

*I didn't realize there's such an emphasis on writing and reading before university. ... But then you meet them and say how are you? And they're like, don't know how to answer it, but then you give them an essay question and they will write two pages on it, but they won't be able to speak at all.* (Aaron)

*"I will ask a question that I think is pretty simple. ... it's very quiet and nobody wants to volunteer. And so maybe I think they didn't understand me, but I think typically they did and they do know the answer, but it's just that they don't really want to come out and say it."* (Jade)

##### (c). Oversized Classes with Students From Different Majors With Different Level of Proficiency and Motivation

The participant non-local EFL teachers illustrated that another challenge was that the classes were oversized with students from different majors with different level of proficiency and motivation. In these days English language

obtains unprecedentedly high status in China, and it plays the gatekeeper role for both study and work and is regarded as a judge of value and talent (Gil & Adamson, 2011). English is taught as a key curriculum subject since grade three of primary school, and in college education all non-English-major undergraduate students are still required to take College English courses for two years. In this case, the interviewed non-local teachers complained that they had to face over-sized classes with students from different majors whose language proficiency and learning motivation vary significantly. They struggled to balance the needs of students of different levels, to modify teaching materials to attract attention, and to survive in a hostile environment of compulsory course (Wolff, 2009, p. 51), which were vividly reported as follows:

*“Whereas here, you know, students, um, obviously they’re here because they want to get their degree, but maybe they’re in English class, maybe they’re just not very interested in English... (Jade)*

*“Teaching especially the way we, I was, I learned to do it and the only foreigners prefer to do it and that means a lot of interaction, communication, a very group oriented, uh, we expect students to speak more and participate more, but for certain students of certain majors, they’re just not used to it at all. And it’s very challenging to kind of drive them to adapt to our style of teaching. So, it’s still, even now it’s quite a struggle. (Kevin)*

### B. Language Teacher Identity Construction in Intercultural Adaptation

The non-local teachers who were working in the culturally different Chinese tertiary context were found strategically shift among their different role identities and instrumentalize their non-local identity in the language classes to adapt to the local educational culture and to empower themselves professionally as language teachers.

#### (a). Strategically Shifting Their Teacher Role Identities to Manage the Class

The identity of being a “teacher as a manager” refers to the teacher identity that the teachers construct in the classes when they attempt to control what happens in class, and it includes seven sub-identities (Farrell, 2011): the vendor to sell learning, the entertainer to amuse the class, the communication controller to control the class interaction dynamics, the juggler to do multi-tasks in classes, the motivator to keep students on tasks, the presenter to deliver information, and the arbitrator to offer feedbacks to the classes.

When facing the deferential and teacher-dependant Chinese students who were quiet and reluctant to speak in English, the non-local teachers made themselves as the cheerleaders in class. They frequently took the role of entertainer and motivator to make a quiet class cheerful and tried to use their “cheerful character” to fuel students to talk, to reach the “friend zone” to create fearless and comfortable class atmosphere, and to narrow down the large power distance between teacher and student.

*“Uh, well, it’s also your own character because in a way how you teach your character kind of fuels, uh, their willingness to interact. If you’re kind of like bored or kind of a not, not too active yourself, then they won’t have much, uh, they don’t have much motivation to be active in return, you know.” (Kevin)*

*“The other one is like you get in with them, you sit next to them on the desks. You sort of talked to them. You get to know them; you ask them personal questions; you answer their questions. I think that’s an important thing that you sort of become a bit of the friend zone and they respond well to that. (Aaron)*

The affective classroom climate created by such means can have a profound influence on the development of language competence (Chappell, 2014, p.56), and the non-local teachers strategically shifted to their role identity of communication controller if the Chinese students just remained silent and dared not to speak in public. They resorted to group activities, a ready-made panacea for all sorts of difficulties in class management (see Table 2). These activities helped to divert the focused attention to the teachers towards the students themselves, to encourage the shy and quiet students to communicate with their friends, and to manage the over-sized classes more effectively.

