# The geographies of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) industry: international student mobility and homestay accommodation in Brighton and Hove

# The Geographies of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Industry: International Student Mobility and Homestay Accommodation in Brighton and Hove

**by**

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# Abstract

This thesis provides the first geographical investigation of the interconnections between international student mobility (ISM), the English as a foreign language (EFL) industry, and homestay student accommodation. In recent years, theorisations of ISM and research on mobile student groups in situ has burgeoned, however, often concerned with students engaged in Higher Education, the patterns, processes and dynamics of the EFL industry remain under-researched. Weaving together disparate scholarship and presenting empirical findings on ISM, student geographies, and the geographies of home, the thesis provides an original and timely contribution to geographical knowledges and contemporary policy-relevant issues, including the regulation of international student mobility, studentification, loneliness and child safeguarding.

Drawing on a case study of the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove, and employing a mixed-methods approach comprising GIS mapping; a questionnaire survey; and semi-structured interviews with EFL students, host families, ELT professionals and EFL industry stakeholders, the thesis presents some key findings. First, it is argued that capital theory and the concept of geographical imaginations are valuable frameworks for understanding how mobilities are sold and (re)produced within the EFL industry. Second, the findings expose the central role that governments and education agents play in regulating patterns of ISM, including (im)mobilising different social groups. It is contended that the unique structural conditions in which the UK's EFL industry operates in has created a seasonal industry that requires homestay accommodation as an alternative form of student residence to that traditionally consumed by university students. Through an exploration of the motivations of the host family population, the role of EFL students in enabling financial flexibility, socialisation, and cultural capital accumulation for host families is identified. For EFL students, homestay accommodation offers intensified non-student social relationships and disrupts 'traditional' student-identity making processes. Through these analyses, a tension is highlighted between the role of homestay student accommodation as a form of care, and as commercialised service. Overall, whilst research on ISM, studenthood and studentification have provided useful frameworks for examining student identities and local student geographies thus far, it is argued that the conceptual boundaries should be extended to embrace the wider demographic, socio-cultural, and temporal contexts present within the EFL industry.



**Key words:** ISM; the EFL industry; homestay; host families; studenthood; Brighton and Hove

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **EFL** | English as a Foreign Language |
| **ELT** | English Language Teaching |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **HE** | Higher Education |
| **HEI** | Higher Education Institution |
| **HMO** | House in Multiple Occupation |
| **ISM** | International Student Mobility |
| **LGBTQ+** | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer |
| **LAD** | Local Authority District |
| **PBSA** | Purpose-Built Student Accommodation |
| **UK** | United Kingdom |

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# CHAPTER ONE
# Introduction

## 1.1 The Research Context

Despite rapidly increasing numbers of internationally mobile students in recent decades, at the beginning of the twenty-first century there was a dearth of research on international student migration (ISM) that led King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003:230) to argue that "the standard academic literature on migration pays virtually no attention to students". In subsequent years, research on student migration and mobility has burgeoned at a similar time to which the geographies of children and youth has emerged as a "vibrant field of research" (Holloway et al. 2011:2) and the geographies of education developed a more coherent outlook (Wainwright and Marandet 2011). The existing literature on student populations has largely focused on two key areas: theorisations of international student migration and mobility (Waters and Brooks 2011; King and Raghuram 2013; Beech 2015; Findlay et al. 2017), and mobile student groups in situ (Smith and Holt 2007; Hubbard 2009; Holton 2016; Kinton et al. 2018).

Internationally mobile students have been defined by UNESCO (2019) as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin". This definition captures the movements of tertiary students, credit-mobile students (such as those participating in the Erasmus programme), and language students, who are the focus of this thesis. However, as a broad conceptualisation of a diverse population group, the 'international student' suffers from what Castles (2002:1143) calls a "blurring of boundaries between different categories of migrants". Although Collins (2010a; 2010b) and Bagnoli (2009) recognise 'language students' in their research on South Korean students in New Zealand and 'the year out' respectively, neither explores the distinct identity of the English as a foreign language (EFL) student population and therefore they remain notably absent from geographical scholarship. This could be due to a combination of factors, including a lack of robust statistics, the methodological challenges of researching temporary populations, and the visibility and accessibility of Higher Education (HE) students to academics for research purposes. This thesis therefore takes up the challenge outlined by Holton and Riley (2013) for more research to be conducted on the diversity of experience between student groups.

EFL is a historic form of learning, embedded within social, cultural, economic and political landscapes. The first EFL School in the UK was established in the early twentieth century

(Berlitz 2018), and therefore the industry was a pioneer of international education. In 2013, the Director of English at the British Council wrote in his foreword on 'the English Effect' that the language was the operating system of global conversations between the economically active, the thought leaders, the business decision-makers, and the young, and predicted that by 2020 the language would be spoken at a useful level by two billion people worldwide (British Council 2013).

Over 400 accredited English language teaching (ELT) centres operate across the UK, jointly enrolling over 500,000 EFL students from across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America in 2019 (English UK 2019). Within the UK context, the delivery of EFL takes place in a differentiated market place, providing ELT for both public and privately funded students[1]. ELT centres take various forms, comprising small family-run centres, large independents and international chains in the private sector, and further education colleges and universities in the state sector. With regards to the nature of the learning, the most popular course studied is General English, followed by Summer/Winter Camp, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) respectively. Other types of courses offered in the UK include Business and Professional English, English Plus[2] and one-to-one tuition (English UK 2019a). As a result, the industry caters to a varied demographic of global students, including juniors (up to 17 years old) and adults (18+). Whilst the two groups represent 51% and 49% of the market respectively, junior students accounted for only 25% of student weeks[3] in 2018 (English UK 2019), which means that they stay for shorter periods of time than adult students. Moreover, the junior market also fluctuates seasonally due to its association with the academic calendar. For example, between July and September 2019 junior students constituted 32% of the market (English UK 2018) compared to an average of 12% in the first 6 months of the year (English UK 2018a; 2018b).

At the time of writing (before the intricacies of the UK's EU Exit deal have been finalised), EFL students from EU member states do not need a visa to enrol on an ELT course. For EFL students arriving from outside of the EU, the most popular visa is the Short-term study visa (English UK 2018c) which permits a stay of up to 11 months. Students who want to study for longer than 11 months can apply for a Tier 4 Visa (also known as the General student visa). However, students on a Tier 4 Visa can only study at an ELT centre on the Government's Tier 4 Sponsor register, which represents only a small proportion of the market. In 2019, the

[1]For example, Italy offers groups of 16-19-year olds the opportunity to attend English language courses abroad through the PON scheme (Trinity College London 2018).
[2] English Plus refers to courses where English tuition is supplemented by another form of learning, for example, an internship; sport; or creative activity.
[3] The UK ELT market is predominantly measured by student weeks rather than student numbers.

average period of enrolment for EFL students was 10.3 weeks for adults and 2.1 weeks for juniors in the state sector, and 5 weeks and 1.8 weeks respectively in the private sector (English UK 2019a). Therefore, as a migrant is principally defined as someone who stays for a period of 12 months or more (Anderson and Blinder 2017), this thesis defines EFL student moves as international mobility, rather than migration.

EFL students bring a number of benefits to the UK, including boosting national and local economies. For example, it has been estimated that every EFL student is worth £378 per week, contributing £194 million to the exchequer annually, as well as directly and indirectly supporting the jobs of 26,500 employees through teaching, supply chains and employee and student expenditure (Chaloner et al. 2015). Furthermore, the economic contributions made by EFL students to the UK often continue after they finish their period of EFL study; those who use their English qualification to obtain a place at a UK HE Institution constitute a portion of the export revenue of the UK's universities, which stood at £10.8bn between 2014-2015 (Universities UK 2017). Moreover, former students are more likely to do business with the UK and return as visitors in the future (Chaloner et al. 2015).

Cranston et al. (2018:10) state that "to understand migration, we cannot simply locate our research with migrants, but have a need to think more widely about the actors that intersect with their journeys". Therefore, this thesis considers the role of national governments and non-governmental agencies, such as education agents and English UK, in regulating and facilitating EFL student mobility. English UK is a registered charity, and the national trade association for accredited English language schools. The organisation's objectives are to represent, support and promote excellence in the UK's EFL industry both domestically and globally. The organisation also provides business-critical intelligence, marketing and training for its member centres. For the students, English UK aims to ensure a positive experience by improving standards, providing protection through the Student Emergency Support Fund, and creating a welcoming environment by lobbying the government for more favourable visa and post-study rights (English UK 2019c). To become a member of English UK, ELT centres must pass the Accreditation UK scheme[4], which at the time of writing is not compulsory. Therefore, it is important to note at this stage that a proportion of the market for ELT in the UK remains unregulated.

[4] Accreditation UK is a quality assurance scheme for UK providers of EFL courses, run by the British Council in partnership with English UK (British Council 2018)

Another benefit of researching the EFL student population is that it enables a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of international students, and their impact on place: two key areas for research on student geographies thus far. For instance, studenthood and studentification have provided important conceptual frameworks to investigate student identity and processes of urban neighbourhood change. However, the concepts are almost exclusively focused on examples and experiences of traditional university student accommodation pathways: houses in multiple occupation (HMO), halls of residence, and increasingly, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) (Smith and Hubbard 2014). Contrastingly, this thesis identifies the most popular accommodation type for EFL students as homestay accommodation, whereby students live with a local host family for the duration of their studies. The homestay is defined by Lynch (2005: 528) as:

> "A specialist term referring to types of accommodation where tourists or guests pay to stay in private homes, where interaction takes place with a host and/or family usually living upon the premises, and with whom public space is, to a degree, shared".

Schmidt-Reinhart (2004) argued that although the homestay had long been considered a key factor in the study abroad experience, it was one of the least examined components of foreign study. Subsequently, the homestay sector has been researched within hospitality and tourism literature from perspectives including commercialised hospitality (Lynch 2005; Sweeny and Lynch 2007) and host-guest encounters (Di Domenico and Lynch 2007), yet it remains under-examined within geographical literature. This is surprising when taking into consideration the homestay's role in reinforcing and contradicting prevailing ideologies of home, gendered divisions of labour, and sexualities within the home. Furthermore, the homestay offers an alternative outlook to transnational networks of care that have primarily been researched from the perspective of migrant mothers providing care in the host country (e.g. Yeoh and Huang 2000), rather than care provided by the host country to mobile children and youth. Research on the EFL industry therefore presents an opportunity to consider an alternative role of temporary student populations in the host community, and develops knowledges of international student populations in situ by investigating their experiences of homestay accommodation and the impact on studenthood and student identity making processes.

The EFL industry therefore remains underexplored within academic literature. This is despite widely debated concerns on young people's visibility in research (Holloway and Valentine 2000), and the criticism of research for lacking accounts that take seriously the views and experiences of students (Waters and Leung 2014). Research on the EFL industry is also important for advancing understandings of a range of contemporary issues, including short-

term migration, the regulation of housing supply/demand nexus, the loneliness epidemic, and child safeguarding, which will be explored in the empirical chapters of this thesis. Therefore, by deepening our understanding and knowledge of the way that the EFL industry impacts on local communities, this research begins to take up the call by Smith (2018: 735) for population geographers to offer empirically-grounded evidence to refute and/or concur with political and media representations of migration.

The remaining sections of this chapter present the aims and objectives of this research and introduce the case study location, Brighton and Hove, highlighting why this case study is appropriate to conduct research on the EFL industry and for contributing to existing research on ISM, student geographies, and the geographies of home.

## 1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

In light of the context provided in section 1.1, the aim of this thesis is to examine processes and outcomes of international student mobility within the English as a foreign language industry, using the case study of Brighton and Hove.

To address this aim, the key objectives of the thesis are:

1. to identify the scale and distribution of the EFL industry in the UK;

2. to investigate how ISM is produced, facilitated and regulated within the UK's EFL industry;

3. to explore the dynamics of homestay student accommodation through an analysis of the profiles, motivations, and experiences of host families in Brighton and Hove;

4. to examine EFL students' destination and residential decision-making processes, and their experiences of studenthood in Brighton and Hove.

## 1.3 The Case Study

Brighton and Hove is a unitary authority located 54 miles south of London on the East Sussex coastline (Figure 1). At the time of the 2011 census, Brighton and Hove's population was 273,369, making it the second largest seaside town by population in the UK after Greater

Bournemouth. Once favoured as a holiday destination by the working class and royal family alike, the British seaside has fallen in popularity since the 1970s largely as a consequence of the reduced costs of air travel that has lowered the threshold levels of wealth required to travel internationally (Czaika and De Haas 2014). As a result, many traditional UK seaside holiday destinations – such as Clacton, Greater Yarmouth and Blackpool – have fallen into a spiral of economic decline (Ward 2015; Beatty et al. 2008). However, Brighton and Hove attracted 8.5 million visitors in 2011, which supported around 14% of jobs in the city (Brighton and Hove City Council 2014). Furthermore, in 2015 Trip Advisor's Travellers Choice Awards voted Brighton the 6th top destination on the rise in the world, and in 2016, tourist visitors to the city increased by 6.4%, compared to an average decrease of 2% across the rest of England (Brighton and Hove City Council 2018a). As a result, tourism from national and overseas visitors plays a key part in the Brighton and Hove's economy.

**Figure 1. The location of Brighton and Hove**


(Source: Google Maps 2018)

As to what attracts such large numbers of visitors, Brighton and Hove is renowned for its collaborative, creative and cosmopolitan reputation, and its sub-cultural populations. This creativity is best represented by the city's thriving independent business sector in the historic North Laine area, which is home to over 300 independent shops. Described as 'oozing retro chic', possessing 'a bohemian atmosphere', and 'a mix of the ethical, exotic and funky' (Visit Brighton 2018), the North Laine area is a symbol of Brighton's first wave of gentrification that began as a result of the 'sweat equity' of the city's creatives (Lees et al. 2013). More recently,

the city was the first political constituency to elect a Green Party MP[5], and is well-known worldwide for being the 'gay capital' of the UK, and favoured location of the LGBT community (Browne and Bakshi 2013), annually hosting the largest Pride festival of its kind in England (Brighton and Hove City Council 2014). It is unsurprising therefore that Brighton and Hove City Council (2014) reported that residents get on well with people from different backgrounds, making it an attractive location for mobile populations and longer-term migrants.

Nevertheless, inequalities inherent within the city have been compounded by a second wave of gentrification that began in the 1990s, characterised by the commissioning of 'showy' regeneration projects that aimed to make the city a place where the 'urbane middle classes would want to live' (Lees et al. 2013). Consequently, Brighton and Hove has become a commuter satellite of London (Dee 2014), which has led to the in-migration of 'down-from-Londoners' (Harrap 2018) who have contributed to increasing property prices in the city. As a collective result of high property prices, in-migration, a small supply of council housing, and a lack of available land for new developments, demand for housing in the city is high. The Council's Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report (Brighton and Hove City Council 2012) identified that almost 72% of households in the city cannot afford market housing without spending a disproportionate level of their income, or receiving some form of subsidy. The average 1-bed flat in the city costs nearly nine times the median household annual income, and with average house prices above £360,000, prospective buyers require an annual income of over £80,000 (Brighton and Hove City Council 2017). Most recently, Brighton and Hove was included in the top 20% of most expensive local authorities in England (HM Land Registry 2019). This has contributed to the city's creatives turning to precarious housing solutions such as property guardianship, whereby residents are permitted to occupy an otherwise empty property if they help to maintain its condition. The city is one of only a handful of locations in the UK that has organisations offering property guardianship (Ferreri et al. 2017). Brighton and Hove is therefore, arguably, in the midst of one of the most challenging housing crises in the country.

Furthermore, as home to two large universities that together enrolled over 39,000 HE students in the period 2017/2018 (HESA 2019), the city also has an unusual demographic make-up as the only seaside location in the country to have a share of the population over state pension age that is below the English average (Beatty et al. 2008). Youthful, student populations can create additional housing challenges, and in recent years increasing student numbers have

[5] One of the main UK political parties. The Green Party's aim is to 'end the system that keeps hurting the environment and all of us who rely on it' (The Green Party 2019).

not been correspondingly matched with an increase in university provided residential accommodation due to the lack of available land in the city. Therefore, students have been forced to compete in the local housing market, which has resulted in a large private rented sector. It is estimated that there is a total of 6,460 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the city, which is nine times the national average (Brighton and Hove City Council 2015b). Therefore, as HE students traditionally compete for the same type of private rented dwellings favoured by lower income groups, and as their competitive capacity as a group is considerably greater than that of low-income families, this tends to lead to the displacement of more established, settled residents in a process coined studentification (Smith 2005).

Brighton's unique history of studentification has been explored as processes have unfolded (Sage et al. 2012a). In contrast to other university towns and cities that have witnessed a 'ghettoization' of communities (Hubbard 2009), where students live in distinct enclaves separate from the local residents, in Brighton, students have located in neighbourhoods that are typically unaffected by studentification. For example, HE students have located in Bevendean: a more marginal and deprived area of the city, and a former New Deal for Communities regeneration area. This has resulted in the compounding of pre-existing social issues such as anti-social behaviour, marginalisation, and community decline (Sage et al. 2012b). Furthermore, through an investigation of Phoenix halls PBSA, Sage et al. (2013) revealed that this development had given rise to particular, and magnified, expressions of studentification, including noise-nuisance and other low-level anti-social behaviour occurring around the building. It was acknowledged that this presented a year-round challenge associated with the arrival and departure of university students, followed by cohorts of EFL students arriving during the summer.

This brief suggestion by Sage et al. (2013) that EFL students are contributing to existing expressions of studentification in the city requires further exploration, particularly as the short-term transience of this population, and their role in creating and sustaining the homestay sector, is likely to contribute to different social, economic and cultural impacts on the host community to those of their HE counterparts. For these reasons, Brighton and Hove makes for an interesting and appropriate location to examine processes and outcomes of international student mobility and homestay hosting within the English as a foreign language (EFL) industry.

## 1.4 Pathway Through Thesis

The thesis is structured into seven chapters. This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the EFL industry, the academic and policy rationale for the research, and the

context to support the appropriateness of using Brighton and Hove as a case study location. Chapter 2 offers a critical review of established academic literature on the migration industries; youth mobility; ISM; student geographies and the geographies of home. In doing so, the chapter highlights the absence of a geographic investigation on the EFL industry, its students, and homestay hosts. As a result, it is contended that a micro-geographic investigation of the expressions of studenthood and studentification in the context of the EFL student is required. This will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the diversity inherent within the mobile student population, and, consequently, the impacts of this process on host communities.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the application of grounded theory as the methodological framework through which empirical data was collected. A mixed-methods approach to data collection was employed, consisting of four phases: GIS mapping, a content analysis, a questionnaire survey, and semi-structured interviews. The rationale behind the methodological framework, and a discussion of the application of the data collection methods, is supported by a consideration of the ethics of the research, the influence of the researcher's positionality on the experience of the data collection process, and the data obtained. The findings of the empirical data collection are outlined in the next three chapters.

Chapter 4 examines findings from ELT centre surveys, and semi-structured interviews with ELT centre employees and EFL industry stakeholders to investigate the industry at a global, national and local scale. It is argued that capital theory, and the concept of geographical imaginations, are useful frameworks for understanding how mobilities are sold and produced within the industry. Furthermore, it is established that governments around the world play a central role in regulating student mobility. In doing so, they construct the global mobility patterns, and socio-economic characteristics, of the EFL student population. The chapter also identifies the geographies of the EFL industry in the UK, highlighting an uneven national distribution of ELT centres. Brighton and Hove is shown to be a key EFL hub and therefore an appropriate case study to examine the processes and outcomes of international student mobility within the English as a foreign language (EFL) industry. The chapter explores the key characteristics of the industry in Brighton and Hove: namely, the type of ELT centres and the demographics of the EFL students that study there. Furthermore, by investigating accommodation provision and preferences, it is revealed that homestay accommodation is the most popular choice of residence for EFL students. The chapter concludes with an investigation of safeguarding practices within the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove.

Chapter 2 argued that homestay accommodation is an underexplored transnational network of care. Consequently, Chapter 5 draws upon semi-structured interviews with host families and EFL students to explore their motivations and the impacts of homestay accommodation respectively. It is contended that hosts are a largely homogenous population, motivated primarily by financial remuneration or socialisation. The chapter draws upon the experiences of EFL students and host families to highlight the tension between the provision of homestay accommodation as a form of care and, at the same time, a monetised service. Furthermore, it is argued that the homestay offers intensified non-student social relationships which disrupts the 'traditional' micro-geographies of student identity making processes. Finally, the chapter assesses the multi-scalar impacts of homestay accommodation on the local host community, from changes in the everyday performances of family through to long-lasting transnational social networks.

Building upon these empirical findings, Chapter 6 analyses the diverse motivations of EFL students for participating in the EFL industry; the complexity of the destination and accommodation decision-making processes; and their in-situ experiences. Two key motivations for participating in the EFL industry are highlighted: to accumulate language capital, and for a 'youthful escape' (Waters, Brooks and Pimlott Wilson 2011). Both motivations are mediated by axes of social difference, through which EFL students are shown to resist, or look for, parental care. Second, it is argued that the short-termism of EFL courses constructs a unique form of studenthood. Therefore, it is important to recognise the diverse nuances of what it means to be a student in academic research on ISM.

In bringing this thesis to a conclusion, Chapter 7 pulls together the key findings of the research and outlines the thesis' empirical, theoretical and conceptual contributions to geographical knowledges. The chapter also considers the policy significance of the findings and highlights key areas for future research.