TABLE 2  
GROUP ACTIVITIES AS A READY-MADE PANACEA FOR CLASS MANAGEMENT

Challenges	Solutions
Students over-focused on teachers	<i>“They always focused on speaker (teacher), and I always do a big thing about, uh, getting the students to speak, <u>discuss things amongst themselves</u> especially. They like it’s so fun to them to be able to speak amongst themselves in the class.” (Aaron)</i>
Students too shy to speak in public	<i>“They already have these friend groups in classes, so if you just make them feel <u>comfortable enough to talk to their friends</u> but just use an English, then they’re going to be open...” (Aaron)</i>
Students in over-sized classes	<i>“Just kind of learning how to <u>conduct a class with a big group</u>, is kind of how um, pair work and group work and different kinds of activities.” (Jade)</i>
Students too quiet and unresponsive	<i>“It’s just that they don’t really want to come out and say it. I guess that’s one thing that I’ve done is <u>not necessarily too much teacher to student interaction</u>. It’s more like <u>having them discuss things</u> I think works a little better.” (Jade)</i>
Students unmotivated	<i>“Usually my method is to have these <u>less-motivated students to be mixed into groups</u> with the students may be at a better level, are more motivated...” (Kevin)</i>

The participants reported that they used various methods and endeavours to cheerlead the class and organize different group activities, which would divert from the original purpose of the class and eventually convert all kinds of EFL classes into an oral English class. Although prevailing teaching methodology for language classes is the communicative

approach and it is worthwhile for the non-local teachers to use this teaching method to shape the local learning culture for better language learning outcome, the communicative approach is not supposed to be used for the sake of convenience but should be used for the purpose to motivate students and to engage them in the communication activities. When too many group activities are organized and the speaking is promoted as the core skill, the other skills like reading and writing are possibly ignored, which could be illustrated in the following interview:

*"I feel I should do more sort of specific parts of language, sometimes I'm just giving them practice, an opportunity to practice what they already know rather than explaining the sort of finer points of English."*  
(Aaron)

The above analysis shows that these non-local teachers in the Chinese EFL classes tried to strategically shift different teacher role identities and acted as a cheerleading oral English teacher in class to build a fearless atmosphere to talk and organize various group activities. They also utilized their non-local or native-speaker identity to build a complementary role to their local Chinese counterparts and made the class a place to learn authentic English language and culture. The cheerleading work that the participant teachers tried to do in the relatively quiet and inactive Chinese classes in this study was exactly identical with the research findings about the western oral English teachers' efforts of making the class funny in the research of Stanley (2013, p.125). Chinese students hold the view that they benefit from the funny, active, passionate, and interactive non-local teachers' EFL classes, but also complain the classes are oversimplified and unsystematical (Huang, 2018, p.68).

#### *(b). Instrumentalizing Native-Speaker Identity to Empower Themselves Professionally*

The identity of being a "teacher as a professional" refers to the identity that teachers construct in their devotion to the work, and there are three sub-identities (Farrell, 2011): the collaborator who works and shares with other teachers, the learners who seek the knowledge to improve their teaching work, and the teachers as the knowledgeable agent about teaching and subject matters.

The analysis revealed that the non-local EFL teachers constructed their "teacher as a professional" identity by the native-speakerism and presented themselves as being knowledgeable in English as a language and a culture. By empowering themselves professionally and by othering Chinese teachers (Holliday, 2011, p.69), they construed the identity as a teacher complementary to their local Chinese counterparts through the following three means:

##### *1. Exemplifying Authentic English*

The non-local teachers believed that when they as English-speaking teachers could exemplify authentic English in the class the students could learn genuine examples of the language, could have real-time authentic experiences of communication, could obtain more exposure to English, and could have ideal native speakers for language drills.

*"Even if the class (of a foreigner) is a complete disaster, the fact that the teacher is only speaking English and the students are forced to speak English to the English teacher, that's great. Because the thing is that it is real-time authentic experience speaking the language. So that's something the Chinese teacher can't offer."* (Jade)

##### *2. Concretizing the Culture of English-Speaking Countries*

The non-local EFL teachers held the view that they could concretize the culture of English-speaking countries because they could share their first-hand experience and they themselves were the best example of the cultural norms for students to explore.