# CHAPTER TWO
# Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

the aim of this chapter is to critically review disparate scholarship on ISM, student geographies, and the geographies of home to consider the existing conceptual and theoretical debates. In doing so, The chapter highlights the absence of a comprehensive study on the EFL industry in existing geographical scholarship. Specifically, three main gaps within the existing literature are identified. First, it is highlighted that literatures on ISM and student geographies have tended to focus on the higher education (HE) student, and, therefore, there is an absence of empirical research on the English as a foreign language (EFL) industry and EFL students. Second, it is contended that current conceptualisations of the 'mobile student' do not fully embrace the diverse spatialities and temporalities that are inherent within the population. Third, the phenomenon of homestay accommodation in geographical scholarship, is, to date, under-researched. As a result, the chapter argues that there is a rich and timely opportunity for a geographical investigation on the EFL industry. This is valuable to fully understand the diversity of the mobile student population, the facilitation and regulation of their mobility, and the impacts of temporary population influxes on host communities.

## 2.2 International Mobility

The first English language teaching (ELT) centre was established in the UK in the early twentieth century, however, the majority of centres can be attributed to the 'boom years' of the 1960s and 1970s (McCallen 1989). This period of expansion in the UK's EFL industry unfolded at the same time as globalisation in the late twentieth century, which describes "the stretching and deepening of social relations and institutions across space and time" (Held 1995: 20). A rapidly expanding literature on globalisation addressed these new global structural reorganisations, provoking debates such as the contemporary relevance of national borders (Ohmae 1995), and 'space[s] of flows' replacing 'space of places' (Castells 1996). What united the diverse analyses of globalisation was a "focus on the accelerated *circulation* of people, commodities, capital money, identities and images" (Brenner 1999:431, emphasis added). These new space/place relations enabled a wider breadth of the global population to become internationally mobile. Within some groups, globalisation increased the expectation of international mobility. Arguably, where this expectation was, and continues to be, most nuanced is in the highly-skilled industry. A general ideological shift towards economic

liberalisation (Czaika and de Haas 2015) in the era of globalisation encouraged the exponential growth of transnational corporations (TNCs), placing more importance on knowledge sharing processes such as 'brain circulation' (Saxenian 2005). Consequently, research on highly-skilled professional labour migration to global city agglomerations burgeoned (Salt 1992; Beaverstock 1994; Beaverstock and Smith 1996). Nevertheless, to date, there has been no consensus of what constitutes a highly-skilled migrant, with attempts at classification including the possession of a tertiary educational qualification, or professional, managerial and technical status (Koser and Salt 1997). As a result, international mobility for educational purposes has become increasingly normalised as middle-class families see international experience as a way to appropriate the cultural and social capital necessary to obtain a highly-skilled, mobile career (Waters 2006).

At a similar time, Sheller and Urry (2006) proposed that the social sciences had taken a 'mobility turn', in which the 'new mobilities paradigm' urged researchers not to start from a point of view that takes fixity and boundedness for granted (Cresswell 2010). As short-term movements and circulations of people are not easily captured in migration frameworks, geographers have increasingly engaged with seeing cross-border moves as part of a spectrum of mobility types which in turn has begun to expose the heterogeneity within different mobile groups (King 2012). Importantly, the paradigm details two further aspects of mobility that are pertinent for this research. First, attention is paid to why and how new systems of globalisation enhance the mobility of some people *and* heighten the immobility of others (Sheller and Urry 2006: emphasis original). Second, Cresswell (2006: 2) contends that while in classic migration theory the choice of whether or not to move would be the result of so-called 'push and pull' factors in A and B (the origin and destination), the interfaces between origin and destination tend to be under-explored. Conversely, research on mobilities explores how migrants are produced relationally through their mobility (Cranston 2016), which is conceptualised and theorised in scholarly research on the migration industries.

## 2.3 The Migration Industries

Studies on the 'migration industries' are an emerging field of research (e.g. Cranston et al. 2018). The term 'migration industries' was coined by Castles and Miller (2003) in the third edition of *The Age of Migration*, and, since then, the commercialisation of migration has been a key feature of research on the migration industries. For example, in its earliest form, Salt and Stein (1997) highlighted the ways that migration can be seen as a 'business'. Moreover, Hernandez-Leon (2008:154) defined a migration industry as "the ensemble of entrepreneurs who, motivated by the pursuit of financial gain, provide a variety of services facilitating human

mobility across international borders". These 'entrepreneurs' are also often referred to as 'non-state actors' (Harvey et al. 2018), and include, amongst others, travel agents, lawyers, bankers, labour recruiters, brokers, interpreters, and housing agents (Castles 2004).

Cranston et al. (2017:543-544) contend that the migration industries:

"Provides an analytical lens to better unpack the social, economic and geographical complexities of migration processes to helps us understand contemporary articulations of the interactions between the economy, nation states, non-governmental organisations and the movement of people".

Nevertheless, McCollum and Findlay (2018:571) argue that there is still work to be done to move beyond conceptualisations of how actors motivated by profit facilitate migration, to acknowledge the macro structural spatio-temporal context within which relations between profit-motivated individuals and other actors in the system play out. The authors therefore contend that there is an opportunity for the field to advance as a cohesive theoretical framework in migration studies.

Thompson (2016) states that to fully comprehend migration decision-making, it is necessary to take note of the impacts of place, and in an education context, Collins (2012) argues for the importance of researching the manner in which education agents might direct students into different destinations. Spaan and van Naerssen (2018, emphasis added) state that the migration industries influence migrant decision-making by increasing *awareness* of opportunities. Imaginative geographies involve experiencing or anticipating the 'atmosphere of place' (Hannam et al. 2006), and therefore, the concept of geographical imaginations has been drawn upon by a number of scholars as a framework for understanding the interactions between the international student and the structures in which this mobility operates. For example, Kölbel (2018) found that international students construct their biographies with reference to dominant imaginaries of studying abroad, and Beech (2014) showed how imaginative geographies of place influenced students' locational study choices.

However, to date, the literature on the education migration industry exclusively focuses on Higher Education (HE), and, consequently, Beech (2017) has called for the migration industry to be investigated in a variety of different education contexts in more detail to provide a fuller understanding of the structural context in which EFL student mobility is unfolding. In doing so, the thesis will contribute to understandings of the way in which the migration industries play a

role in producing how [EFL students] experience mobility (Cranston 2016) and through this, how they shape learner's experiences (Robinson-Pant and Magyar 2018).

## 2.4 Youth Mobility and ISM

Through their edited collection: *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* Skelton and Valentine (1998: 6) aimed to demonstrate the relevance of youth to a range of geographical debates. Since then, Geographies of children, youth of families has emerged as a vibrant field of research (Holloway and Pimlott Wilson 2011). Marked by seminal texts such as *Children's Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning* (Holloway and Valentine 2000) and *Geographies of Children, Youth and Families* (Holt 2011) the subdiscipline has also been the focus of an International Conference series, and the Journal *Children's Geographies*. Accordingly, there has been growing scholarship on youth within geographical research in the four key areas proposed by (Skelton and Valentine 1998): representations, scale, youth cultures and sites of resistance taking into account key axes of social difference: ethnicity, age, race, class and (dis)ability. However, Smith and Mills (2019) argue that while academic work on youth is flourishing, very few academic outputs are self-defining as youth geographies. Instead, they are scattered across numerous sub-disciplinary niches of Human Geography, for example, migration, politics, gender, and religion.

This may be a consequence of 'youth' being a contested term, varying from one society and culture to another, and by class, gender and ethnicity (King et al. 2016). Youth is widely accepted to describe the transitional period between 'innocent childhood' and the 'realities of adulthood' (Skelton and Valentine 1998). However, in the global North, 'youth' largely refers to those aged 16 to 25, whereas in the Global South, youth extends into an individual's thirties, as more emphasis is placed on achieving full adult status rather than a specific age (Hampshire et al. 2011). Transition is therefore one of the core concepts within research on youth geographies (Bauer and Landolt 2018). The status of the transition is often measured by success against key markers of adulthood, which include events such as education to employment and moving out of the parental home to independent living. In these cases, the emphasis is on responsibility and independence (Evans 2008). However, the age at which youth achieve these markers varies by categories of social difference, for example, working-class individuals leaving school compared to middle class individuals studying for longer in HE (Cieslik and Simpson 2013).

It is therefore important to consider the role of socio-economic forces on youth transitions and mobility. In the context of international student mobilities, whilst global flows of students have

diversified (Czaika and Haas 2015), inequalities in educational access have resulted in some social groups being left behind (Butler and Hamnett 2007) due to the costs of studying abroad (Perkins and Neumayer 2014), which is especially emphasised when work restrictions for migrants in the host country are often restricted. As a result, international education is paradoxical: whilst it is heralded on its ability to create opportunities, in doing so it also reproduces inequalities, resulting in a reproduction of global socio-economic hierarchies (Collins 2014).

Waters et al. (2011) contend that for the most privileged social groups, notions of fun, enjoyment and the pursuit of happiness abroad featured strongly in young people's stories. This supports the view that international youth mobility is increasingly considered as a rite of passage, a time for self-discovery (Beech 2014b), and an opportunity to fulfil desires to explore the world (Collins 2014). Furthermore, Brown (2011) contends that the decision to become internationally mobile for the purposes of work, study or leisure is often reliant on, and motivated by the extent to which it is an 'acceptable aspiration' within peer groups. This consequently perpetuates mobility habits within social networks (Beech 2014a) and normalises international mobility amongst contemporary global youth (Collins 2014; Holloway et al. 2010).

However, Cranston et al. (2020) found that even for students who highlighted a desire for overseas travel, they still articulated the experience in the context of distinction through gaining cultural capital. A significant contribution to international student mobility studies has been made through the recognition of the role of social and cultural capital accumulation as a way to mobilise future employability (Waters 2005; 2006; 2009; Waters and Leung 2013a; 2013b). This is largely attributable to the contention that a degree from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) is a requirement for a highly paid job and social integration in post-industrial knowledge economies, and an often-cited idea that a global mind-set developed through international experience, is a pre-requisite for future leaders of transnational organisations (Cranston 2016).

It is widely recognised that education is the key to long-term economic growth and social inequality reductions (Butler and Hamnett 2007). Education strategies are therefore being adopted across the globe to focus efforts on widening access to HE for youthful populations in an attempt to meet the demands of increasingly internationalised industries. Within this, Deakin (2014) argues that mobility is both encouraged and sustained by processes of neoliberalism. Pimlott-Wilson (2015: 288) argues that the neoliberalism agenda tasks young

people with taking responsibility for their futures "and 'raising' their aspirations in order to contribute through economic production as active citizen-workers" (Pimlott-Wilson 2015: 288).

Youth mobility as a way to display and learn global citizenship been explored through literature on the gap year, predominantly through the perspective of Western youth traveling to less developed countries (e.g. Simpson 2005; Snee 2013). In her research on Canadian exchange students, Prazeres (2016) explores how the Global South is sought as a location to 'exercise a reflexive and distinctive self' as it extends beyond the comfort of the west. Simpson (2005: 447) suggests that this agenda has changed the premise of the gap year from a:

> "radical activity, dominated by charities and inspired by the travel of the hippie generation to an institutionally accepted commercial gap year industry which helps form new citizens for a global age".

Findlay et al. 2015 provide evidence to show how exposure to the gap year is part of a longer-term mobility strategy and that those who took a gap year were more likely to lead participation in international opportunities during the course of a student's university studies.

Interestingly, King (2011) suggests that the gap year emerged as a phenomenon during the 1960s, at the same time to the boom years of the EFL industry in the UK. Therefore, the EFL industry provides a useful comparative case study as a form of 'gap mobility' in the Global North. This research therefore responds to the call from Waite and Smith (2017) for further research is required on other forms of temporary international migration to enhance understandings of the similarities and differences between the practice of taking gap years. In doing so, it will be possible to explore the extent to which study is a method of strategizing or a method of escape, in relation to wider debates within youth mobilities.

## 2.5 Student Geographies 'in Situ'

Holdsworth (2009a: 1853) asserts that "student migration is recognised as an important, if overlooked, component of migration and has been identified as one of the significant mobilities in the 21st century". As a result, research on international student migration is a fairly recent phenomenon, only forming a significant field of migration research and temporary mobility studies in the last decade. The advancement of this field of research is timely, considering its status as a highly policy-relevant and politicised field that continues to gain importance in internationalisation strategies across the globe. Empirical studies in the field of ISM have, to date, largely concentrated on two thematic areas: short-duration forms of circulation

incorporated into the structure of a degree, and movement to a foreign university for the entire duration of a course, usually an undergraduate programme (Cairns 2017).

Within this framework, researchers have discovered a distinct form of identity (Field and Morgan-Klein 2010), coined ‘studenthood’, which encompasses the embodiment of the rules of student life (Chatterton 1999), learned through exposure to student-centric socialising, such as Freshers’ nightclubs and bars, the Students’ Union, volunteering groups and university sports or academic societies (Holton 2017a). Chatterton (2010) contends that the student represents a monetarised and commodified, as much as an educational, persona, representing opportunities for profit for both local businesses and universities. As a result, there have been clear trends towards the growth of segregated service provision for students in student destinations.

However, the neoliberal, marketisation of higher education (Kinton et al. 2016) has led to an increase in the number of young people taking up higher education (Munro et al. 2009), which has not been commensurate with increased on-site accommodation provision Rugg et al. (2000). As a result, university students have increasingly migrated into established residential neighbourhoods since the outset of the twenty-first century in a process that triggers a gamut of distinct social, economic, cultural, and physical transformations (Sage et al. 2012a). This process was coined studentification by Smith (2005) and is now identified as an influential process of contemporary urban change. A key ‘outcome’ of studentification is a more segregated society that leads to the disintegration of established communities due to displacement and polarisation (Smith 2008). Traditionally recognised as creating geographies of low-quality, high-density student houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) usually near to university campuses (Kinton et al. 2018), in the last decade, the challenges of studentification have extended to purpose-built student developments in gated communities. Processes of studentification have therefore been met with critical politics in the UK (Smith and Holt, 2007), and an oft-cited association in the media with physical decline (Hubbard 2009).

However, Hubbard (2008) notes that in comparison to the research on the role of studentification, there has been a paucity of research tracing the impacts of students on ‘host’ communities. Indeed, Smith (2009: 1797) notes in a special issue on student geographies that:

> “This concern with the studentification of university towns and cities provides only a partial understanding of the wider sociospatial effects of expanded systems of higher education and enlarged student populations”.

Consequently, Smith (2009) borrows Lee's (2009: 1532) proclamation to scholars of gentrification, that those engaged with researching student geographies need to “think outside the box! Be creative!” Arguably, stepping outside of the conceptual boundaries of the HE student through an investigation of EFL students in situ presents an opportunity to contribute to the theorisation of the socio-spatial impacts of mobile student populations.

## 2.6 The Geographies of Home

In the 1970s and 1980s, the home was cast by geographers as a uniform space of safety, familiarity and belonging (Brickell 2012). However, by the early twenty-first century, scholars such as Blunt and Varley (2004: 3) had problematised this normative association between home and positivity through the acknowledgement that the home can dichotomously be “a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships”. In this way, the home can represent a site of struggle between what it is, and what it ought to be. In their seminal book *Home*, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 21-22) developed a critical geography of home, defined as:

> “We first mean a spatialized understanding of home, one that appreciates home as a place and also as a spatial imaginary that travels across space and is commented to particular sites. Second, we mean a politicized understanding of home, one alert to the processes of oppression and resistance embedded in ideas and processes of home”.

In this book, Blunt and Dowling tease out three key components of the ‘critical turn’: home as simultaneously material and imaginative; the nexus between home, power and identity; and home as multi-scalar. In other words, there are three main ways of looking at home: as a feeling; as an experience; and as constituted through social and political relations. Drawing on feminist critiques of the home as a site of resistance or oppression (hooks 1990), a key debate in the literature is how the meanings and experiences of home can vary according to an individual’s age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability and class. More recently, Wilkinson (2014) has argued for the importance of recognising how heteronormative ideals can make many different groups feel ‘out of place’ within the familial home, including single people and those without children.

The heteronormative ideals also have implications for the provision of care within the home setting. For example, when asking ‘who cares for whom?’ Kraftl and Horton (2017) contend that everyday caring practices are disproportionately carried out by women and marginalised

social groups, and that these practices are disproportionately undervalued, low paid or unpaid. England (2010: 133) attributes the gendering of work to the:

> "Ideological and historical roots in the social and spatial separation of waged work from social reproduction. 'Work' became constituted as 'economically productive' waged-labour that took place outside the home. Housekeeping, caring for family members and other 'domestic' activities became non-marketized 'labours of love' primarily associated within the private sphere of family and home, and assumed to be primarily the responsibility of wives and mothers."

Despite women increasingly pursuing careers outside of the home in recent decades, Valentine et al. (2012) recognise that under neoliberalism, the responsibility of childcare has shifted from the government and society back to the individual family and home space. Nevertheless, Lee (2002) highlights that in certain socio-cultural contexts, while men partake in recreational oriented childcare and maintenance work when it does not interfere with their job, women are expected to work, do the housework, care for relatives and help children with their homework. Therefore, the labour of migrant care workers has increasingly supported women's labour market participation (Schwiter et al. 2018). Mattingly (2001) argues that this is a class and ethnic phenomenon as the majority of domestic workers are female immigrants from poorer countries. The impacts of this factor on reproductive labour within the home extends beyond national boundaries to the fathers and husbands, or wider familial networks, assume care duties left behind by migrant mothers (Hoang et al. 2012). Caring labour in the home is therefore increasingly tied into international networks and the term "global care chains" is frequently used to describe how these relations of care have become increasingly spatially stretched (Schwiter et al. 2018). The migration of women engaged in transnational domestic work therefore reveals how the uneven impacts of globalisation have intruded into the micro-world of families and households (Asis et al. 2004). Geographers have therefore contributed to understandings of the role of caregiving in the experience and meaning of the home environment (Williams 2002:149). However, what is missing in these debates is a geographical investigation of the impacts of care provided by British families to internationally mobile children and young adult students through homestay accommodation. Nevertheless, the homestay has been explored in hospitality literature from the perspective of the commercialised home. This is exemplified by Lynch (2005a) who argues that rather than the homestay concept, a more accurate term might be 'commercial homes', as distinctive hybrid between the home and the hotel. In this sense, the host refers to the principal contact person whom the guest encounters when staying in the commercial home (Sweeney and Lynch

2007). To distinguish the homestay from other forms of commercialised hospitality, Di Domenico and Lynch (2007: 322) contend that:

> "The term 'host' reflects a more personal undertaking than the more neutral terms of 'owner' or 'proprietor'. Similarly, the term 'guest' is used in everyday discourse to refer to an invited person within one's home as distinct from the more value-free label of 'customer'".

However, Castles (2002) states that as a key force of social transformation, it is 'vital' to understand the causes, characteristics and processes of societal change that arise from international moves. There is an opportunity to investigate how current understandings of the homestay in hospitality literature tie into wider understandings of student geographies and youth mobility. This can be achieved by, first, exploring how the experience of residing in parental home problematises experiences of studenthood and youth transitions, and, second, by examining an incoming student population that does not contribute to the displacement of the local population.

## 2.7 Summary

In summary, this Chapter has discussed some of the ways in which geographers have engaged with debates on the migration industries, youth mobility, ISM, student geographies, and the geographies of home. A consistent thread between each disparate area of literature is the notable absence of research on the EFL industry and its students. It is possible to suggest that EFL students have been under-researched to date as they do not fit neatly into current conceptualisations of the mobile student as one engaged in HE study. Therefore, there is still great scope to expand knowledge on the heterogeneity of the mobile student population, including student identity-making processes and experiences of studenthood. By engaging with the diverse spatialities and temporalities of the EFL student, it is possible to further understandings of the impact of short-term population influxes on the host community through examining the unique impacts of the consumption of homestay accommodation. This is in addition to PBSA and private rented student accommodation that has been the subject of research on student-initiated process of urban change to date. To respond to these lacunas, the empirical chapters of this thesis examine the processes and outcomes of international student mobility within the English as a foreign language (EFL) industry. Particular attention is paid to the facilitation and regulation of ISM by the EFL mobility industry (Chapter 4); the profiles, motivations and experiences of homestay hosts (Chapter 5), and; the complex

decision-making processes of EFL students and their in-situ experiences of studenthood (Chapter 6).

# CHAPTER THREE
# Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the rationale for the methodological approach taken to address the main objectives of this research, outlined in Chapter 1. The objectives necessitated a mixed-methods approach, and therefore there were four key stages to data collection. First, locational data was collated for all accredited English language teaching (ELT) centres in the UK, using member information obtained from the British Council and English UK websites. This data was used to map the distribution of ELT centres in each UK local authority district (LAD) using ArcGIS, and subsequently to identify the scale of the industry. Second, using these maps as evidence for the appropriateness of selecting Brighton and Hove as a case study location for this research, a content analysis of a local newspaper, *The Argus,* was conducted, using the online newspaper archive, Nexis. This method established how EFL students and the EFL industry have been represented in the local media, and explored how, and if, these changed in accordance with local, national, and global events. The data from the content analysis contextually ground the empirical findings from the third and fourth stages of data collection: a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. The purpose of the survey was to obtain organisational data that provided an insight into the key characteristics of the ELT centres in the case study location, including the demographics of the EFL students. The questionnaire survey was distributed to all ELT centres in the city via a drop-and-pick up method, and online and postal surveys. The fourth, and final, phase of data collection comprised 42 semi-structured interviews with 59 research participants. Based on the findings of the survey, the participant populations included EFL students, ELT centre employees, host families, and other local and national EFL industry stakeholders.

Although the search for patterns, distributions and flows in migration research can be critiqued as a return to a pre-cultural turn approach in the social sciences (King 2012), the quantitative findings illuminated by the questionnaire survey and map provided the appropriate research context on which the qualitative findings were built (see Deakin 2014). Furthermore, a mixed-method approach is viewed as a successful way to develop understandings of social issues by enabling researchers to delve deeper into the social phenomena that quantitative research provides a description for (Castles 2012). A mixed-methods approach was therefore appropriate due to the lack of prior research on the EFL industry within geographical scholarship to date.