*"I always noticed they pay the most attention is when I'm giving a sort of personal anecdotes about life, about life back home... So I was trying to do as many because they've had main Chinese teachers talking about the English language, but maybe the Chinese teachers talking about life, just the West in general."*  
(Aaron)

##### *3. Differentiating From Local Teachers*

These non-local EFL teachers also branded themselves as a foreigner as a selling point, which differentiated them from local teachers and built a complementary role to the local Chinese counterparts.

*"Um, so obviously the role is different, and I guess in my life when I was learning how to teach, I was always told that I'm not really supposed to fulfill that Chinese teacher role. I am more supposed to fulfill a foreign teacher role, which is kind of allowing the students to have an example and allowing the students to practice."* (Jade)

Such attempts of the non-local EFL teachers to utilize their non-local or native-speaking identity as a complementary role to the local Chinese teachers in this study were also supported by the research findings of Huang (2018). Based on her classroom observations and interviews, she found that the local Chinese teachers also othered the non-local teachers and established their own credibility by their unique strengths and hard work to reach the balanced power dynamic with the presence and possible threats of native-speaking teachers in their work. The instrumentalization of their non-local or native-speaking identity is a strategic resort or compensation of their insufficient training or experience in EFL teaching, especially the teaching in a culturally different environment. Most of the non-local EFL teachers are not well-trained, and they are insensitive to the linguistic problems of local students because they lack experience of learning English as

a second language (Rao & Yuan, 2015). Their problem of limited knowledge of the linguistic difficulties of the local learners was vividly demonstrated by the following examples:

*Whereas obviously maybe if you are a foreign teacher and you can't, er, you don't have Chinese language ability. You don't really have the um, you know, you don't have the language to explain these sort of grammar concepts that you might need, you know, a high level or level of English to explain. (Jade)*

*Especially for let's say like computers science students, sometimes they have to work with their first language and also you have difficulty in understanding your students because we're in, er, we come from a different culture, raised in a different system. (Kevin)*

The non-local English-speaking EFL teachers' overuse or over-dependence on their non-local or native-speaker identity leads to the trickery of performing stereotypical "foreignness" or "foreign idiot" noticed by Stanley (2013, p.209). Such over-dependence on their non-local or native-speaker identity in return negatively influences their professional identity formation or their professional career development as language teachers. The efficacy of intercultural adaptation in such classes is thus questioned by Stanley (2011) and she argues that it leads to an awkward situation that the non-local teachers infantilize their students and the students regard their teachers as idiots. She and other scholars therefore call for proper training courses about the learning cultures and language instruction skills for these non-local EFL teachers.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the teacher identity construction of the non-local English-speaking EFL teachers during their intercultural adaptation process by analysing the data of the in-depth interviews with three non-local EFL teachers in one Chinese university. The non-local teachers were found facing three major types of intercultural challenges in the EFL classes in Chinese tertiary education due to the divergences of the learning and teaching styles of the local students and the non-local teachers. The non-local teachers expect for highly interactive and student-centered classes, but the Chinese students are too deferential and teacher-dependent, quiet and reluctant to talk, and mixed in over-sized classes with diverse language proficiency and motivation. Facing such intercultural challenges, the non-local EFL teachers strategically shift their teacher identities and instrumentalize their non-local identity to adapt to their intercultural teaching work and to empower themselves professionally in their language teaching work.

This study contributes to the understanding of the complexity of the identity-making in intercultural adaptation process and provides implications for the adaptive policymaking and training for non-local teachers. Future research should include more participants with gender variety from different university backgrounds to present a more holistic and ecological view of the intercultural adaptation process of non-local EFL teachers. And more work also needs to be done on how cultural and contextual factors like power dynamics between teachers and students influence the teacher identity construction process within and outside the classrooms.

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**Li Yi** is a lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages at Sun Yat-sen University. Her research interests include discourse studies, intercultural communication, and health communication. She has published several research articles in the prestigious peer-reviewed journals.

**Ling Meng** (PhD) is a researcher in the School of Foreign Studies at South China Normal University. Her research interests include health communication and second language teacher education and development. She has published more than ten journal articles in the leading Chinese peer-reviewed journals like *Foreign Languages in China*, *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, and *Foreign Languages Research*. Dr. Meng's email: forever.ml@163.com