There are eight further sections in this chapter. Section 3.2 outlines the methodological framework adopted in this research. Sections 3.3 to 3.6 discuss the rationale behind the selection of each data collection method, and outline the procedures used for analysing and interpreting the data obtained. Section 3.7 outlines the ethical considerations adhered to throughout the research process, and Section 3.8 discusses the impact of my positionality on the knowledge produced in this thesis. The chapter concludes in Section 3.9 with a reflection on the lessons learned throughout the research process, and how the methodology used to conduct this research could be improved upon in future studies on the EFL industry and homestay accommodation.

## 3.2 Methodological Framework

The methodological framework adopted in this research is Grounded Theory. Established by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Grounded Theory is a common methodological approach for qualitative research. Silverman (2010: 434) outlines the three main stages of Grounded Theory as follows:

1. an initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate the data;
2. the saturation of these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance;
3. the development of these categories into more general analytical frameworks with relevance outside of the setting.

Grounded theory is a systematic methodology involving the construction of theory through continuous thematic refinement in an iterative process of sorting and coding (Holton and Riley 2016). Grounded theory is therefore an appropriate approach for an exploratory research project (Lewis 2017) such as this, as the research begins with an aim and objectives, rather than within the parameters of an established theoretical framework. Furthermore, the approach allows for the continued development of method (Weichbrodt 2014), which is important in the context of this research due to a dearth of prior methodological case studies on the EFL industry and homestay accommodation within geographical scholarship from which to draw lessons from.

## 3.3 Mapping the EFL Industry Using GIS

As a powerful medium to communicate knowledge about places (Perkins 2010), mapping was an appropriate method to address objective one of this research: to identify the scale and distribution of the EFL industry in the UK. This method was an important step in justifying the appropriateness of the selected case study and for contextualising its significance as a key destination for EFL students. Furthermore, it also allowed for the identification of other key EFL destinations and clusters, enabling trends to be analysed. The map can also be used as a tool for future comparative research on the EFL industry in the UK to identify their own localised case study locations.

Using a Geographical Information System (GIS) was the most appropriate method to produce the type of map required for this research as a presentational *and* analytical tool, allowing for large quantities of data to be processed quickly. The GIS software used in this research was ArcGIS, which enables patterns in spatial data to be extracted, understood and visualised (Batty 2010:408).

The first stage in the production of the map was to generate a database detailing locational data for each of the UK's 750 accredited ELT centres. The database was created using the contact details of ELT centres that was publicly available on the British Council and English UK websites. In occasions when ELT centres occupied more than one building – a finding largely attributed to language provision in universities – only one location was incorporated into the database to ensure that each ELT provider was represented only once. The postcode for each accredited ELT centre was then geocoded to provide latitude and longitude coordinates. Once imported into ArcGIS, the attribute data (coordinates) was tagged to LAD boundary data sourced from the UK border map website, to pinpoint the exact location of each accredited ELT centre in the UK. In order to uncover patterns and trends in the locations of the ELT centres, the data was subsequently grouped into a suitable classification scheme to create a choropleth map (see Chapter 4). The choropleth map presents the key characteristics in the national distribution of ELT centres, providing evidence that the case study location, Brighton and Hove, is a leading destination for the EFL industry in the UK (see Chapter 4).

## 3.4 Local Media Content Analysis

Once Brighton and Hove was confirmed as an appropriate case study for this research through its identification as one of the most popular EFL destination in the UK, an analysis was conducted of archived newspaper articles on the EFL industry that were published over an

11-year period between 2007-2018 in one of Brighton and Hove's leading local newspapers – *The Argus*. The purpose of this research method was, first, to establish how EFL students and the EFL industry have been represented in the local media. Second, the process explored if, and how, representations of EFL students and the EFL industry have changed over time in accordance with local, national, and global events. As such, the findings contextually ground the analyses of empirical data from the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the findings can also be drawn upon to contribute to discussions on the 'rules of studenthood' (Chatterton 1999:124) in Chapter 6, by allowing comparisons to be made between the representations of EFL students and the city's university student population, the latter of which are the focus of previous academic research on the unfolding processes of studentification in Brighton and Hove (Smith and Holt 2004; Sage et al. 2012; 2013a; 2013b).

A quantitative analysis was conducted using the Nexis newspaper archive database, which was chosen as "the most widely used news archive in the social sciences" (Weaver and Bimber 2008). The newspaper selected for analysis – *The Argus* – is one of the leading local newspapers in Brighton and Hove. Whilst the *Brighton and Hove Independent* has reported a larger readership within the City than *The Argus* (Le Duc 2014), the rationale behind the newspaper choice was that the *Brighton and Hove Independent* was only founded in 2011, and thus would not have reported on key events impacting on the city's EFL industry that occurred prior to the paper's establishment, such as changes to visa rules in 2010.

To retrieve results, a phrase extraction was undertaken using the key terms 'language student' and 'language school', the predominant descriptors of EFL students in *The Argus*. This thesis adopts the term EFL student rather than language student, as the latter is also used as a term within academic research to describe students studying languages at university, which would consequently obscure the unique identity of the EFL student population that this research aims to reveal. The search incorporated articles from 2007 – the earliest records of *The Argus* stored in the Nexis database. Although an initial search was conducted in August 2015, it was repeated on a regular basis throughout the data collection phase so that unfolding processes over the course of the research could be identified. Concerns about incomplete data sets in the Nexis database have been acknowledged in numerous studies as a factor to be taken into account when assessing the reliability of the data (Liu et al. 2008; Deacon 2007; Kaufman et al. 1993). Nevertheless, this method was chosen over *The Argus'* own online archive search function as this returned a significantly higher number of irrelevant articles which was impractical for the limited time available to complete this phase of data collection.

The key phrases – 'language student' and 'language school' – returned 30 and 51 article results respectively. Although content analyses are characterised by their objectivity and systematic nature (Bryman 2012), to avoid obtaining articles that included 'false positives' or 'false negatives' (Deacon 2007), each article was read in full to ensure its relevance to the search, and to counteract the 'indiscriminate nature' of online newspaper databases (Liu et al. 2008). This subjective methodological approach, also used by Weaver and Bimber (2008), ensured that there was not an overreliance on statistical patterns, instead adopting a more interpretive and critical approach to analysis (Thurlow 2006). On closer inspection of the articles, 34 of the 81 returns from the original searches were removed from the analysis due to duplicate occurrences or lack of relevance to the subject. The revised search therefore gave a combined final total of 47 articles in *The Argus* newspaper between 2007 and 2018 related to language students and language schools.

Once the articles had been retrieved, an in-depth review was conducted of the representation of the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove by this source. This textual analysis identified the key themes communicated to *The Argus'* readers, and thus the characteristics ascribed to EFL students as a social population. The findings also allowed for a comparison to be made between how EFL students and the EFL industry are represented in media outlets, and how they are perceived in the local community through the semi-structured interviews with host families and ELT professionals.

## 3.5 Questionnaire Survey

The third phase of empirical data collection was a structured questionnaire survey (see Appendix 1), administered to all accredited, and non-accredited, ELT centres in the case study location. Questionnaires were selected for their ability to acquire information about the characteristics of a specific population that is not already available from published sources (McLafferty, 2003), and as an appropriate method to provide context for in-depth interviews (Cox and Narula 2003). National data on student weeks, age groups, course types, booking sources, and nationalities is available via English UK's Quarterly Intelligence Cohort (QUIC) reports[6], however, Brighton and Hove as a unique entity is indistinguishable in this pool of data. Therefore, repeat surveying of ELT centres was necessary to produce localised data for analysis. The data collected from the surveys is compared to wider national trends, and previous studies on student populations in the UK and Brighton and Hove, in Chapter 4.

[6] An initiative that provides reports by professional analysts to help English UK members identify market trends and opportunities.

### 3.5.1 Designing the questionnaire survey

The questionnaire was titled ‘English Language Centres and Student Accommodation in Brighton and Hove’, and designed around four overarching sections: ‘The Language Centre’, ‘The Students’, ‘The Accommodation’, and ‘The Demand’. Whilst closed questions formed the majority of the questionnaire, a number of open questions were also included to provide qualitative data that engages with the experiences of participants (Dwyer and Limb 2001), and to enrich the statistics generated by the closed categorical and likert-scale questions (McMillan and Weyers 2007). 5-point likert-scales are an appropriate approach to scaling response as they enable the participant to choose a neutral answer, and simultaneously, do not offer too many categories that would prevent the participant from discriminating between them. The inclusion of the option to describe ‘other’ responses ensured that I did not pre-determine all responses which is particularly important due to my positionality as an outsider, who was unfamiliar with the industry at the outset of this research. As the administration technique was not interview-based, a short description of the purpose of the survey and instructions for completion of the questionnaire were provided on the cover sheet. Details on the nature of the research, and confidentiality and anonymity assurances, were also included (see Appendix 1). This was necessary to ensure full transparency in the purpose of the survey, which assists the researcher to gain the trust of the participant (Harvey 2011).

### 3.5.2 Administering the questionnaire survey

> “I had a look at the questionnaire and it will take me a long time to complete it all as I don’t have all this data available. Unfortunately, I won’t have time to do this for you” (Email from ELT centre employee, October 2015).

> “Having looked closely at the form I realise the information you need is not ‘to hand’ and it will take me considerably longer than the 10-15 minutes you suggested to find the answers” (Email from ELT centre employee, October 2015).

> “Unfortunately, I do not have the time to complete the survey at the moment due to workload. I am sorry I can't help”. (Email from ELT centre employee, October 2015).

Cranston (2014: 53) critiques methods chapters for “[producing] neat accounts of what is often a messy, iterative, slippery and unfolding process. Methods cannot be seen as a step-to-step guide when each research encounter is different”. In this context, the section is framed within the obstacles faced in collecting data and the ways in which these were addressed.

Prior to distributing the questionnaire survey, it was necessary to identify all ELT centres operating in the case study location. Accredited ELT centres in Brighton and Hove were identified through the English UK and British Council websites, and non-accredited ELT centres were revealed through internet web searches. A mixed-method approach was adopted in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire that included face-to-face visits at the ELT centres, telephone and email contact, an online survey, and a postal survey. A flow-chart detailing these processes and the reflections from my field diary can be found in Appendix 2. The mixed-methods approach to the survey distribution is an example of the reflective adaptability of the research process (Shih 2012), whereby research strategy was changed in response to lessons learnt in the field (Castles 2012).

The preferred method was drop and pick-up questionnaires, of which a key benefit is the combination of the strengths of face-to-face interview response rates with quick, self-administered strategies (McLafferty 2010). However, some receptionists at the ELT centres acted as gatekeepers in this process, restricting access to potential participants (ELT centre Directors, Managers, Principals, or those with equivalent centre knowledge). This experience resonates with other studies that found individuals exerting authority tended to be less senior (Smith 2006). As a result, the approach was revised by telephoning the gatekeeper to request permission to visit in person. This offered the receptionists the opportunity to provide contact details for colleagues, whilst ensuring that they did not have to initiate face-to-face contact without prior agreement. This method also preserved funding for travel to the case study location to conduct interviews in the latter stages of the research process. The approach was successful in that email addresses for the participants, or permission to visit the site, was approved on all occasions. Nevertheless, the ensuing responsiveness of the contact provided by the receptionists was limited, despite the nature of email contact allowing for flexibility on the participants' part (Harvey 2011). For those who did not complete the questionnaire, on two occasions the participant stated that they did not want to, or could not, give out this information, and others cited time constraints and inexperience in their role.

Although unable to challenge refusals, in response to time constraints, an online version of the questionnaire was created. This minimised the time taken for participants to complete the task, by removing printing and scanning responsibilities. Bearing in mind email inbox traffic, reminders were sent to those who did not respond to the initial invitation to complete the questionnaire, with the aim of increasing the response rate (Latukha et al. 2015; Yeung 1995). Face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were not used in the survey process, as the information required would require the participant to locate organisational data (a limitation highlighted in the email responses at the start of this section). As the quotes at the introduction

of this section and the preceding discussion illustrate, this data collection process was 'messy'. Despite flexing the method of distribution, a number of times this, if lucky, would only yield one or two extra responses. I must acknowledge my gratitude to my supervisor for also making calls to ELT centres to try and extrapolate contact names and for validating the nature of the research – however, even with this intervention and validation of my trustworthiness, no further responses were received. In July 2017 a final method was adopted, posting the survey to ELT centres that I had thus far failed to receive a response from. Enclosed with the survey was a pre-paid, addressed envelope to encourage completion and return. This method resulted in one extra return.

The overall response rate was 21% of the population of ELT centres in the city (9 completed surveys). Within literature on international students, this response rate is deemed trustworthy (Van Mol 2013), and was positively received by Lesjak et al. (2015) who also used self-administered surveys to research international student mobility. Furthermore, as the aim of the survey was to establish characteristics of the industry, the fact that responses were received from independent ELT centres, international chains, home schools and further education Colleges ensured that a range of providers were represented in the findings.

### 3.5.3 Questionnaire survey analysis

To analyse the quantitative data collected, a coding schedule was created before the questionnaires were distributed through the allocation of identifying numbers for all possible responses to the closed questions. On receipt, the data from the completed questionnaires was inputted into an excel spreadsheet, where it was subsequently coded according to the schedule. The open-ended questions were analysed in accordance with Grounded Theory by using open coding, which is the 'process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data' (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 61) which enabled the identification of key themes within the responses. The examination of this data forms the discussion on the EFL Industry in Brighton and Hove in Chapter 4.

## 3.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

The findings of the questionnaire survey identified a number of themes that warranted further exploration. As a result, the fourth stage of data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews that generated complementary qualitative insights (Findlay et al. 2006) to the data generated by the survey. As there were predetermined topics to be covered, unstructured interviews were not considered a suitable approach. However, as the surveys identified a number of themes that were not originally anticipated, such as the dominance of homestay

accommodation as the preferred type of student residence, it was important to ensure that the interviews enabled the co-production of knowledge (Lewis 2017). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were employed as an approach to interviewing that promotes conversation and offers individuals the opportunity to express the complexities of their experiences (Valentine 2005), yet also remains focused and directed toward the aims of the research (Sánchez-Ayala 2012) through the use of an interview schedule to guide the conversation.

Overall, 59 participants were interviewed: eight were senior members of staff at ELT centres, three worked for student accommodation services, 12 were active hosts, 32 were EFL students, and four were EFL industry stakeholders. The following sub-sections will discuss how these participants were recruited, the content and structure of the interviews, and the dynamics involved in conducting interviews with different population groups.

### 3.6.1 Identifying and Recruiting Participants

#### *3.6.1.1 ELT professionals and EFL industry stakeholders*

Although ELT centres had already been surveyed, interviews were necessary to gain depth in the findings, by offering ELT centre directors the opportunity to expand upon their comprehensive knowledge and experiences. This approach enabled ELT centre directors to raise issues for further exploration that were not covered in the questionnaire survey. Furthermore, it was also recognised that ELT centres would act as gatekeepers in the recruitment of host family and EFL student interviews, and therefore developing relationships with these individuals was valuable for enabling access to other research participants.

While the questionnaire allowed participants to provide their details if they were willing to be interviewed at a later date, none of the questionnaire participants volunteered to be interviewed. Although this required more time to be spent on recruitment, interviewing and surveying different ELT centres has resulted in a higher proportion of the ELT centre population in Brighton and Hove being represented in this thesis (36%). As an outsider to the industry, potential participants were initially reluctant to participate in the research process. After months of recruitment processes in Brighton and Hove (see Appendix 2) led to only one interview with a non-accredited centre, a breakthrough came when a representative from English UK agreed to participate. Once English UK had validated the research via an email to member centres in Brighton and Hove, a number of interviews were then arranged via a snowballing method. It was likely that this validation of the research, and myself as the researcher, overcame the initial obstacle of trust for the participants (Valentine 2005). A full list of participants can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Research Participants: ELT Professionals and EFL Industry Stakeholders

| Pseudonym | Role | Interview Method |
|---|---|---|
| Tom | ELT centre Director | Face-to-face |
| Rose | ELT centre Managing Director | Face-to-face |
| Dominic | EFL industry stakeholder | Face-to-face |
| Aiden | ELT centre Director | Face-to-face |
| Emma | ELT centre Principal | Face-to-face |
| Nick | EFL industry stakeholder | Face-to-face |
| Marina | EFL industry stakeholder | Face-to-face |
| Stephanie | Student Accommodation Coordinator | Face-to-face |
| Lara | ELT centre employee | Skype |
| Aimee | ELT centre Director | Face-to-face |
| Olivia | EFL industry stakeholder | Face-to-face |
| Jamie | ELT centre Director | Face-to-face |
| Claire | Student Accommodation Coordinator | Face-to-face |
| Phil | Student Accommodation Coordinator | Face-to-face |
| Daniel | ELT centre employee | Face-to-face |

(Source: author's survey 2016)

#### *3.6.1.2 Host families*

As the survey findings highlighted that homestay accommodation was the most popular type of residence for EFL students at all surveyed ELT centres, host families were a key population to engage with the interview process. Before recruiting any hosts for interview, a general online search for host families in Brighton and Hove was conducted using the website homestay.com, to ensure that I was familiar with the 'typical' household composition of a host family in the area. A database of 101 different households was created, and the gender of the host contact; their relationship status; family composition; the price of their accommodation; and the length of time that they have been hosting, was recorded. I therefore ensured that the sample of interviewees included representatives from all types of households identified through the homestay.com database.

Nevertheless, the recruitment of host families was a difficult process due to the absence of a central database. I was therefore reliant on the cooperation of the ELT centres to either recruit host families on my behalf, or to distribute the participant information sheet (see Appendix 7) to their host families via email, with a supporting statement that included contact details

through which hosts could opt-in to the research. This barrier to recruitment was experienced in another study researching the homestay industry:

> "The sampling of host families proved difficult owing to the absence of a central database for host families who are recruited by individual organisations. The sample was obtained by identifying organisations recruiting and providing support in some way to host families in the target city and was obtained through publicity material, advertisements in the local press, and word of mouth through speaking to people working in the relevant sectors" (Lynch 1998: 325).

The organisations in Lynch's study provided him with the contact details of their hosts, so that he could contact them directly. However, his study was conducted 20 years ago, and data protection regulations at the time of this research prevented ELT centres from doing the same. As a result, I had to wait for the ELT centre, or host, to make contact.

Interestingly, with the exception of immediate family members, none of the hosts interviewed knew of any other hosts in the city. This contrasts to research conducted with host families in Edinburgh (Lynch 2000), where 57.9% of hosts knew three or more other host families. As a result, all host families interviewed were recruited via contacts made through ELT centre employees. This recruitment method ensured that host families were employed by a range of ELT centres, and thus had varied experiences of hosting different age groups, genders and nationalities for varying lengths of time. A number of hosts were also registered with more than one ELT centre, and were therefore able to compare their experiences of hosting for different providers.

Overall, 12 hosts were interviewed (10 female and 2 male) from a range of household compositions that included single-person households, young families, single parent families, and retired couples (see Table 2). Regarding the gender imbalance in host interviews, this reflects the findings of the homestay.com database analysis, which showed that 81% of hosts listed were female.

The prevalence of female hosts was also identified by Lynch (1998) as 91.2% of his survey participants were female. Nevertheless, during the course of the interviews there was no overt difference between the experiences of male and female respondents and therefore it is possible to conclude that the gender imbalance of participants did not skew the findings. Table 2 also shows that there was a range of experience amongst hosts, ranging from two to more than 40 years', and there was a variety of household compositions from single and widowed

hosts, to couples and those with young children and/or teenage children. The group not represented in this research are hosts under the age of 30 and without children. However, when asked about the host families registered at their centres, none identified this group as a key host population.

**Table 2.** Research Participants: Homestay Hosts

| Pseudonym | Employment Status | Time as a Host (years) | Household Composition | Interview Method |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gloria | Retired | 22 | Self and husband | Face-to-face |
| David | Retired | 8 | Self and wife | Telephone |
| Heidi[7] | Full-time | ~30 | Self, one son and three daughters | Face-to-face |
| Julia | Part-time | 3 | Self, husband and two daughters | Face-to-face |
| Linda | Householder | ~40 | Self | Face-to-face |
| Shirley | Semi-retired | 28 | Self | Face-to-face |
| Nicole | Part-time | 3 | Self, husband, one son and one daughter | Face-to-face |
| Lauren | Full-time | 9 | Self, two daughters and one son | Face-to-face |
| Eileen | Retired | 2 | Self and husband | Face-to-face |
| Joe | Semi-retired | 2 | Self and wife | Face-to-face |
| Erin | Full-time | 8 | Self and daughter | Face-to-face |
| Sofie | Full-time | 3 | Self, husband, daughter and son-in-law | Face-to-face |

(Source: author's survey 2016)

#### *3.6.1.3 EFL students*

As there is a dearth of existing empirical research on EFL students, interviews were deemed the most appropriate methodology to explore the mobility processes associated with this population group due to their flexibility; being able to ask more open-ended questions and follow up questions on subjects that arise during the interview. As was the case with host families, recruitment of EFL students was dependent on the ELT centres' cooperation, as the

[7] Heidi was recruited for interview as a homestay host, but is also the accommodation coordinator at an ELT centre in Brighton and Hove

only identified medium through which contact could be made with EFL student groups. Three ELT centres permitted access to their students, two of which pre-arranged the interviews. Whilst there could be a lack of transparency in this process, I engaged in a discussion with participants before the interview commenced to ensure they understood the nature of the research, and that participation was entirely voluntary. In doing so, the extent to which industry hierarchies could have impacted upon recruitment (Gallagher et al. 2010) was minimised. The approach taken by the third school differed to the others, as I was given access to the ELT centres social spaces, in which I was able to freely recruit participants. As a result, I distributed posters to the students (see Appendix 6) that promoted participation as a way to practice their English language skills. Advertisement took place in the first study break period of the day (which also included questions from the EFL students), and interviews were conducted in their lunch break. Regarding the reasons that students agreed to participate, field diary notes reveal that Yuki (30, Japanese EFL student) and Jialíng (25, Taiwanese EFL student) thanked me for giving them the opportunity to practice communicating with a native English speaker. Furthermore, the offer of sweets to thank the students for giving up their free time also encouraged participation. When asked if the participants had any questions or further thoughts at the end of the interview, one student, Ruben (Belgian EFL student, 18) asked: “where’s the cookie you promised?”

All EFL student participants were over the age of 18, and largely under 30 years old. Both male (44%) and female (56%) students were interviewed (see Table 3). The slight skew towards female participants reflected the findings of the questionnaire survey which showed a higher percentage of female EFL students attending ELT centres in Brighton and Hove. Of those interviewed, 84% were from the EU. This was as a result of the higher proportion of European students enrolled at the ELT centres participating in the research. Moreover, I found that the European students tended to have more advanced English language skills, and were therefore more confident in volunteering to participate. The students comprised nine nationalities, and were enrolled on courses for between 2 weeks and 1 year (See Table 3). It is important to note that two students had enrolled at two different ELT centres for half of their total stay in the UK respectively. Moreover, whilst all students they were enrolled on ELT courses for a specific length of time, many expressed a desire to stay on in the UK to travel afterwards, and one had recently started working at the café in her ELT centre to prolong her stay in Brighton and Hove post-study.

**Table 3.** Research Participants: EFL Students

| Pseudonym | Nationality | Age (years) | Time Enrolled on EFL Course | Interview Method |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lucas | Swedish | 19 | 5 months | Paired |
| Alice | Swedish | 20 | 5 months | Paired |
| Kaito | Multinational | 21 | 12 months | Individual |
| Maja | Swedish | 23 | 5 months | Paired |
| Linnéa | Swedish | 54 | 5 months | Paired |
| Nicolás | Spanish | 22 | 6 months | Paired |
| Yuki | Japanese | 30 | 3 months | Paired |
| Elias | Swedish | 20 | 5 months | Paired |
| Hugo | Swedish | 20 | 5 months | Paired |
| Camille | French | 18 | 2 weeks | Individual |
| Felix | German | 19 | 3 months | Individual |
| Jialíng | Taiwanese | 25 | 3 months | Individual |
| Ruben | Belgian | 18 | 6 months | Paired |
| Thomas | Belgian | 19 | 7 weeks | Paired |
| Vincent | Italian | 23 | 6 weeks | Individual |
| Natalia | Spanish | 19 | 6 months | Individual |
| Gabriela | Brazilian | 28 | 3 months | Individual |
| Sarah | Swiss | 18 | 1 month | Individual |
| Giorgia | Italian | 25 | 2 months | Group of three |
| Elena | Italian | 25 | 2 months | Group of three |
| Celine | Swiss | 21 | Not stated | Group of three |
| Alberto | Spanish | 43 | Not stated | Focus group |
| Annika | German | 32 | Not stated | Focus group |
| Helena | Czech | 18 | Not stated | Focus group |
| Larissa | German | 19 | Not stated | Focus group |

(Source: author's survey 2016)

### 3.6.2 Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews

As aforementioned, interviews with EFL students were conducted in their respective ELT centres, and followed a semi-structured approach based on an interview guide (see Appendix 4). The guide drew upon their experiences, as well as decision-making processes. The interview length varied between 9 minutes and 69 minutes. One reason for this variance was the short time slots made available to interview in one ELT centre. In these instances, I had to condense the interview guide so that depth in the conversation could still be reached. This

was a frustrating part of the research process that was outside of my control, nonetheless each interview offered a unique insight into each participants' own decision-making processes and experiences and were therefore of significant value to this research. Another reason for the varying interview lengths was due to the differing interview formats: individual interviews, paired interviews, and one (unanticipated) focus group. The aim of this flexible format was to make the students feel more comfortable by sharing the experience with a peer. While all students had the option for an individual interview, paired interviews had two benefits: first, students were able to help each other with their English language ability, and second, they were able to reflect on their experiences by discussing comparisons with their peers, which added more depth to the conversation. In this comparative process, paired and group interviews encouraged an emotional response from participants, inspiring laughter and, in some instances, angry responses to a friend's negative experience. This finding was also experienced by Wang and Collins (2015) in their research with Chinese migrants in New Zealand on the role of emotions in everyday intercultural encounters. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted in English. This had some limitations for interviews where students' English skills were not fluent as I was not able to get the desired depth to some answers. However, it was not possible within the funding available for this research to pay to be accompanied by a translator.

The interviews with host families lasted between 45 minutes to an hour on average, and were all conducted in their partner ELT centre, or in a public place. Interviews with the host families were the most informal of all the participant populations, and in some instances the host stayed after the interview had ended to engage in general conversation. It is reasonable to suggest that this is due to the interview taking place in an informal setting rather than their place of work or study.

One host family interview, and one interview with a senior member of an ELT centre were conducted over the telephone and via skype respectively. Although both methods have been criticised as approaches to data-collection due to the increase in the emotional distance between the interviewer and the participant (Prazeres 2016), in this research process, both worked successfully. First, interviews occurred synchronously and therefore aspects of spontaneity and interaction were preserved (Madge and O'Connor 2004). Furthermore, there were no issues with internet connection or telephone reception to affect the flow of the interview as was experienced by Beech (2018). The participants managed the interface very well so that there were no silences (Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst 2017), and were keen to engage in discussions about the research once the interview had ended. As a result, based

on the experiences of this research, there is no reason to assume that these methods were 'second-best' to face-to-face interviews (Holt 2010).

### 3.6.3 Interview analysis

Throughout the data collection process interviews were conducted, transcribed, coded and analysed as the interviews unfolded, in a technique referred to as theoretical sampling (Glaser and Straus 1967). This led to a process of refinement of the interview guides, as more questions were added based on topics raised in previous interviews, and questions revealed to be irrelevant were removed. The analysis of interview transcripts therefore followed a grounded theory approach, whereby theory is discovered rather than tested against a hypothesis in an iterative process that involves the constant comparison and refinement of coded categories (Glaser and Straus 1967). This approach was deemed appropriate given the current under-theorisation of the topic and lack of prior empirical studies on the EFL industry (Moskal 2015). Whilst it is difficult to enter the research process without any preconceptions about likely findings and comparative theory, the research questions in this thesis were deliberately left open-ended and exploratory (Moskal and Tyrell 2016), and were refined numerous times throughout the data collection process as 'meaning saturation' was reached (Hennink et al. 2017).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim throughout the data collection process. This allowed for re-familiarisation with the content of each interview. This process also enabled me to reflect on the interviews process and how I presented myself as a researcher. For example, by acknowledging pauses and 'um's' I was able to identify where I needed to rephrase questions in the future to ensure clarity in what I was asking the participants.

The finished transcripts were manually coded into themes and sub-themes and inputted into an excel workbook. I chose not to use software to aid in the coding and analysis process so that I could remain close to the data. In line with grounded theory, there were two phases to the coding process: open coding and focused coding (Charmaz 2008). Open coding was conducted simultaneously to the data collection process, and therefore as more transcripts were completed, responses were either coded into existing categories, new categories or were used to revise the initial codes (Janning and Volk 2017). Codes were therefore refined as themes were understood in greater detail. Themes and sub-themes arising from this first stage of coding were then duplicated onto a separate piece of paper under a separate heading for each research objective. This was a useful step to ensure overlapping themes between empirical chapters in this thesis are acknowledged. When the most significant sub-themes

were identified, focussed coding identified the interview quotes that best explain or interpret the empirical phenomena (Charmaz 2008). These quotes form the basis of the analysis in the proceeding empirical chapters.

## 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Adhering to ethical considerations was a key priority throughout the research process and therefore each methodological phase was approved for implementation by the Loughborough University Departmental Ethics Advisor.

A key ethical consideration in this research was that all participants were fully informed about the research process, particularly those for which English was not their first language. As Loughborough University's Ethics Approval Sub-Committee require under 18-year olds to have a signed parental consent form, it was not possible to interview junior EFL students in this research. Gallagher et al. (2010) problematise this requirement as it constructs children as both active agents and as dependant on adults as intermediaries, however the importance of safeguarding these students - particularly as the interviews would not have been conducted in their first language - was central to this research. Furthermore, it was not deemed appropriate to substitute the parental signature for either the agreement of the ELT centre, nor their homestay host, as neither are formal guardians. Whilst it may have been possible to email parents the informed consent form and an explanation of the study and their child's participation, as interviews with EFL students were scheduled ad-hoc on the day by the ELT centre (depending on volunteers and timetable availability), there was not an opportunity to collect this data beforehand. On reflection, I was also cautious of the obstacles faced in accessing participants, and the effect that 'overburdening' the centres might have on them withdrawing from the research process entirely.

Prior to all interviews taking place, each participant was therefore given a participant information sheet (see Appendix 5), which outlined the purpose of the study; requirements of the interview; the right to withdraw from the research process; anonymity and confidentiality assurances; the use of their data; my contact details; and the contact details of my supervisor and the University's Ethics Approval Sub-Committee. The participant information sheet acted as what Alderson and Morrow (2004: 96) define as the first part of consent: 'the invisible act of evaluating information and making a decision', where the second is the 'visible act of signifying the decision'. Participants were therefore asked to complete an informed consent form (see Appendix 8) which required them to state their name and signature to confirm that they had understood and agreed to the terms for taking part in the study and the use of any

information collected. The participants were correspondingly asked if they had any questions about the research process or their participation before the interview began.

Gallagher et al. (2010) question the usefulness of the consent process altogether by stipulating that there is no guarantee that the participant shares the same conception of the research as the researcher. This argument is particularly pertinent in this case, as English is not the first language of any of the EFL students interviewed. I was therefore aware and conscious of the fact that the students may misunderstand the research purpose and process. Furthermore, there is also a degree of stigma attached to admitting that one does not understand in educational settings (Gallagher et al. 2010). As a result, the participant was asked if they would find it helpful if I read the participant information sheet and informed consent form to them before they agreed to partake. This approach aimed to ensure that written language barriers did not impact upon the integrity of the ethical processes implemented to protect the participants from harm.

The visible act of signifying the decision to partake in the interview was complicated in Skype and telephone interviews. To ensure that the same standards set in the face-to-face interviews were adhered to, the participant information sheet and informed consent forms were emailed to the participants prior to the interview commencing. The participants were asked to confirm that they understood the terms laid out in the participant information sheet and informed consent form via email response, and to verbally confirm that they had seen and completed these forms on the interview recording. Pseudonyms were allocated to all research participants and to their friends, family, and colleagues that they referred to during the interview to protect their anonymity. Moreover, following a similar approach to Brown (2011) who also conducted research in an educational setting, anonymity has also been extended to the ELT centres.

### 3.7.1 Research Funding

To ensure full transparency in the research process, it is important to acknowledge the role of funding sources on the research process and the findings presented in this thesis. All three years of the doctorate programme were either part of fully funded by a university studentship, provided by Loughborough University. The university did not impose any direct influence on the research design, implementation, analysis or key findings. The first and second year were also part-funded by Brighton and Hove City Council, which therefore influenced the case study location of this research. The Council also made input to the design of the questionnaire survey, as a condition of the funding, a number of questions related to the EFL industry in the

city required investigation ahead of the development of future housing strategies. These were as follows:

- the number of institutions and their location;
- the number of students and approximate age groups, including seasonal variations;
- whether the institution has any plans to expand or contract and the consequent expectation of student numbers in the future;
- the proportion of students that require accommodation to be provided;
- where students are currently accommodated (purpose built, host families etc), including extent of use of university facilities in the summer vacation;
- the costs of accommodation per room;
- whether the institution has aspirations for increased use of purpose-built accommodation;
- the forecast increase in schools in the city.

I had limited further engagement with the Council during the research process with the exception of reporting my findings on the above questions, and interviewing an employee of the Planning Department to contextualise the case study. The research outcomes of this thesis therefore contribute to advancing geographical scholarship, *and* to supporting local policy development through recommendations on how Brighton and Hove policy-makers might better engage with the city's EFL industry (see Chapter 7).

Although I explored the option of using the findings of the questionnaire survey to form the basis of a comparative case study with another EFL destination in the UK, there were a number of factors that influenced the decision to use Brighton and Hove as the sole case study for this research. First, the identification of the city as one of the most popular EFL destinations in the UK (see Chapter 4). Second, the questionnaire survey highlighted a number of interesting themes that required further exploration through a qualitative research method (see section 3.6 and Chapter 4). Third a number of prior studies on student geographies had used Brighton and Hove as a case study for their research (Smith and Holt 2007; Sage et all. 2012a; 2012b; Sage et al. 2013), and therefore the city was an appropriate case study to explore whether, and how, EFL students contribute to existing expressions of studentification; and to compare EFL student's in-situ experiences of studenthood and studentified spaces to the 'local' university student population.

## 3.8 Positionality

A critical approach to data collection can be achieved by recognising, and reflecting on, one's own positionality within the research process. As Valentine (2005: 113) states, it is important to "reflect on who you are, and how your own identity will shape the interactions that you have with others". I identify as a young, white, female researcher, with no migration history, no second language, and no prior knowledge of the EFL industry. However, I do have experience of a short-term cultural exchange in which I lived with a host family in Philadelphia, USA, for 10 days. Subsequently, my family hosted a 17-year-old American student for 5 days. It is important to recognise my prior experience of hosting and being hosted as Brickell (2012:238) states that:

> "In line with feminist approaches, the 'doing' of a critical geography of home can also extend itself to self-reflection by scholars themselves on how their own home histories, experiences and actions shape, and are shaped by, the domestic worlds and issues that they choose to research".

My positionality had both positive and challenging implications for this research. As aforementioned, my outsider status made it difficult to gain access to participants. Furthermore, when interviewing ELT centre employees, most presumed that I had little, if any, understanding of the industry. However, when I asked questions that demonstrated I had invested time researching their centre and had existing knowledge on the EFL industry, they began to disclose more information as I gained their trust. Indeed, one participant commented that they were "impressed with my industry knowledge" and exclaimed "wow" when I showed an awareness of the locations of their offices. These examples show that a researcher's positionality is dynamic, and constituted within and through shifting power relations (Rose, 1997). It is therefore important for the researcher to recognise the implications of their social position on the research process and its interpretation (Clifford and Valentine 2003).

## 3.9 Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological approach taken in this thesis to address the four research objectives (see Chapter 1). Adopting a grounded theory approach was deemed most appropriate for conducting research on a population group that has thus far been overlooked in geographical scholarship, as it allows for the continued development of theory as the research process unfolded. Throughout the chapter, the four data collection methods have been critically evaluated by highlighting the issues that emerged throughout the data

collection process, and offering an explanation as to how these issues were overcome, and how they impacted upon the knowledge created in this thesis. As such, the chapter has taken account of the argument that research is a non-linear process, that requires the researcher to be critical of their design, and flexible in making changes (Holton 2013).

# CHAPTER FOUR
# The EFL Industry

"You're selling a dream. It's a really special thing" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

## 4.1 Introduction

Findlay et al. (2006) state that student mobilities are structured by multiple forces that lie beyond specific individual choices and preferences. With this in mind, the starting point for this chapter is to adopt a scalar approach to investigate the contextual factors that are influencing the global flows of students undertaking English as a foreign language (EFL) courses in the UK. More specifically, the chapter investigates how mobilities within the EFL industry are sold in strategic and operational ways, and regulated by different actors. In doing so, the discussion shows how the global mobilities of EFL students are shaped through: a) the immigration policies of *both* destination and origin countries, within which the national EFL associations and English language teaching (ELT) centres play a role, and; b) the services offered by education agents. The chapter also presents the locations of accredited ELT centres in the UK, revealing uneven patterns in their spatial distribution. The analysis of these locations supports the appropriateness of using Brighton and Hove as a case study for a local investigation on the EFL industry. Within this local context, the findings of the questionnaire survey are examined so that the organisational characteristics of ELT centres in Brighton and Hove, and the EFL students that study there are identified. It is argued that the global and national structural conditions that shape the operations of the UK's EFL industry, and the services offered by ELT centres, contribute to a seasonal industry that requires a distinctive form of 'homestay' student accommodation.

The chapter is divided into four sections. First, Section 4.2 provides an overview of the global EFL industry. With a specific focus on the UK, Section 4.3 investigates the structural conditions that underpin the operations of ELT centres, and explores of the distinct role of education agents and national governments in the regulation of student mobilities across national borders. Section 4.4 presents an analysis of the uneven geographies of the EFL industry in the UK, and considers the value of the concept of geographical imaginations as a framework for understanding the unequal distribution of ELT hubs. Section 4.5 examines the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove, including an investigation of safeguarding practices at a local and national scale. A summary of the key findings of the chapter is offered in Section 4.6.

## 4.2 The EFL Mobility Industry

The first ELT centre in the UK was established in 1901, and therefore participation in the EFL industry is one of the most historic forms of international student mobility (ISM) to the UK. The industry began to thrive in the UK in the 1960s in the era of American/British hegemony, and English language proficiency in the twenty-first century is viewed as both a 'global norm' and 'basic skill' (British Council 2006). As a result, it is argued that anglophone speakers are no longer the arbiters of the language (Baker and Fang 2019) as the number of non-native English speakers now outnumbers native speakers at an estimated ratio of four to one (Chaloner et al. 2015). The British Council (2006) suggests that the English language has benefited from the technological advances and social changes associated with processes of globalisation that widened access to international travel, and encouraged business collaboration across borders. Therefore, the global adoption of English as a lingua franca is a reflection of its use as a shared language in an increasingly interconnected world (EF 2017a). For example, Chaloner et al. (2015) revealed through a survey of global executives that nearly 70% of respondents commented that their workforce will need to master English to realise corporate expansion plans, and approximately one-quarter of respondents stated that more than 50% of their total workforce will need some ability in the language.

Nevertheless, the UK is not the only destination for EFL courses; the other leading destinations are spread across native-speaking countries: The United States of America (USA), Ireland, Canada, Australia, Malta and New Zealand (British Council 2006).

> "The biggest destinations for English language are the ones who speak English, because the reason for the visit is generally to immerse yourself in the language, which makes sense […] it's generally easier to learn the language if you're in an environment where it's spoken, you see it written everywhere" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

Bourdieu (1984:133) stated that as the working-class increasingly enter the education market, middle class families need to 'step up' their investments in education to maintain the scarcity of their qualifications. Waters (2006; 2009) has developed this argument to show the link between scarcity value and cultural capital, arguing that as access to tertiary education widens, middle-class families are increasingly capitalising on the opportunities for the accumulation of valuable cultural capital offered by the international market in education. In literature on ISM, the most common overseas qualification focused on is that of a higher education degree. However, the EFL industry also capitalises on the scarcity value acquired by learning English in a native-speaking environment, and therefore it is important to consider

the relationship between partaking in the EFL industry, and the opportunities for cultural capital accumulation:

> "They're [EFL students] making it real; they're using real newspapers, real information, real interviews with their host families, making the most of the environment they're in because they can book a course in their own country, but they can't interview each other, they can't go down to conduct a survey in the centre" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

Nevertheless, EFL students often do not make the decision of where to study themselves (See Chapter 6), and in the UK, an average of 80% of student weeks are booked through a commissionable source (English UK 2018). Therefore, it is important to analyse the role of education agents in facilitating EFL student mobility. First, the findings show that the role of education agents has changed over time:

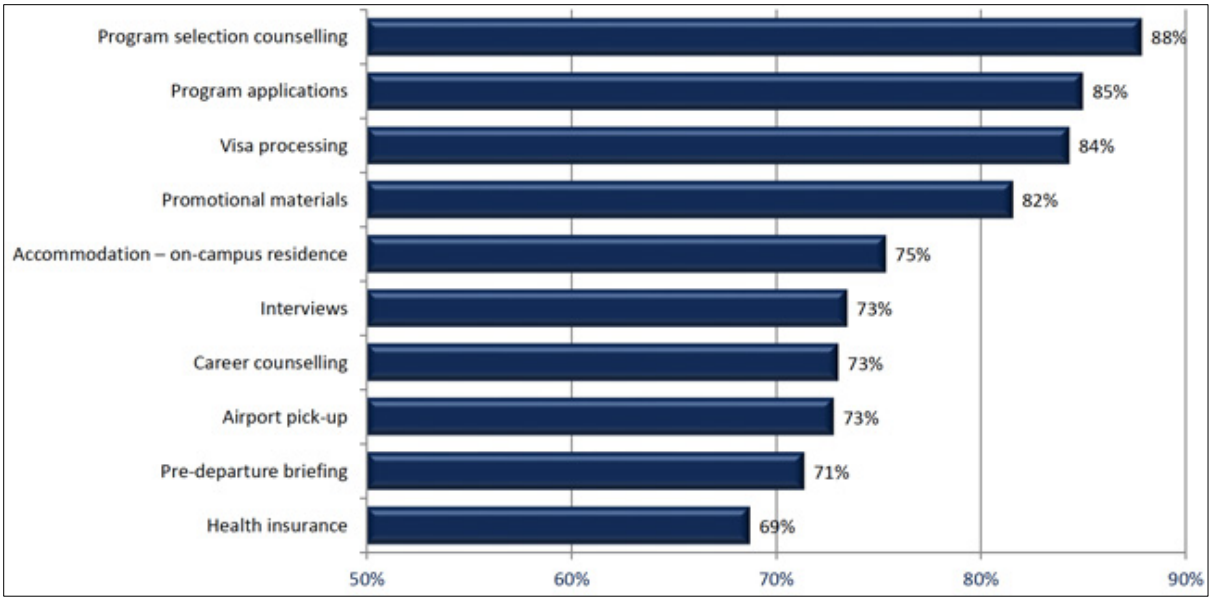
> "Nowadays, the parents are a bit more informed, whereas the agent used to go 'I'm sending you all to Swindon' and they'd go 'oh great, Swindon sounds lovely!' Whereas now they've got more choice, and a more informed choice" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

> "People have been becoming more independent for many years. With the internet you can. But very often the agent will suggest them [EFL student] a school, then they will go away and look at it online and then it is really easy for them just to send us an email and book. But often they will go back to their agent and say yes please book that for me, so they like the reassurance, the security I think of going through an agent […] Even European students who you think well it's only across the water- it's not that alien to you" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

The breadth of services offered by education agents are detailed in Figure 2, which supports Collins' (2012) description of agents as both a source of information for students and a promotional tool for education providers. As a result of this overlapping role, Collins argues that it is important to recognise the complex relationships that are likely to exist between agents, education providers, governments, families and students. The complexity was highlighted in its simplest form by Stephanie, who listed the multiple actors involved in connecting the student to the final product:

"It's a very long-winded process; the agents work with our international officers who work with [the ELT centre], who then come to me" (Stephanie, Student Accommodation Coordinator).

**Figure 2.** Services most commonly offered by education agents in 2017




(Source: Source: i-graduate/ICEF 2017)

The relationship between an education agent and education provider is particularly important for independent and smaller family-run centres as they do not have the economic capital to fund their own competitive marketing strategies:

"We're a small school so we don't have the marketing budget of these big chains and stuff so we are trying to do as much as we can on a shoestring, so I go to South America once a year and the Far East once a year, maybe twice a year, and visit" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

For UK-based ELT centres, one of the main ways that they form these relationships is through the annual study world fair, organised by English UK - the national association of accredited ELT centres. This supports Cranston's (2014) argument that trade shows are spaces that make mobility industries, rather than being spaces that merely represent them.

The role of English UK is multifaceted, but can be described as representing, supporting, and promoting the UK EFL industry, both nationally and internationally, to maintain and increase the UK's attractiveness in an increasingly competitive global market. English UK aims to

achieve this goal through a variety of activities such as: organising conferences and roadshows to advertise member centres to education agents; building data intelligence through market reports; running the Accreditation UK scheme with the British Council; training ELT professionals to drive up the quality of ELT provision; lobbying politicians and sitting on the Home Office Joint Education Taskforce, and; acting as a complaints service and emergency support provider for EFL students. At present, English UK represents over 400 member centres, including small family-run centres, big independents, international chains, colleges, independent schools and universities (English UK 2019b). To promote the UK as a destination for EFL students, English UK have implemented a number of strategic campaigns:

> "International promotion is a very important part of what we do… the Shakespeare lives campaign that we currently have, the English is Great campaign in Brazil, this is hopefully raising the profile of the UK as a major destination within Latin America. Getting people to think about coming here rather than the USA" (Dominic, EFL industry stakeholder).

Nevertheless, the importance of having local sales representation in the origin country was noted by Marina:

> "Having an agent and sales rep on site seems to make a difference. For example, we tend to get a lot of Saudi's over as well, but they tend to come from one or two organisations, and then when you look you think oh well that's obvious because they've got sale agents in there, or they've partnered with a company in that country" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

Beech (2018) suggests that the benefits of using locally-based agents results from them having the same cultural and local understandings as the students, which makes it easier for them to gain the students' trust. However, within this it is necessary to recognise the complex relationship between education agents and ELT centres. For example, some ELT centres noted how they are increasingly having to diversify their product, and present different products to each education agent in order to not 'dilute' their offer. The impact of ELT centres maintaining a positive relationship with education agents was highlighted by Aiden:

> "It's quite political how much we can invest in our direct business and our website, and direct marketing and that kind of thing, because that's treading on the agent's toes so they don't like it. We can't put any special offers on our websites for example because the agents will get annoyed […] they're gradually taking more and more of our income

> which we're struggling with a little bit. The market has dropped in the last couple of years, a lot of schools have gone under […] if someone else is offering a bit more we have to try and keep up with it. But it's tricky, because we don't make much money really, we're struggling" (Aiden, ELT centre Director).

It is therefore essential that ELT centres increase their resilience by catering to a variety of international markets. As a result, some ELT centres are also taking steps towards 'integration', a term which describes the consolidation of the industry. For example, one ELT centre Director explained how their headquarters had purchased education agencies in popular sending destinations to maximise profits by not having to out-source recruitment.

By conducting research on the education migration industry in the context of EFL students, this section has shown how the industry relies on education agents to maintain competitiveness in the global market. More specifically, the complexity of the relationship between agents and ELT centres has been presented, highlighting the delicate power relations between the two actors. Therefore, for smaller ELT centres in particular, their relationship with education agents can determine their survival. The discussion in the following section builds upon the findings on the role of education agents as facilitators of EFL student mobility by considering the role of government policy on the regulation of ISM.

## 4.3 The State Actor: Regulation and Reputation

Promises of strong control over immigration appeals to sections of UK society as a way to achieve a stable and cohesive national society (Anderson 2017), and therefore, consecutive UK governments have, arguably, undermined the work of English UK through their creation and implementation of visa policy. From 2005, New Labour incorporated immigration and border control into its election manifesto (Finch and Goodhart 2010), and a stricter control of immigration of non-EU nationals to the UK continued under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition and the subsequent Conservative Governments. During David Cameron's leadership, there was an ongoing government agenda to reduce net-migration to under 100,000. Despite the average stay of EFL students falling below 6 weeks for both adult and junior students (English UK 2017a), they are included in net-migration figures and are therefore subject to the controls that this form of 'problematic mobility' is subject to (Anderson 2017). For example, in 2015, the Conservative Party proposed tougher student migration control in their party manifesto as a response to a belief that a minority of international students had been able to abuse the visa system by enrolling into bogus colleges and overstaying their

visa (Conservative Party 2015). The politicization of the international education market, including the EFL industry, was highly contested by the EFL industry:

> "The Home Secretary talked about overstayers amongst students, and then the exit data which we're now getting in, which has been supressed, seems to indicate that far fewer than 1% of students are overstayers, so it's not a problem. So why make it a problem in your speech? Unless for political reasons you want to keep them in the net migration targets" (Dominic, EFL industry stakeholder).

As well as highlighting inaccuracies in government discourse on international students, Emma also suggests that there is a lack of consistency in their approach:

> "We want to promote Britain as a quality institute, as a quality place to learn English, and the government is time and time again throwing at us 'no we don't want you.' What are you talking about!? and then they go to India and say 'oh yes of course we want more students' … and it's like no you don't, you just put another barrier in their place!" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

One specific amendment to visa policy that was widely opposed by the EFL industry was the 2010 proposal that a higher proficiency of English would be a prerequisite to obtaining a visa to study in the UK. After much criticism, Damian Green – the then Minister of State for Immigration – addressed concerns by stating that the "special needs" of the EFL industry qualified for the waving of the new legislation so that lower level English courses at "legitimate" institutions for "genuine" students could be offered through a student visitor route (Green 2010). I wrote a letter to the Home Office in November 2016 asking for their policy approach to the EFL industry. The reply (see Appendix 9) echoes the discourse used by Green, including phrases such as "genuine students", "tackling abuse" and "those who stick to the rules", 9 years later. Emma was frustrated by this continued undermining of the quality of the EFL industry:

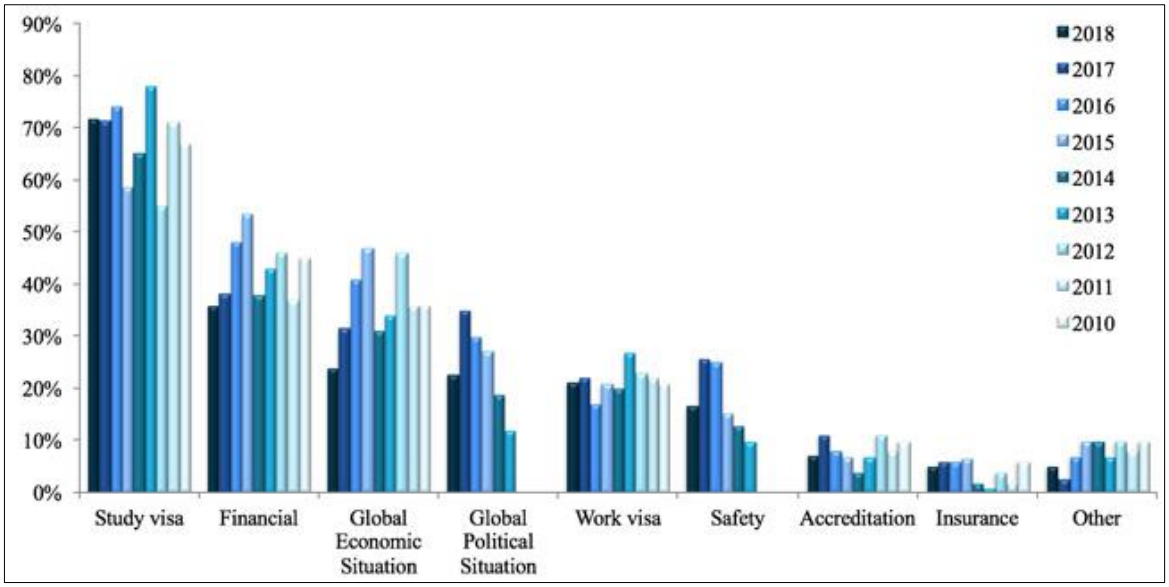
> "The Government don't actually seem to know, they don't talk to each other, so you still get people saying 'oh we've got to stop these visa shops', but there hasn't been the opportunity to have any of those for years!" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

The letter also stated that 'after the USA, the UK remains the second most popular destination in the world for *international higher education students'* (emphasis added). As such, the Home Office entirely overlooked the fact that the UK is *the* most popular destination in the world for

EFL students, which is perhaps a result of the fact the EFL industry is less financially lucrative than the International HE sector. Nevertheless, English UK (2019d) have cited 'very positive developments', including ELT being put at the heart of the Government's international education strategy, yet when I wrote a subsequent letter in September 2019 to confirm Boris Johnson's governments position on the EFL industry, I did not receive a reply.

Nevertheless, the complexities of Brexit mean that this is a fraught time for an industry that relies on the unrestricted flow of mobile EU students, particularly as some commentators have stated that the current visa system for international students has become 'confusing and incompatible' (Sachrajda and Pennington 2013). Figure 3 also shows that study visas were reported as the main concern cited by mobile students in 2018. The visa conditions for EFL students (as shown in Figures 4 and 5) detail stringent controls on an EFL student's ability to take any work.

**Figure 3.** Student mobility concerns reported by education agents in 2018




(Source: i-graduate/ICEF 2018)

**Figure 4.** Requirements for obtaining a Short-term study visa

- The student can apply for a Short-term study visa up to 3 months before their date of travel to the UK.
- The student can obtain a visa to study in the UK for 6 months, or 11 months if they are over 16.
- The student can't work (including on a work placement or work experience) or carry out any business
- The student can't extend this visa
- The student can't bring family members ('dependants') with them
- The student can't get public funds
- The student will pay £93 for a 6-month visa, or £179 for an 11-month visa
- The student must prove that they have been offered a place on a course in the UK with an educational provider that holds a Tier 4 sponsor licence or specified accredited educational institution
- The student must prove that they have enough money to support themselves without working or help from public funds, or that relatives and friends that can support and house them
- The student must prove that they can pay for their return or onward journey
- If the student is under 18, they must prove that they have made arrangements for travel and stay in the UK
- If the student is under 18, they must have permission from a parent or guardian to study in the UK
- The student must provide the following documents: a valid travel identification, details of where they intend to stay and travel plans, TB test results, contact details for at least one parent or guardian (if under 18)
- The student must provide proof of the course that they're studying
- The student may need to provide additional documents such as evidence of: previous study, English language qualifications, financial sponsor's occupation, income, savings, or funds that will support their studies.

(Source: Gov.UK 2019)

**Figure 5.** Additional Short-term study visa requirements for junior EFL students

- The student must prove that they have made arrangements for travel and stay in the UK
- The student must have permission from a parent or guardian to study in the UK
- The student must provide contact details for at least one parent or guardian
- The students' parent or guardian needs to provide their written consent for the student to travel to the UK; full contact details.
- The students' parent or guardian need to provide proof that the student has somewhere suitable to live during their stay in the UK, including: the name and date of birth of the person that they will be staying with, an address where you will be living, details of your relationship to the person who'' be looking after them; consent in writing so they can look after you during their stay in the UK.
- The student must provide a letter from the school confirming that it has notified the LA of their visit and the details of who'll be caring for them if they're under-16; under-18 if they have a disability; they'll be looked after for more than 28 days by someone who is not a close relative (called 'private foster care'), and include the reply form the LA if the school has received one.

(Source: Gov.UK 2019)

For students studying in the UK on a year-long course, this prevents them from gaining any work experience or paid employment to contribute to their study fees. This manifests in disproportionately impacting certain nationalities over others (see Beech 2018). The UK government is therefore jeopardising the UK's attractiveness as a destination for EFL study in an increasingly competitive market:

> "Having work rights if you go and study at a language course, in Dublin you do and Ireland I understand is booming at the moment in terms language students. We look enviously across the Irish sea" (Dominic, EFL industry stakeholder).

Jamie (ELT centre Manager) felt that the forms of control implemented by the government disproportionately impact the EFL industry, suggesting that the industry can be seen to be an 'easy target' in comparison to other sectors of the international education market:

> "Both the Labour and Conservative governments have seen English language students as being immigrants [...] when they keep saying they want to bring net migration down

to this number, it's the first place they visit because they don't go to universities, they're too powerful; they don't go to Burger King and Costa coffee, they're too powerful; so they just go to English language schools" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

Stephanie highlighted how the government exercised their ability to control non-EU EFL student mobility through the use of visas in early 2016:

"For the first time ever, half of our Chinese students were denied their visa, which hasn't happened in a long time- they're sort of like a guaranteed group essentially that can always come" (Stephanie, Student Accommodation Coordinator).

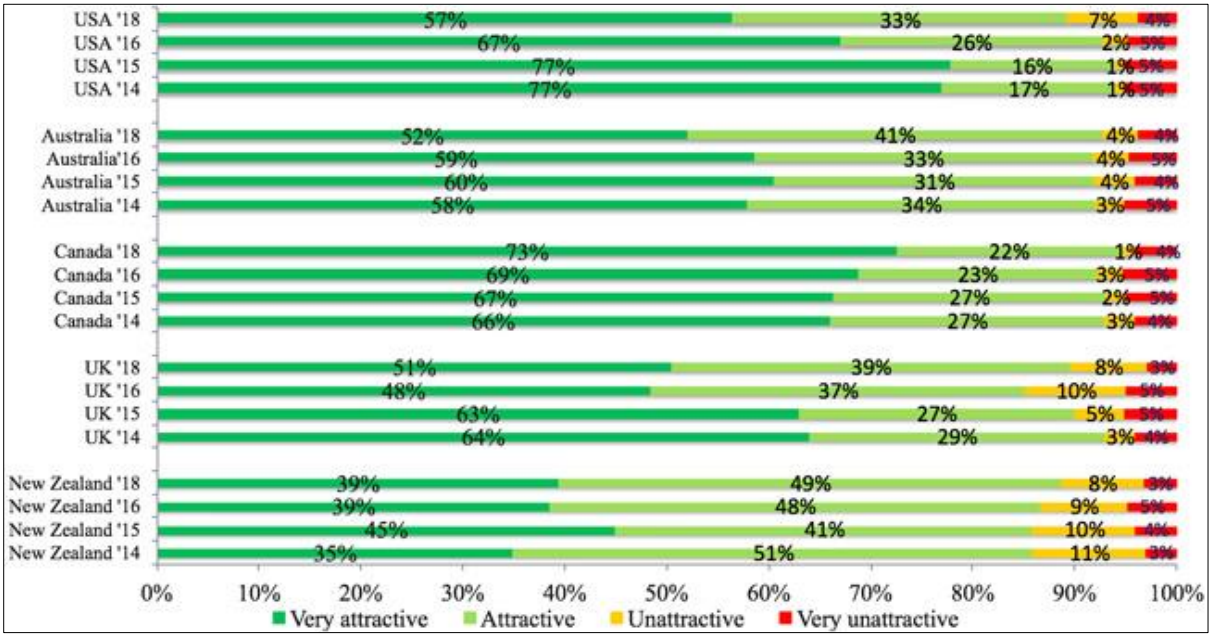
Furthermore, for those who may be self-funded, the restrictions on undertaking paid work are likely to be a significant deterrent to longer-term studying in the UK, and the Short-term study visa for EFL students is contributing to the exclusivity of non-EU student migration (Smith, Rérat and Sage 2014) by favouring those who have an availability of economic capital. This prevents access to the cultural and intellectual experiences that study-abroad affords (Perna et al. 2014). These restrictions undermine essential and strategic markets for the UK, compromising its position as the number one provider of ELT in an increasingly competitive and globalised industry.

One such competitor capitalising on the position of the UK's EFL industry is Australia (see Figure 6), whose International Strategy for International Education 2025, stipulates that international students can work for 2 to 4 years after the completion of a HE degree (Australian Government 2016):

"Some of the agents said some of their students were looking at places like Australia for example for their Asia students to go to because it was just generally easier for them" (Stephanie, Student Accommodation Coordinator).

"In Japan […] students have to spend the money to go to the embassy wherever they are which is quite a cost, and the cost of the visa is lots more than the Australian visa, and they might not get it, so if they go for it and don't get it they've just wasted £200-£300 for nothing, and so its whether they take the risk or they go to Australia instead. It's hard for the agents to persuade them. It is a barrier" (Aiden, ELT centre Director).

**Figure 6.** Trends in 'attractiveness' for leading EFL destinations




(Source: i-graduate/ICEF 2018)

Focussing on the attractiveness of a destination, the findings of this thesis are extremely timely given unfolding and dynamic socio-economic and political conditions. For example, at the outset of the research process in July 2015, it would have been difficult to predict that on Thursday 23rd June 2016, the UK would go to the polls to vote on European Union membership and vote for 'Brexit'. Equally, it could not have been foreseen that this event would be followed by Donald Trump's inauguration as president of the United States on Friday 20th January 2017. At the forefront of these historic votes was an anti-immigration rhetoric, namely to erect a USA-Mexico border wall, to ban entry into the USA for select nationalities, and to end privileges of free movement for some within the EU. Both events have therefore influenced normative ideas of international migration and otherness, and consequently, the tolerance and acceptance of 'foreign' groups. This has coincided with other geopolitical processes such as the rise of far-right parties across Europe (Halla et al. 2017), and the discourse of a 'migration crisis' (Anderson 2017) associated with the Syrian war, that have contributed to the shaping of perceptions of migrant groups.

Within the UK, Brexit has exposed divisions within communities over the pace and magnitude of demographic and political change (Harris and Charlton 2016). From an international perspective, research conducted on the impact of Brexit suggests a negative effect of the UK's vote to leave the EU on the country's attractiveness as a destination. Thirty percent of EU respondents stated that Brexit would make them less likely to study in the UK, whereas only 5% were more likely (British Council 2016). Although this sentiment was reversed for the rest

of the respondents from G20 countries at 14% and 17% respectively, concern over Brexit has been voiced globally. For example, Emma remarked:

> "People were concerned about Brexit- and still are! We are seen as extremely unwelcoming. I was in Vietnam in November with people from all over that sort of area at an English UK fair and they said 'we're not sure why we should be promoting the UK because you are not welcoming'" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

Emma's experience therefore highlights the role of international relations upon the fragility of cross-border education (Chulapová 2017). Nevertheless, the EFL industry is taking a proactive approach to prevent a loss in students due to the global media rhetoric that attributes Brexit to an unwelcomeness of foreigners:

> "Brexit has sent out the wrong opinions. Certainly, I know in Korea we have agents that feel England is very anti-foreigner - it's sent the message at least that we don't want foreign people, and they're finding it hard to battle. So, we're trying to counteract that by some of our Korean students writing blogs about how wonderful it is, friendly and nice, and trying to get some first-hand experience back to the students out there. There are lots of reasons for Brexit - you could talk about it for ages. Nonetheless, it's how much people want to read into it, they just read the headlines, and the headlines are that it's a closed door, we hate all foreign people… so I think that's a challenge for the marketing people at the moment" (Aiden, ELT centre Director).

This result was particularly pertinent as before the Brexit vote the UK's EFL industry had been experiencing a period of growth:

> "On average we've grown between 10% and 15% over the last 7 years consistently with the exception of last year [2016] when we only grew it marginally, about 2%" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

The slowing down of growth in 2016 highlighted by Marina reflects a general period of contraction across the industry, which saw student weeks and student numbers declining by 13% and 11%, respectively (English UK 2017). This indicates that total numbers of EFL students are enrolling on UK ELT courses have fallen in number, and that students are staying for shorter periods of time.

Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge the role of the sending nations in facilitating the mobility of EFL students. The following quote from an ELT centre Director points to some possible alternative reasons for the loss in market share:

> "At the moment for next year [2017] we already have bookings for about 80 so we think next year is going to be back to normal. This year [2016] was 61, so a big drop. I think there are three reasons for that and one is because the Czech Government threw a load of money at them the year before, so they came the year before" (Tom, ELT centre Director).

Tom therefore suggests that availability of funding from the Czech government was a factor in increasing the centre's number of student bookings in 2015, and that the absence of funding in 2016 contributed to falling student numbers. This type of state-sponsored study-abroad initiative is considered to contribute to economic and political development in a way that is not achievable through national education programmes alone (Holloway et al. 2012). For example, Marina explains that:

> "In Italy you've got government sponsored business which is called inps that's a huge driver of summer language school business in the UK. It's enormous; I mean last year I think there were about 24,000 spaces allocated to the inps groups […] if you work for your local council in Italy, as part of what you pay into, the government then pay to take the children away on a two-week English language training course, and the UK has always been hugely popular for that. In addition, the Government also with EU money in the underprivileged areas, they'll sponsor those places and bring the kids over" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

The impacts of these programmes for individual students will be explored in Chapter 6. These schemes show how the Governments of EFL sending nations are investing in their future workforce, by simultaneously producing international mobility amongst children, and widening access to international mobility for the working class. Therefore, this exemplifies the different roles of sending and receiving governments in shaping how EFL is practised and experienced.

By investigating the intersections between intermediaries (education agents, ELT centres and English UK), visa regulations and international student mobility (Beech 2018), this section has responded to Harvey et al.'s (2018) call for a more holistic understanding of the migration industries by recognising the role of the *reputation* of a destination in shaping

EFL student flows, supporting Collins' (2012) contention that ISM takes place through a complex assemblage of actors and networks. This argument is developed in Chapter 6 through a consideration of the role of education agents and familial and social networks on shaping the destination choices of EFL students.

## 4.4 The Uneven Geographies of the UK's EFL Industry

Geographical scholarship on ISM has established that international student flows are globally uneven (Perkins and Neumayer 2014), and many scholars have explored the reasons why higher education (HE) students often choose one country, or continent, over another. For example, Waters (2006) identifies the importance of obtaining a Western University degree for families from Hong Kong to accumulate the 'valuable' cultural capital required to reproduce their middle-class status. Findlay et al. (2006) reveal that the destination choice of internationally mobile UK students varies depending on the subject of their degree.

As discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, the flows of EFL students are also globally uneven, traditionally directed towards countries that speak English as a native language, and, more recently, diversifying to those that are cheap, safe, and provide favourable post-study work rights. Taking the UK as a unit of analysis, this section shows that the destination choices of EFL students are also spatially uneven *within* national borders. The findings show that EFL students choose to study in particular towns and cities of the UK. This section draws on the concept of geographical imaginations as a framework for analysis, which describes how people see and think about specific places (Warf 2010).

As aforementioned, the UK's EFL industry is largely overseen by English UK: the national trade association for English language schools. To become a member of English UK, ELT centres must pass the Accreditation UK scheme which is administered by the British Council. At present, accreditation is not compulsory, and some ELT centres have opted not to apply:

> "British Council accreditation is one of those things that you either make a decision to go for or you don't. Is it worth all the paperwork and all the hoops that you have to go through to get it so you can stick a little badge on your website to say that you are British Council accredited? We've taken the decision that no, it's not" (Tom, ELT centre Director).

Foregoing accreditation means that the centre is not discoverable on the English UK database. Furthermore, the centre only enrols EU students, which means that it is also unidentifiable on

government databases that record Tier 4 (General student visa) education providers as EU citizens do not require a visa to study in the UK under current immigration rules. There is a lack of understanding of how many other ELT centres are operating in this way, making it difficult to uncover a comprehensive market for ELT in the UK (British Council 2006). The hidden nature of the EFL industry has also been noted in the case study area of Brighton and Hove:

> "It's been easy to get information out of universities because the City Council has got connections to the universities, because they're such a big employer and such a big wealth creator in the city... But with all these language schools, there's very little at all" (Nick, EFL industry stakeholder).

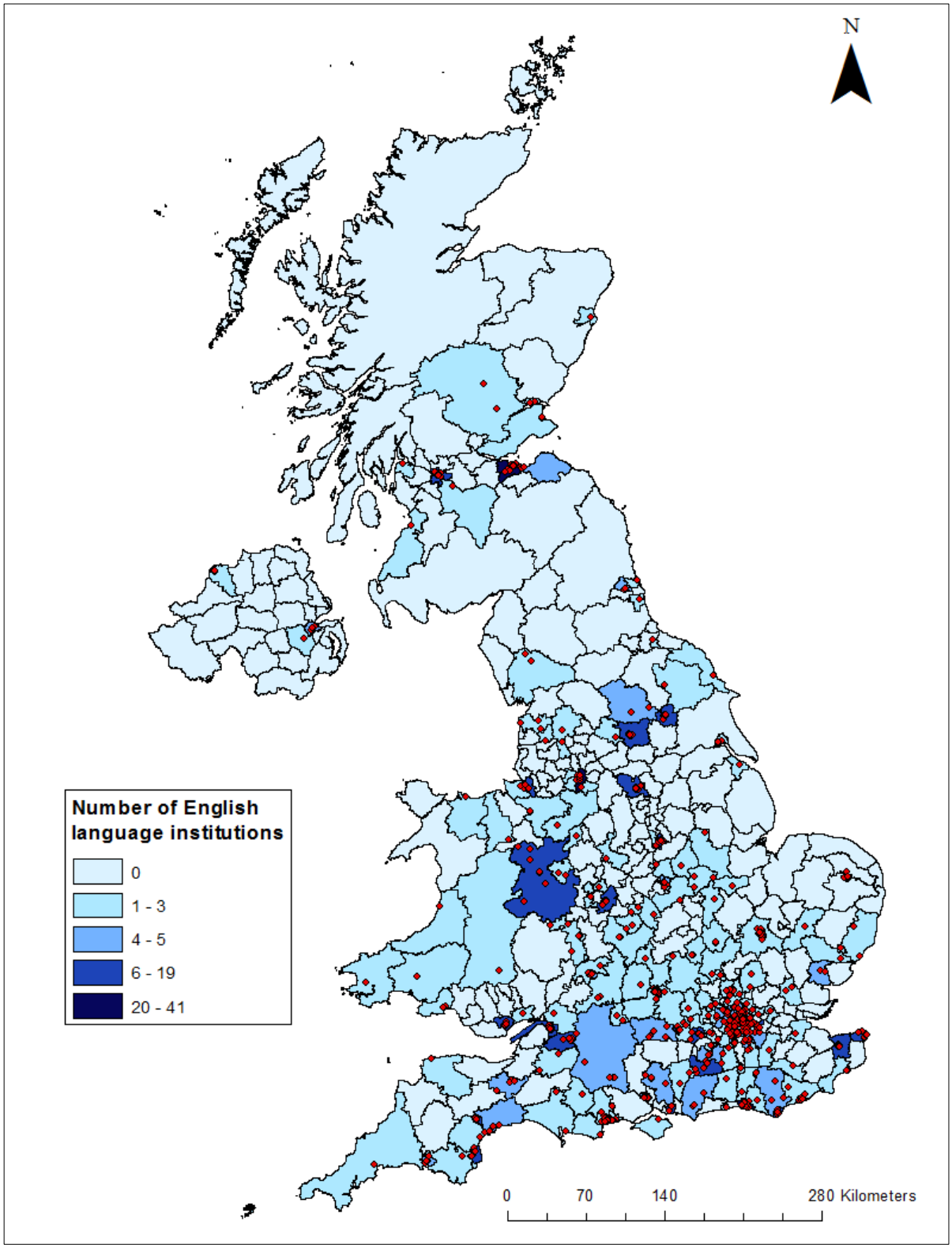
Whilst it is not possible within the scope of this research to uncover all of the hidden ELT centres across the country, this research presents the first map of all accredited ELT centres in the UK, and reveals the total number of accredited ELT centres in each Local Authority District (LAD). Although English UK (2018) reported that the top 7 destinations for EFL students in the UK were: London, Bournemouth, Brighton and Hove, Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, and Edinburgh, the data was based on the total number of weeks that EFL students spend in a destination, whereas this thesis presents the only spatial analysis of the industry based on the volume of providers.

**Table 4.** The eight LADs hosting the most ELT centres in the UK

| Local Authority District (LAD) | Number of ELT centres |
|---|---|
| Oxford | 39 |
| Westminster | 30 |
| Camden | 30 |
| Brighton and Hove | 27 |
| Bournemouth | 26 |
| Edinburgh | 23 |
| Cambridge | 22 |
| Manchester | 20 |

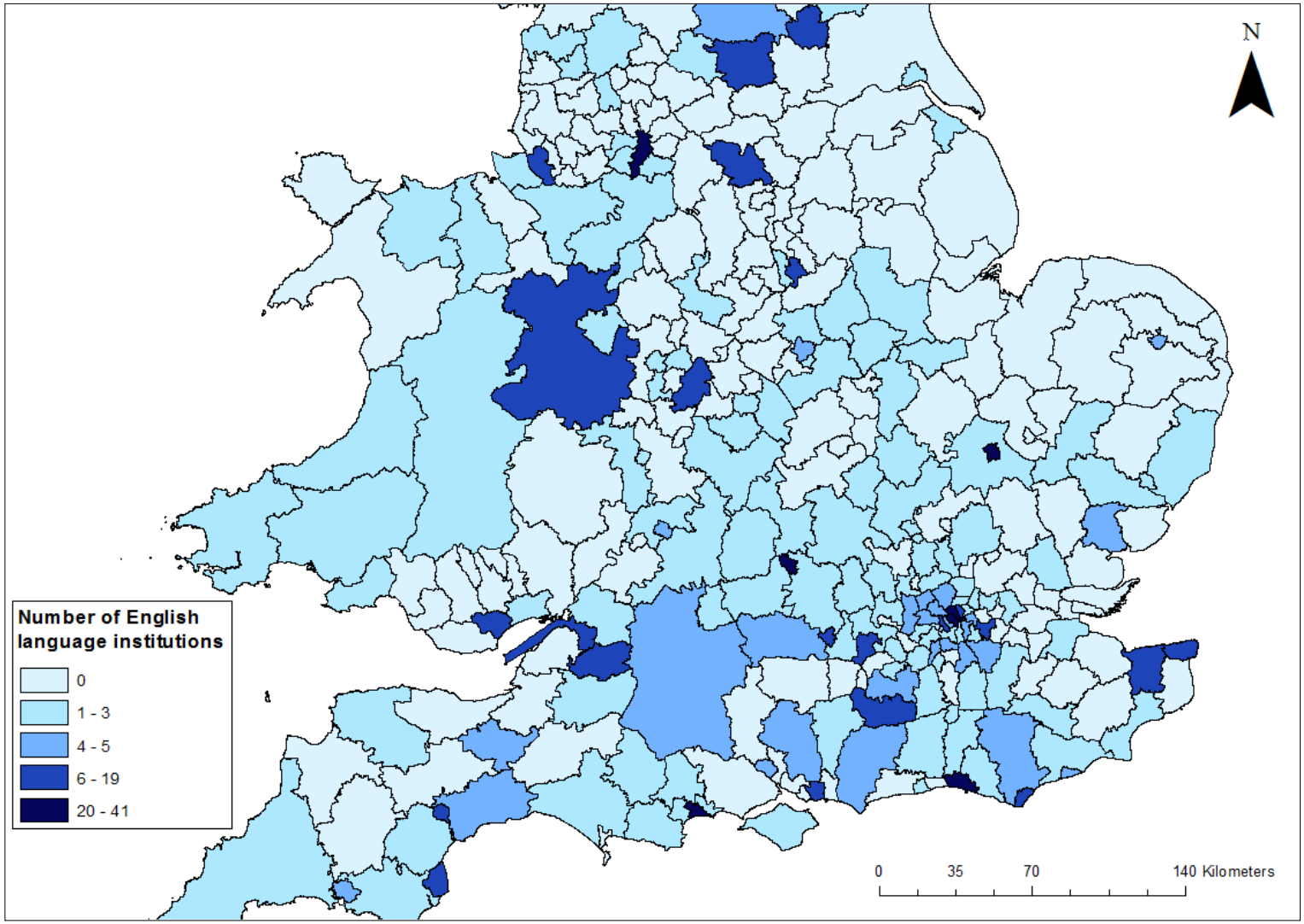
(Source: LAD data sourced from census.edina.ac.uk; ELT centre locations from the British Council website 2016)

**Figure 7.** The location and number of accredited ELT centres in each of the UK's Local Authority Districts




(Source: base map sourced from census.edina.ac.uk; ELT centre data from the British Council website 2016)

**Figure 8.** The Local Authority Districts hosting the most accredited ELT centres in England




(Source: base map sourced from census.edina.ac.uk; ELT centre data from the British Council website 2016)

The choropleth map presented in Figures 7 and 8 highlights some key characteristics of the national distribution of ELT centres. First, the eight LADs that host the most ELT centres in the UK (Table 4) are almost directly comparable to the most popular destinations by student weeks as recorded by English UK. However, where this thesis offers additional insight, is that we can see an unequal distribution of ELT centres across the country, as the majority of LADs host no ELT centres at all. Furthermore, by mapping by LAD we can see that the English UK data hides the diversity within places, such as London, where Westminster and Camden are the only boroughs to compete by volume with the other leading destinations across the country. The identification of these UK ELT hubs suggests the importance of place in this industry. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the EFL industry is operating within localised agglomeration economies (Pike and Tomaney 2009), whereby ELT centres benefit from locating near to other centres in established EFL destinations.

Furthermore, six of the eight destinations that host the most ELT centres (Oxford, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh and Manchester) are also home to the UK's most highly ranked universities (Times Higher Education's World University Rankings 2018). On further investigation, all of the LAD's that host the top 50 UK Universities are also home to ELT centre (albeit Lincoln, Lancaster and Essex only have 1 each). Destination choices for EFL study therefore appears to be linked to place-based global educational reputability:

> "Years ago, it was all about the academic reputation of the university – particularly for the Chinese market. They would look at the league tables, they would research it; that's why Oxford and Cambridge always did brilliantly well" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

This reflects the findings of Beech (2014a) who revealed that academic imperialism plays a key part in destination choice for HE students. Nevertheless, Marina's reference to 'years ago' suggests that these geographically constrained imaginations have become increasingly diversified over recent years. This is also suggested by Aimee, an ELT centre Director, who describes Oxford and Cambridge as 'traditional' destinations. Marina pinpointed the growth of the internet as one of the key methods through which expressions of diversification have occurred:

> "When the internet started to grow, people's awareness was starting to grow and it was a little bit more about football teams!" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

This suggests that geographical imaginations are increasingly formed from a range of different sources (Thompson 2016) – in this instance popular culture. However, it is also important to

recognise the influence of ELT centres marketing strategies on the construction of geographical imaginations, and consequently, mobility trajectories:

> "You can sell destinations […] I used to be in London, and I used to say 'what is there in Brighton? You've got stony beaches; you've got a sea life centre *wow*. In London we've got seven world heritage sites, free museums...' And then they asked me to move to Brighton, and I thought ah. What is there in Brighton? Well, it's close to London, it's peaceful…" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

In this way, geographical imaginations are being shaped by stakeholders through the selling of particular cultural and geographical attributes. Olivia also recognises the importance of Brighton and Hove's place-specific character for selling the destination by positively comparing it to other EFL destinations:

> "London, obviously it's amazing, but it is so huge, whereas I think Brighton it's nicer that we're smaller, we're friendlier, you can sort of do it all quite easily, you can get around more easily, and see more, but I think also it's the people. It is generally a much friendlier city than London is and you get all walks of life" (Olivia, EFL industry stakeholder).

Therefore, in marketing destinations, it is not only the unique selling points of a particular location that are capitalised on, but the comparisons that can be made between places. In this sense, Brighton and Hove is socio-culturally represented as a friendly and small city, which creates an image of comfort and safety for incoming international students. These qualities become increasingly important in the context of global events that impact upon EFL students' perceptions of the safety of a destination:

> "This industry is very volatile: we've had SARS, we've had foot and mouth, we've had bird flu… there just has to be one, or of course terrorism – either at home or close by – and to someone from South America, Paris is practically next door y'know, we're in spitting distance" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

Shortly after the terrorist attacks in the popular tourist sites of Westminster and Borough Market in 2017, I interviewed Jamie (Manager of an ELT centre), who discussed how EFL marketing teams sell Brighton and Hove over its competitor, London, by creating a perception of the destination as being safer:

> "You've got to be very careful using the word safe, because nowhere is safe … you've got to be careful you don't oversell that – although our sales team will go off and say anything to get a sale" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

Cranston and Lloyd (2019) acknowledge the impact of discourses of fear on people's everyday experiences, and in this instance, discourse on the threat of terrorism is used to shape EFL student flows.

In summary, Beech (2014a) argues that research on ISM has largely overlooked the role of perceptions of place in favour of traditional economic push-pull factors of migration, particularly graduate access to the labour market. This section has shown that the geographies of the UK's EFL industry is closely linked to EFL students' geographical imaginations – traditionally from the perspective of league tables and academic imperialism, through to popular culture and more recently political events. Within this context, it has been shown that the EFL industry inherently recognises these underlying influences and uses this knowledge to capitalise on students' geographical imaginations, particularly by comparing and contrasting their location over their competitors.

## 4.5 The EFL Industry in Brighton and Hove

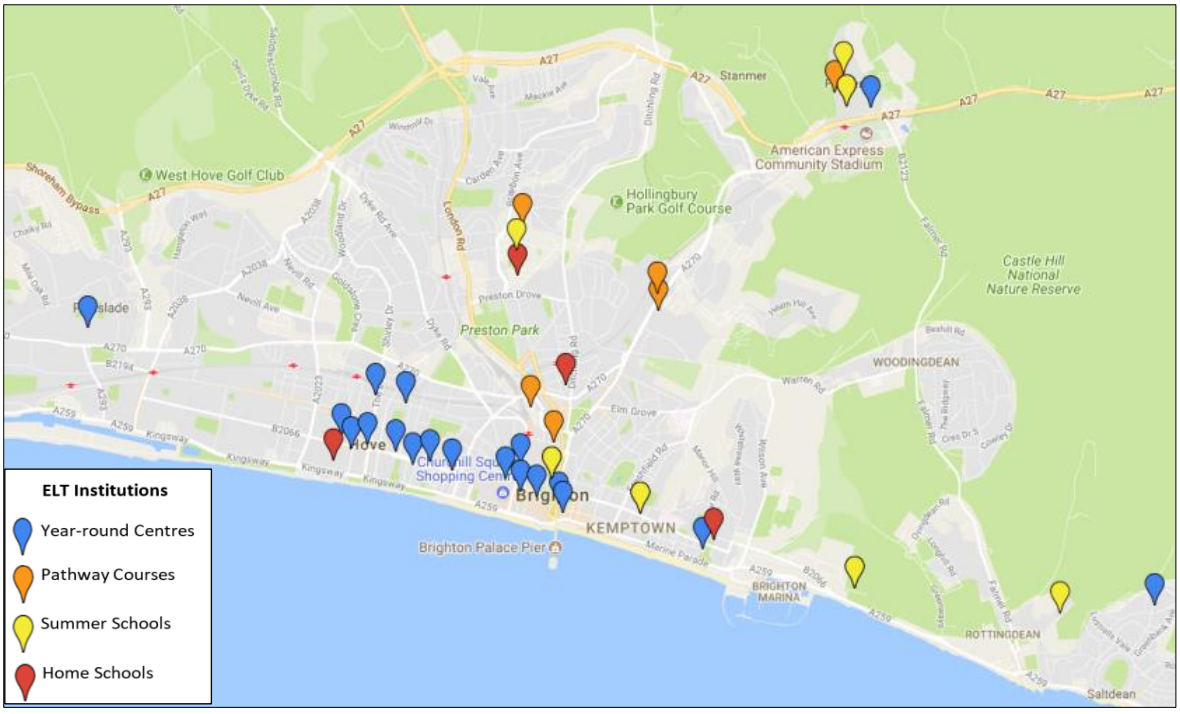
The previous section identified Brighton and Hove and Bournemouth as two of the leading destinations for ELT in the UK. Unlike the other destinations in this group (Oxford, London, Edinburgh, Cambridge and Manchester), the two seaside resorts on the South East coast of England are unique because they do not include any of the world's most highly ranked universities (Times Higher Education's World University Rankings 2018). Brighton and Hove therefore provides a fascinating case study to explore the dynamics between a destination and EFL student motivations and experiences, which will be explored in Chapter 6. As a precursor to this discussion, it is valuable to provide some context to illuminate the key features of the EFL industry in the case study location, and to identify who the EFL students in Brighton and Hove are. This section shows that ELT is diverse, evidenced by the types of services and courses offered in Brighton and Hove. This diversity is also reflected in the EFL students' age, nationality, length of stay and accommodation choices.

First, an in-depth investigation combining an online search, and an on-foot, field-based exploration of the city provided the data required to create a comprehensive list of ELT centres, detailing the type of provider as well as the location. Whereas the previous section focussed on accredited centres only, by narrowing the lens to the case study location I was also able to

identify non-accredited schools which gives a richer insight into the industry and the diversity of ELT provision within Brighton and Hove. Overall, in 2019, the total number of ELT centres in the city totalled 42, although this has fluctuated substantially over the course of this research where an initial search yielded 68 results. The fluctuation in ELT centre numbers is due to a combination of factors including mergers, closures and historical online footprints. A map of all 42 operational ELT centres in the city is presented in Figure 9.

First, Figure 9 provides evidence to show that Brighton and Hove hosts an eclectic variety of ELT centres, made up of independent language schools, corporate franchises, not-for-profit centres, further education colleges, university pathway courses, and temporary summer schools. Second, Figure 9 points to a trend for the year-round ELT centres to locate in the centre of the city near to the seafront, and within the 'hustle and bustle' of the thriving historic North Laine area – a popular tourist attraction. The home schools are predictably scattered throughout the city and the pathway courses tend to be located at Brighton and Hove's two universities – the University of Sussex and the University of Brighton, which reinforces the contention of a relationship between ELT and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's). Summer schools tend to be located where there is classroom and accommodation provision such as in boarding schools and on university campuses.

**Figure 9.** The location and type of ELT providers in Brighton and Hove




(Source: base map sourced from Google Maps)

The year-round ELT centres offer a diverse range of courses that fall into three broad categories: General English, English for business purposes, and English for Academic purposes. EF (2017a) state that "so many different kinds of people – from students, to professionals to retirees – want to learn English" and these different types of courses aim to cater to each of these groups. For example, the University pathway courses are taken by EFL students that need to meet the English language requirements necessary to enrol on a tertiary university degree programme. On the other hand, agricultural English for example, teaches specialist agribusiness vocabulary to those employed in the agriculture industry. During interviews with ELT centres employees, it was revealed that overall, General English was the most popular type of course, although this differs by nationality:

> "Some of them are sponsored and have to do intensive English, then students from Latin America tend to do general English which is only 20 lessons so it's not as intensive" (Aimee, ELT centre Director).

**Figure 10.** ELT centre in Brighton and Hove


(Source: author's photo 2016)

**Figure 11.** ELT centre in Brighton and Hove


(Source: author's photo 2016)

However, many of the centres in the city are increasingly diversifying their portfolio to increase their competitiveness by including courses such as English+, where English tuition is supplemented by extra-curricular activities:

> "We run junior centres in summer, and they do horse riding and tennis and golf and a few different things which always do quite well. They're doing all sorts this year; they're doing performing arts, English for future leaders […] It sort of builds into that leisure idea as well, it's more of an experience than just a study, study, study thing" (Aiden, ELT centre Director).

Here, Aiden has stated that the English+ courses are targeted at the Junior EFL students and suggests that for these younger students, EFL is a leisure experience rather than purely academic. This is in contrast to the exam preparation courses and business English courses offered throughout the city. The extent to which EFL is viewed as an educational or leisure experience, and how this differs by demographic, is explored in Chapter 6. However, the findings revealed by these organisational interviews show that the 'EFL student' is a broad conceptualisation applied to a diverse student population that are engaging with the industry for wide-ranging purposes.

The variety of ELT providers and the courses offered is both a consequence, and a driver, of a diverse EFL student population. For example, Jamie (ELT centre Manager) commented that:

> "[Competitor ELT centre] are more upper end, they used to aim at being in the upper quartile of the market. It's a nice product, a very slick product. Ours is a bit more traditional, and cosy as estate agents would say, which generally means a bit old, a bit battered" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

Jamie's polarisation of the two ELT centres suggests that the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove caters to students from a range of economic backgrounds, and illustrates that a variety of different EFL experiences are being sold to reflect the economic differentials. An online search revealed that the centres varied between low, mid or high tier in their provision based on the cost and types of accommodation that they provide e.g. 'executive' homestay with en-suite accommodation. This diversity is supported by the following two quotes from Marina and Erin respectively:

> "Some of these students that come and stay, they're not from poor families. They all come with their £50 notes. A few years ago, we had some Russian brothers and sisters staying in our accommodation in a full package, and the rest of their family had taken the whole top floor at the Grand in Eastbourne!" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

> "They [Czech EFL students] had a grant last year and the Government funded a lot of their travel, so we had a massive influx right up to Christmas last year. I think it was an opportunity; a lot of parents said 'right, let's take this chance and go'" (Erin, Host).

Erin and Marina have highlighted that the difference in economic capital can be a result of the nationality of the EFL students. Table 5 shows that there is a breadth of nationalities studying at surveyed ELT centres in Brighton and Hove. However, when comparing this data with English UK statistics collected a few months afterwards, the Chinese, Brazilian and Swiss markets are less prevalent in Brighton and Hove than they are on average across other EFL destinations in the UK. This builds upon the findings presented in section 4.4, which showed how culturally mediated geographical imaginations can structure student flows to different destinations within the UK:

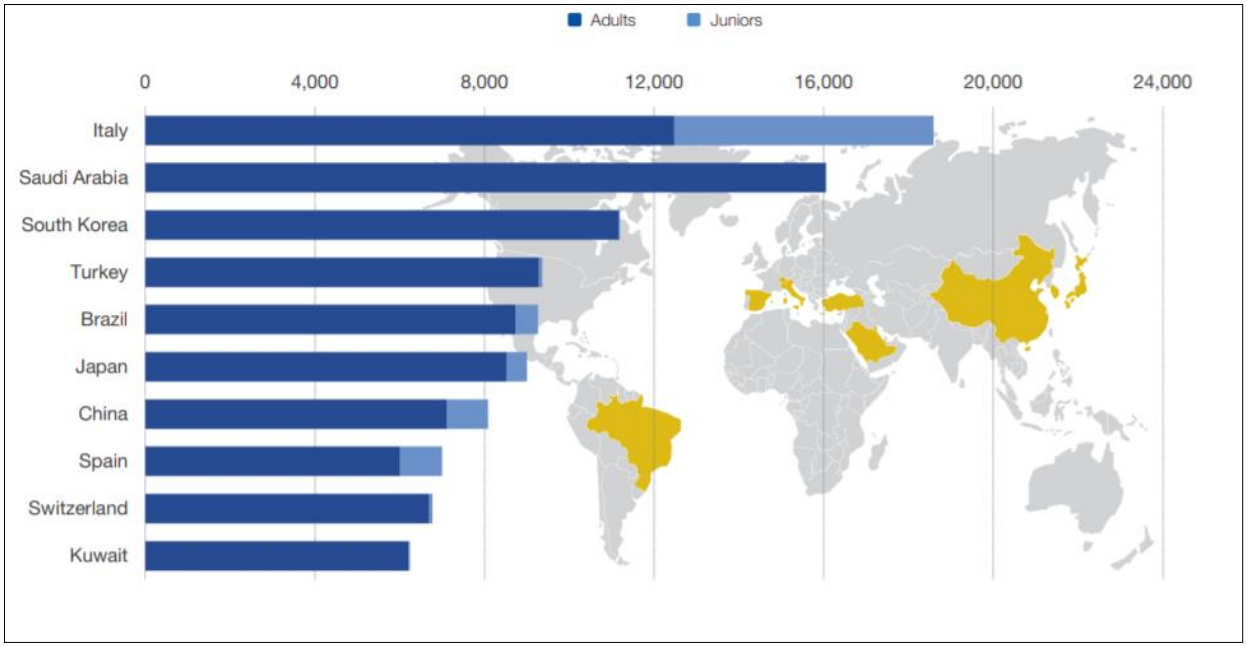
> "The Asian students aren't as popular with choosing Brighton, and they will very much steer towards other courses we have which are steeped in a bit more history, so they'll tend to go for Oxford, or London, or Canterbury" (Lara, ELT centre employee).

**Table 5.** The top five nationalities enrolled at surveyed ELT centres

| Nationality | Number of schools |
|---|---|
| Italian | 4 |
| Turkish | 3 |
| Japanese | 2 |
| Spanish | 2 |
| Korean | 2 |
| German | 1 |
| Swedish | 1 |
| Saudi Arabian | 2 |
| Peruvian | 1 |
| Kuwaiti | 1 |
| Libyan | 1 |
| Czech | 1 |
| Thai | 2 |
| Colombian | 1 |

(Source: author's survey 2016)

**Figure 12.** Student weeks by age group and source country (top 10 markets)




(Source: English UK 2017b)

With the exception of a limited number of studies that explore the experiences of mature students (e.g. Ploner 2017), research on student mobilities, to date, has predominantly focused on those defined as 'youth'. However, Heidi (an ELT centre accommodation manager and host), commented that she has housed 10-year olds up to 80-year olds and, therefore, the 'EFL student' encompasses individuals at various stages in the life course.

In recent years, there has been a push to drive the age of EFL students down even further, as noted by one respondent:

> "We take from 8 because I know we'll get some 7-year olds. If I say we take from 7, I'm going to get some 6-year olds. The reason I've stuck with 8 and the occasional 7-year olds, is because they can then read and write in their own language" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

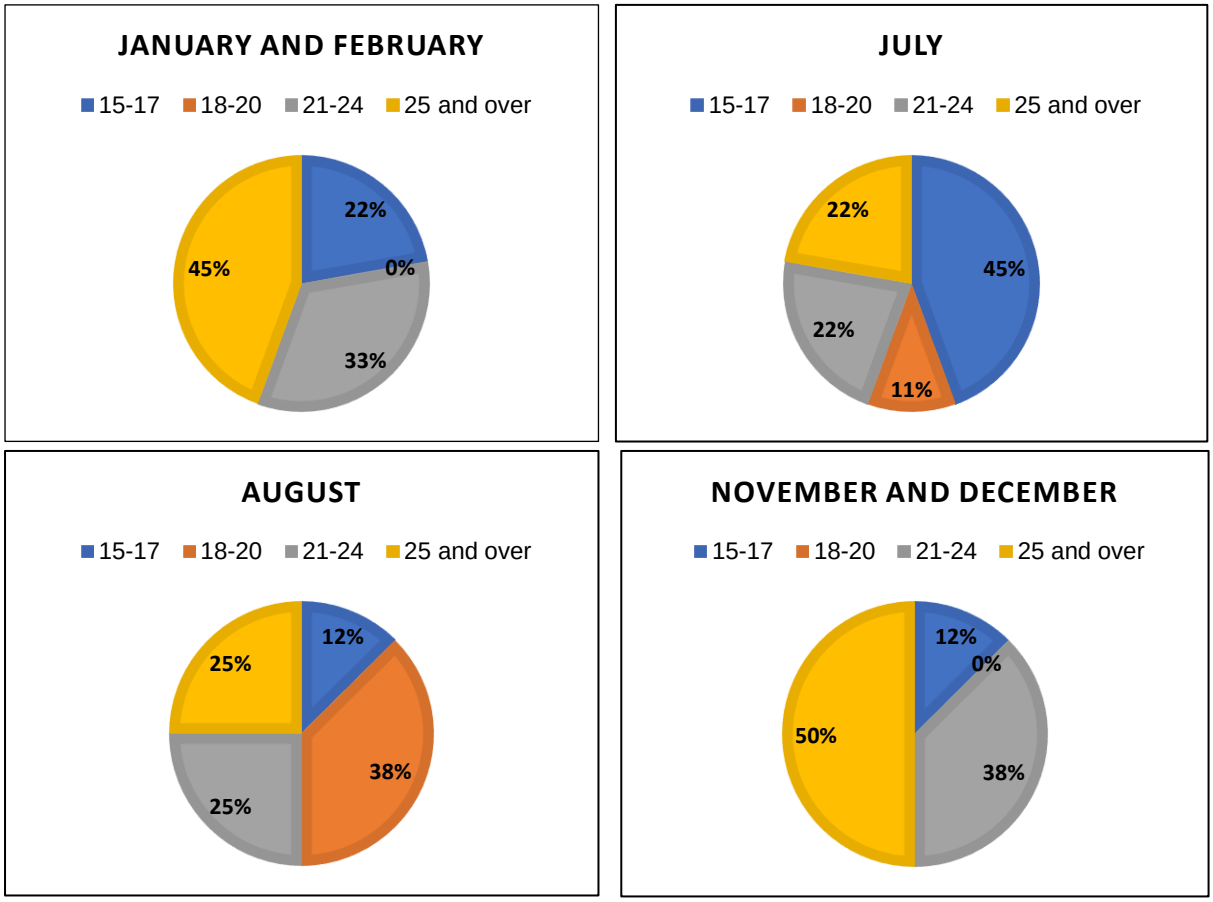
The age ranges of EFL students are a key focus of English UK's quarterly analyses on the UK industry, and while English UK (2019) show that the market is dominated by adults year-round, there are also seasonal variations throughout the year when juniors undertake EFL study. The age of students enrolled at each surveyed ELT centre in Brighton and Hove is summarised in Figure 13. The figure shows that there is a large influx of 15-17-year olds in July, whereas November – February was characterised by majority 25+ EFL students. A number of factors coalesce to create this seasonality, including the age of EFL students and visa restrictions. The first factor relates to school-aged EFL students being restricted on participating in EFL courses during term-time, and the second to only six of the ELT centres in the city (excluding college and university pathway courses) being Tier 4 sponsors (Home Office 2018). This means that the majority of centres can only host students for up to 11 months (see Figure 14):

> "They can be from 1 week to 11 months. On average, I think our average stay is about 7 weeks" (Aimee, ELT centre Director).

The impact of this factor is that ELT centres rely on the summer season for profit:

> "The summer is the time that most language schools make money; you make money in the summer to last hopefully the rest of the year. Whereas in other months it's normal to lose money or just break even" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

**Figure 13.** The age of students enrolled at surveyed ELT centres




(Source: author's survey 2016)

A key expression of the seasonal industry is therefore summer schools. Summer schools largely cater for groups of junior students, for example, those funded by government programmes such as inps, as described in Section 4.3, and are unique as they do not have their own premises as the permanent centres lack capacity for the summer influx of students. Instead, ELT providers purchase packages from hospitality companies such as those that operate within university campuses:

> "We've got 7 campus locations, 5 of which have accommodation, so we either rent out rooms, classrooms or a combinations of packages where it's dinner plus bedrooms plus classrooms [...] the client can be based anywhere in the UK or internationally, and they'll either contract with us directly, or we'll go through a UK agent" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

Nevertheless, although the infrastructure is outsourced, the education programme and care for the students is still coordinated by the ELT provider:

> "They [the ELT provider] will generally do the whole thing: the pastoral care, the teaching, activities, everything for the junior groups" (Marina, EFL industry stakeholder).

An impact of the seasonality and short-term procurement practices is short-term contracts for workers such as cleaners and activity coordinators. The consequence of this can be job insecurity, which results in the ELT centre employees having to diversify their incomes:

> "Alexia is a teacher, Gloria is a teacher, Paige is a teacher; a lot of them are teachers that we've brought to the office to work for us. What else do they do – I think Alexia works in a bakery so just any jobs really; Gloria's got a brother who has a pizza shop and a restaurant; Paige has just gone out and got a job waitressing. Yeah anything basically" (Tom, ELT centre Director).

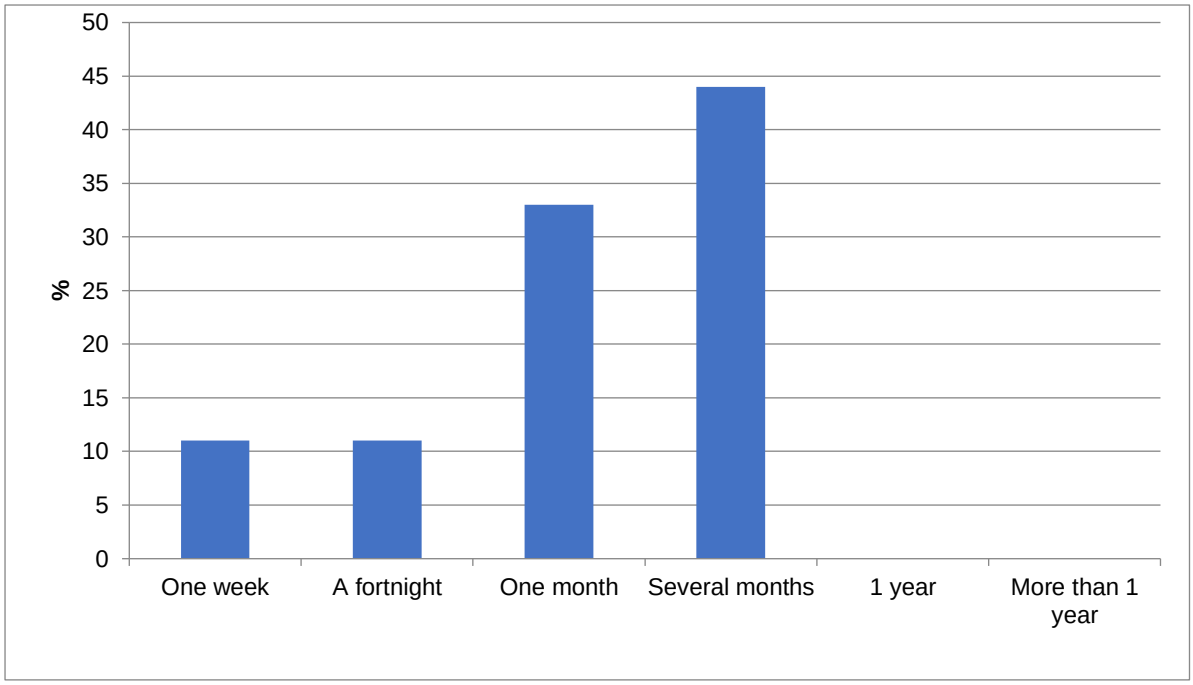
The seasonality is also important in terms of residential provision for EFL students, particularly in the context of Brighton and Hove's existing housing challenges:

> "Student housing is a massive issue politically in the city, mainly because of the pressure on general housing and the need for that because we've got a lot of migration from London. Selling houses up there, making a huge profit, deciding that it's nice to move down to Brighton. So, house prices here are going crazy. We've got a need for new housing of about 30,000 up until 2030 through our City Plan which was adopted last year. We've got a target of 13,200 so we can meet less than half of what we actually need. There are limited sites for new housing because there's the sea on one side, there's the South Downs National Park on the other. At the moment it seems like purpose-built student housing is much more profitable for developers than normal housing developments" (Nick, EFL industry stakeholder).

The impacts of enlarged student populations on established residential communities have been of increasing societal significance (Sage 2010), and this is likely to have become more of an issue due to increasing student numbers over the past 20 years. A letter written by a resident of Brighton and Hove that was published in a local newspaper *The Argus*, referenced an "annual invasion of language students" (The Argus 2002) over the summer months, however, the residential patterns of EFL students in Brighton and Hove have, until now, been unidentified:

> "We know there's a lot of them, we know there's a lot of students that come here, but we don't really know where they all stay" (Nick, EFL industry stakeholder).

**Figure 14.** The average length of EFL student enrolment at surveyed ELT centres




(Source: author's survey 2016)

Figure 15 illustrates the most popular accommodation options selected by EFL students, as reported by surveyed ELT centres. It shows that the majority of students at every surveyed centre stayed in homestay accommodation. This finding shows that the EFL industry is an example of the 'sharing economy' in action, whereby accommodation for EFL students is supplied by established households that rent spare rooms in the homes in which they live. This finding adds a unique dimension to existing research on student accommodation in the city:

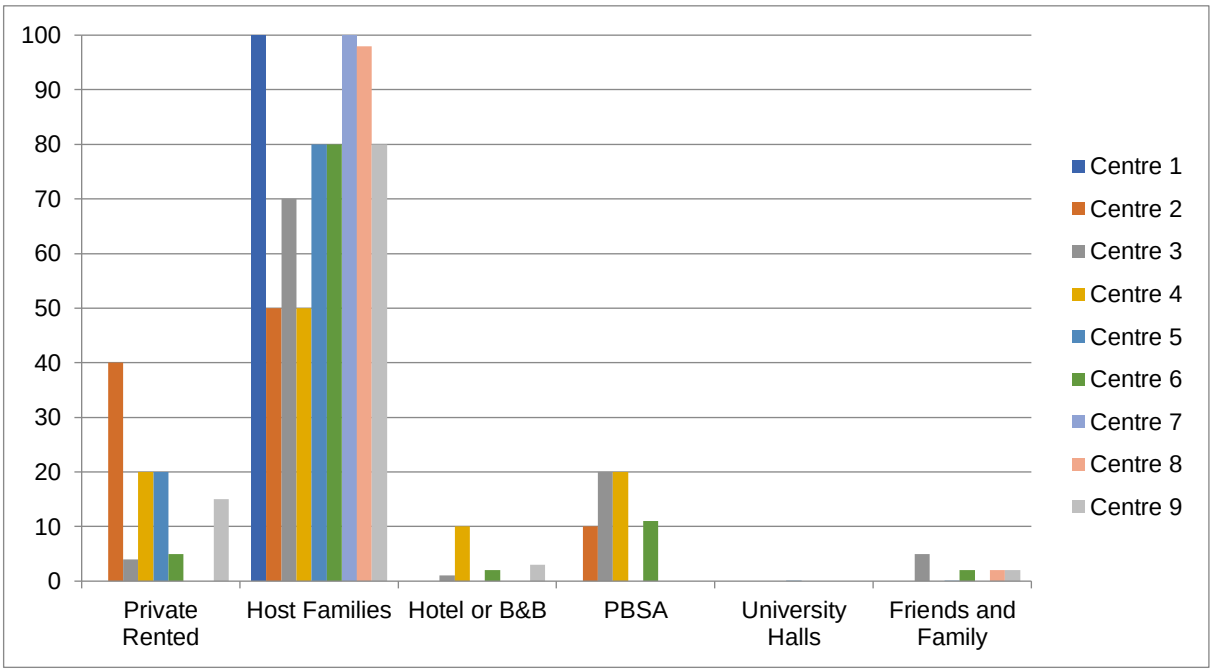
> "If the students stay in host families, from a planning point of view that's fine, we haven't got to worry about that too much. It's only when there's a demand for the purpose-built stuff *or* if there's a conversion to HMOs [houses in multiple occupation] which is a result of demand for language schools, that's an issue for us - that's a big political issue" (Nick, EFL industry stakeholder).

More generally, this finding is important as homestay accommodation remains largely absent from geographical scholarship, however it is defined in hospitality and tourism literature as:

> "A specialist term referring to types of accommodation where tourists or guests pay to stay in private homes, where interaction takes place with a host and/or family usually living

upon the premises, and with whom public space is, to a degree, shared" (Lynch 2005: 528).

**Figure 15.** The percentage of EFL students residing in each type of student accommodation in Brighton and Hove




(Source: author's survey 2016)

Within the context of this research, the aforementioned 'guest' is the EFL student, who is placed under the care of an individual or family (the host) that live locally to the students' ELT centre. Homestay accommodation is often a fundamental part of the EFL student experience, and is sold by industry professionals as a way for students to maximise their learning outcomes by immersing themselves in the native speaking environment. These themes, alongside the perspective of the host, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

### 4.5.1 Safeguarding EFL Students

Chapter 5 will explore who hosts, why they host, and their experiences of hosting. However, as homestay accommodation is compulsory for all under 18s unless on-site accommodation is available, it is first important to establish the role that ELT centres play in regulating the sector in Brighton and Hove, and to explore how this is influenced by UK safeguarding legislation.

Under the 1989 Children's Act, EFL students living in homestay accommodation are classified as privately fostered. Private fostering legislation applies to children who are under the age of 16 and are cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone who is not a relative, or

someone that has parental responsibility for the child, for more than 28 days. Brighton and Hove City Council (2017) state that the 28-day allowance is to prevent inappropriate local authority involvement in scenarios such as short-term breaks with friends and to ensure that "only the most exceptional of circumstances need to be notified". However, the findings highlighted in this chapter showed that the average length of stay for EFL students was less than 28 days. Furthermore, this legislation only applies to those 16 and under and therefore only a small proportion of the EFL student population. For those that it does stand to protect, the act states that "it shall be the duty of every local authority to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are or are proposed to be privately fostered within their area is being or will be satisfactorily safeguarded" (Legislation.gov.uk). As cases of private fostering are low, it is difficult for local authorities to identify affected children and therefore a significant number of these care arrangements remain hidden (Brighton and Hove Local Safeguarding Children Board 2013). In an inspection of private fostering checks in Brighton and Hove, Ofsted (2015) stated that not all of these children are visited as regularly as they should be.

The policies outlined above leave some EFL students vulnerable to abuse or neglect. However, the safety and welfare of EFL students is ultimately the responsibility of the EFL industry rather than the state. As per guidance from the Department for Education (2018), where an ELT centre has the power to terminate a homestay, they are defined as the regulated activity provider. Regulated activity providers "commit a criminal offence if it knows, or has reason to believe that, an individual is barred by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) from engaging in regulated activity but allows that individual to carry out any form of regulated activity". It is an ELT centre's responsibility to decide what information it needs to collect to inform the assessment of a host family, and whether that should include conducting an enhance DBS check on others in a household that are not the lead host. This guidance is reinforced by Accreditation UK – a scheme run jointly by the British Council and English UK that has over 400 ELT centre members. In order to obtain accreditation, ELT centres must have "appropriate provision for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 within the organisation and in any leisure activities or accommodation provided" (British Council 2015b). A representative of English UK stated that:

> "*In principle*, everyone who has access to, or who's in what we call a regulated industry where there is one-to-one access with under 18s, has to be DBS checked" (Dominic, EFL industry stakeholder).

This lack of enforcement means that even for ELT centres that are accredited, high standards are not always met:

> “There’s lots that don’t have it. We’re still aiming towards 100%, I don’t think that any school would have 100% no matter what they say. They’d say that they have but they won’t have. You’ve got to do your best, and at least it’s a drive to doing your best” (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

This is most likely because of the high turnover of host families, in particular in the summer months, when ELT centres in the city are competing against each other to recruit hosts to meet demand:

> “In places like Brighton there is so much competition with other language schools you have to over recruit, so in Brighton we might be triple recruiting what we expect for because we know there’s going to be a cancellation drop off. So, for us to do a DBS financially it’s a massive input, but we do visits and sometimes we’ll get requests through and there might be a guy that phones up and says ‘I just want Swedish girls aged fourteen and we would obviously not do a visit there’. We do checks and things like that, but legally we don’t have to [DBS check] right now, so we don’t do it yet” (Lara, ELT centre employee).

This lack of formal checks is surprising and concerning given a recent court case in Brighton and Hove involving the sexual assault of a young EFL student by his host (Barlow 2018). Lara suggested that the cost for ELT centres of DBS checks is high and therefore a number of centres pass this £25 cost on to the hosts.

> “They don’t want to put people off, and that [DBS checks] would put a lot of people off unless they volunteered. I mean, we had to pay for our own and I think it was £30. Because if someone decides that they want to do it, and then they don’t like it…” (Joe, Host).

One ELT centre that was not accredited, and did not DBS check their hosts, was a family-run business that is proud of the friendship it has with hosts and felt that criminal checks would undermine this relationship. However, the hosts did not share the same view and recognised the importance of safeguarding the students that stay with them:

> "I think there should be [DBS checks] without a doubt. I think if you were from the family sending your daughter, you'd want to make sure if there was any history. Perish the thought actually, it's awful! No that is absolutely, honestly that's essential. In this current climate, and in this day and age, nobody would be surprised if you were a host family that

you would be asked to do that [DBS check] and if you have something to hide then…" (Erin, Host).

A number of host families relayed safeguarding concerns in their interviews. For example, Joe had heard that there were four girls sharing a double bed, and Gloria had hosted a number of students that had asked to leave their first host family:

"There have been some really bad stories […] I've taken some students into our kitchen, who cannot believe a) that they can go in the kitchen, and b) that they're allowed to open the fridge!" (Gloria, Host).

The Department for Education advise that during a stay, students should understand who to contact should an emergency occur, or a situation arises that makes them feel uncomfortable (Department for Education 2018). However, Cranston and Lloyd (2019) contend that the ability to live safely is intimately connected to position within society, and for junior students in an unfamiliar, non-native speaking country, speaking out can be daunting:

"I do think the schools should do follow-up checks. They will say they do, because they will ask the student 'were you happy? Did you get blah blah?', but a lot of the students, the younger ones especially, are afraid to say, because they won't know what's normal" (Gloria, Host).

This lack of central regulation on the homestay sector highlights a tension between the state's responsibility for providing care to vulnerable EFL students, and the stringent regulation over the terms of their stay through visa requirements.

It is imperative that EFL students are properly safeguarded, and as a minimum requirement, the government must legislate that all education providers for under 18s are required to go through formal accreditation. Accreditation should also be provisional on all over 18-year olds residing in the homestay accommodation obtaining a DBS certificate. In Brighton and Hove, similar practices are already being upheld in the supported lodgings scheme. Supported Lodgings provides the opportunity for 16 and 17-year olds at risk of homelessness, and care leavers aged 18 and over, to live with someone who will help them develop the practical skills and emotional maturity they need to move on to independent living (Brighton and Hove City Council 2018b). The assessment that carers have to go through includes a 3-4-month assessment that looks at lifestyle, finances and experience, as well as statutory checks on all members of the household, and references from family members and employers. This practice should therefore be

extended to the homestay sector in the city, and to do so, the Local Authority must take responsibility for the education providers in their district.

## 4.6 Summary

In summary, this chapter has shown that there are multiple actors who are shaping the EFL industry in the UK and overseas. EFL is a global industry, with the most popular destination countries being native English-speaking. The industry attracts students from across the globe and universally, education agents are the primary method through which they book their EFL packages. The influence of these agents cannot therefore be under-stated, and findings from interviews have shown that the EFL centres and English UK work to promote the UK as a leading destination for EFL students. This work however is arguably being undermined by the immigration policies and rhetoric of the UK government that frames EFL students as migrants and enforces strict rules on their English proficiency, length of stay and participation in the workforce. In this way, EFL students are all at once viewed as students, tourists and migrants. The sending nations governments also play a key role in shaping the mobility of these students by targeting state-sponsored programmes at those from disadvantaged or less wealthy backgrounds, which is working to widen access to mobility and to create a globally educated workforce.

On a national level, analyses of the scale and geographies of the EFL industry in the UK revealed that the key destinations for EFL students were established student towns and cities, however this geography has diversified in recent years due to the influence of popular culture and the internet. Furthermore, it has been argued that the concept of geographical imaginations is a valuable framework for understanding how mobilities are sold and (re)produced within the EFL industry by ELT centres, emphasising how specific places are compared and contrasted. Moreover, by examining the EFL industry within the case study location of Brighton and Hove, a number of characteristics have been identified, including the variety of ELT centres and the courses offered; the differences between the adult and junior markets; and the seasonality of the industry. In particular, it has been shown that EFL students primarily select to live with local host families in homestay accommodation which differs from the accommodation chosen by other groups of HE students, with the latter predominantly residing within halls of residence, houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). In this way, it can be suggested that EFL students are an appropriate population for investigations of the diversity of student groups, as called for by Holton and Riley (2013). Overall, a number of key themes have been identified that will be analysed in Chapters 5 and 6, including, the motivations and experiences of the homestay hosts and EFL students; and the role of the EFL

industry in creating a commercialised homestay sector and how this impacts on the quality of care provided by host families.

# CHAPTER FIVE
# The Geographies of Homestay Accommodation

"I think if you're in a position to do it – in as much as you've got the space, you've got a nice room (I love their room, I'd rather have it myself) – you should do it not for the money, but if you're interested in people, and different countries, you should do it, because there's no reason why not, there really is no reason why not" (Shirley, Host).

## 5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 identified homestay accommodation as the leading form of living arrangement for EFL students in Brighton and Hove, and investigated the regulation of the EFL industry's safeguarding practices at a national and local scale. This chapter builds upon these findings by exploring the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with host families providing homestay accommodation in Brighton and Hove. The objective of this chapter is to examine the profiles of Brighton and Hove's host families; to identify their motivations; to explore their approaches to hosting; and to investigate EFL student's experiences of consuming homestay accommodation. In doing so, the discussion contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between international student mobility and the geographies of home. This is important because although geographers have engaged with the patterns and processes of transnational networks of care from the perspective of domestic foreign workers in the host's home (e.g. Yeoh and Huang 2000; Anderson 2007; Cox and Narula 2003), and of the families left behind (Lam and Yeoh 2018; Graham et al. 2012), care provided by British families to internationally mobile children and young adult students has, to date, been under-explored.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. Section 5.2 identifies the profiles of Brighton and Hove's host families, and examines the role of ELT centres and EFL students in the gendering, heterosexualisation and racialisation of host families in Brighton and Hove. Section 5.3 identifies the key motivations of hosts in the case study location. It is argued that motivations are complex and individualised, and are tied to wider social processes and changes in the lifecourse such as rising housing costs, an increase in single-person households, and loneliness. Section 5.4 explores the varying approaches to the day-to-day provision of homestay accommodation and how this constructs EFL student experiences. Finally, the chapter explores the impacts of hosting, namely, the formation of long lasting transnational social networks between the host and EFL student, which reproduce international mobility over multiple generations. Section 5.6

provides a summary of the key findings, highlighting three key themes: homestay accommodation as a form of care, and the gendered nature of caring responsibilities; homestay accommodation as a monetised service; and the tensions between these.

## 5.2 Host Family Profiles

Before exploring *why* families choose to host, it is important to address *who* is hosting, and therefore this section seeks to identify the demographic profiles of host families in the case study area. There is no comprehensive or centralised database of host families (at a local or national scale) so a search was conducted using the website homestay.com to identify the profiles of host families operating in Brighton and Hove. Drawing on the data provided by this web platform, and empirical findings from interviews with hosts and ELT centre employees, the section explores the impact of ELT centre recruitment processes, the marketing imagery that they employ within print and digital media, and the imaginations and expectations of EFL students. It is argued that the host family population in Brighton and Hove is predominantly white, heterosexual and female-led as a result of collective views of what families 'should look like' (McIntosh et al. 2011).

One of the most notable findings exposed by the homestay.com database was the gendered nature of homestay provision, as 81% of the 101 contact hosts registered were females. The gendered nature of the sector highlights the persistence of gendered ideologies within society that cast childcare as the work of mothers (Cox 2010), and suggests that the domestic domain continues to be constructed as a traditionally feminised space (Di Domenico 2008). However, Rose (ELT centre Managing Director) explained that the type of host mother has changed in recent decades:

> "25 years ago, when the students came you would have to find a mother who was at home all day because the students used to go home for a hot lunch. Obviously, you would never get anybody like that now" (Rose, ELT centre Director).

This change is a manifestation of the neoliberal government policy in the Global North, which has led consecutive Labour and Conservative Governments to propagate an adult worker model in which all of the working-age population are engaged in paid work. Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) state that this has disproportionately impacted women, particularly mothers, as the shift in care provision from the home to the commercial childcare market has led to negotiations about gender divisions of labour, responsibilities for care, and men and women's

identities as parents (McDowell et al. 2005). Nevertheless, Evans (2016) argues that gendered divisions of labour will only truly shift when two things happen, one of these being that norm perceptions of care as feminine work change. Stephanie (Student Accommodation Coordinator) provides evidence to support the findings of the homestay.com analysis that in the homestay sector, the norm perception of care as feminine work persists: "if it's a couple I tend to only deal with one of the people, and it's usually the woman."

The argument that there is a persistence of the female carer model in British society is supported by Anderson (2007:251), who commented in her study of au pairs and employing households that there is a continued belief that women are more nurturing, and 'better', carers than men. Anderson also revealed that 64% of host families would not consider hosting a male au pair for reasons including fears of inappropriate sexual behaviour, which suggests that men engaging in care work is viewed as deviant to the normalised perception of care as a women's role. Jamie (ELT centre Manager) provided evidence to show how gendered ideologies in the homestay sector exist for fathers, as well as mothers:

> "A lot of the hosts are working parents or mothers – I'm going to say mothers only because it generally tends to be. There are single fathers, but a single father family isn't something that's seen as safe or attractive" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

It is argued by Evans (2016), that gender divisions of labour will shift when compliance with norm perceptions is no longer perceived as advantageous. However, while male carers continue to be considered 'unsafe' by society, the female-carer model is unlikely to be challenged. Household composition and relationship status are therefore important characteristics for ELT centres to consider when recruiting host families and selling this form of accommodation to their students. For example, Figures 16 to 22 show a collection of images of hosts and EFL students which are displayed on the websites of Brighton and Hove's ELT centres. Pertinently, all of the figures show female hosts compared to only 50% that include male hosts. More specifically, none of the figures include a male host without a female host also present, which concurs with Jamie's argument outlined above that male carers are not *seen* as attractive and are therefore not an effective marketing tool. The depiction of host families in the figures is also in line with Emma's portrayal of those employed at her ELT centre:

> "Single parents definitely, retired people who have got the spare room, and also families whose children are sharing a room as they're still young" (Emma, ELT centre Director).

**Figure 16.** Homestay marketing image - The English Language Centre

(Source: The English Language Centre 2019)

**Figure 17.** Homestay marketing image – Brighton Language College

(Source: Brighton Language College 2017)

**Figure 18.** Homestay marketing image – ISE Brighton

(Source: ISE Brighton 2019)

**Figure 19.** Homestay marketing image – Sprachcaffe

(Source: Sprachcaffe 2017)

**Figure 20.** Homestay marketing image – Stafford House

(Source: Stafford House 2019)

**Figure 21.** Homestay marketing image – Eurocentres

(Source: Eurocentres 2019)

**Figure 22.** Homestay marketing image – St Giles

(Source: St Giles 2019)

The figures portray two types of families: first, single-female-led households, and second, the nuclear British family: mother, father and children. The latter are also engaging in family activities such as sitting down for mealtimes together. The focus on food and drink in the images of homestay accommodation is used by the ELT centres to reproduce British stereotypes, such as having afternoon tea. It is also interesting to note that all but one of these pictures is centred on the communal dining space, rather than the student's bedroom. This is in contrast to other types of accommodation, such as student houses and hotels, in which the quality of the facilities are key selling points (e.g. Kinton et al. 2018). Homestay accommodation is therefore being sold by ELT centres as more than a place in which to stay, but a home in which you will be cared for. Other studies such as Munro and Madigan (2006) have highlighted that mealtimes are an important way of maintaining communication within the family unit and, therefore, an opportunity for students to interact with their hosts. For example, Heidi (Host/ ELT centre employee) asks hosts as part of the recruitment process whether they can guarantee that they would eat evening meals with the student at least five times a week. The industry is therefore encouraging, and indeed expects, host families to adhere to traditional spatial models of family life (Putnam 2006) that have become less marked in recent years as families have become increasingly time-poor (Munro and Madigan 2006). As a result, providing homestay accommodation becomes a performance of family, which will be explored further in Section 5.4.

Nevertheless, in reality, not all host families fulfil these idealised images of a nuclear family, and on the homestay.com database, 39% of hosts stated that they were living as a heterosexual couple with children, 17% were single parents, 12% were a heterosexual couple without children, and 23% lived alone. When a host goes against the 'norm' sold to EFL students, they can feel that they are not giving the EFL students the experience that they expect, and paid for, which can create feelings of unease. For example, as a single mother Erin stated that:

> "She [13-year-old daughter] doesn't solely live with me, I share care with her dad. Some of the students haven't met her. The ideal thing is that they come to family homes, but… one of the first things I say is 'there's no men in this house, it's only girls!" (Erin, Host).

Here, Erin shows that the ideal of the family continues to exert a powerful meaning in British culture and the context of the home, providing a definition of what a 'normal' family should look like (McIntosh et al. 2011). Similarly, when the reality of the homestay experience is not how the EFL students imagined it to be, it can cause uncomfortable and prejudiced reactions:

> "When students arrive and they say 'I want to move from my family', you know the reason. They don't want to say it which is natural, they're not going to say it's because they're

> black, so they say it's because the food is a bit spicy, and you think 'oh that's a good phrase to use, that's clever. I say 'is it really because of the food being spicy or is it because they're black?" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

Jamie therefore suggests that hosts can be subject to discriminatory behaviour in their own homes. Furthermore, as EFL students have the power to move and choose a new host family, non-white hosts are prevented from employing the home as a site of resistance to social stigma and exclusion (Gorman-Murray 2012). Race is therefore an important dynamic between the EFL student and their host family. As ELT centres are businesses that operate in the public realm, and are therefore accountable to the Race Relations Act that prevents discrimination in the workplace, they have to carefully approach this dynamic. Nevertheless, the images in Figures 15 to 21 show a lack of ethnic diversity that works to construct the imaginations of EFL students who therefore expect to arrive at the home of a white British family.

ELT centres must also negotiate the dynamics associated with the sexuality of their hosts. This is particularly pertinent in Brighton and Hove, which is described in media discourses as the 'gay capital of the UK' (Browne and Bakshi 2013). Stephanie, (Student Accommodation Coordinator), highlights the tensions that can arise when pairing EFL students with LGBTQ+ host families:

> "This is Brighton: we do have a diverse mix of people, and we do have a strong equality and diversity policy. But the fact is, I'm not going to put a male student from Saudi Arabia in with a gay couple, it's just not worth it".

Due to the ELT centre's apprehension of the consequences of these pairings – outlined by one accommodation coordinator as making both the students and hosts feel 'uncomfortable' – LGBTQ+ host families are often overlooked in favour of heterosexual families. Jamie stated how his centre uses targeted schemes through which they can use their 'gay families':

> "We used to have a flamingo programme and that was lovely because you actually have people, well, you have to have a representative that knew that scene and could show them around, and you have to have Lesbian, gay, BT, whatever it is acceptable and tolerant families, and actually it meant we got to use a lot of our gay families, and it was beautiful" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

Therefore, whilst the centres may employ a diversity of families, arguably they actively avoid engaging with this diversity as a result of cultural sensitivities. Nevertheless, whilst in a minority,

it is interesting to note that some centres appear to be promoting, rather than hiding the diversity within the host family population in their marketing materials:

> "Britain is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community, and our people have tastes that reflect our long history of immigration. As well as traditional 'British' food, you are likely to be offered Italian, Indian, Chinese, and many other different styles of cuisine. And we don't usually stop everything at 5 o'clock for a cup of tea" (Interactive English 2019).

Similarly, diversity in approaches to recruitment processes was also a key finding of the interviews with ELT centre employees and student Accommodation Coordinators. Through an exploration of their online marketing, one centre describes their approach to recruitment as:

> "All our homestays are carefully selected by our Accommodation Department who understand the needs of students from other countries" (English Language College 2019).

This individualised approach was predominantly discussed by smaller, independent centres. For example, when recruiting new host families, Emma highlighted that the Student Accommodation team prioritises feelings of homeliness when making determinations on potential new host families:

> "One of the things we always look at is 'would I be happy to place my children here? Would they be happy to stay here?' And so that's a key point with it, and y'know you get a feel for the place. Sometimes it's not what somebody says, it's just how you yourself feel" (Emma, ELT centre Principal).

The importance of conducting home visits as a method of quality-control was emphasised by Phil:

> "[There was] a host who thought they have a spare room, but they kind of thought it was okay to leave treadmill equipment in the room. They also had furniture that wasn't bedroom furniture- it was still stuffed full of their own family memorabilia that they didn't want to move. It's just totally inappropriate, and they were just going to shove a camp bed in that" (Phil, Student Accommodation Coordinator).

In contrast, international chains discussed how heightened local competition in the summer months encouraged a race to the bottom when recruiting host families:

> "It's got to be a comfortable bedroom, it's got to have British Council standards, but I'm afraid you almost take anything. Some of the families know that, they play a game of poker. They wait, and they know… its dog eat dog. What do they say? In love and war… basically, money rules, money talks […] We are fighting for those families" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

This commercialisation of the homestay conflicts with the with the experience marketed by ELT centres of homestay accommodation as a form of care. Again, this conflicts with the experience of the smaller, independent centres who rather than "fighting" for host families, worked with the same families over multiple generations:

> "Because we're small I know every one of my families, and the cat, and the dog, and the aunt, and the grandma and everybody, so it becomes a big family if you like. I mean, they ring me out of hours, it's the job" (Heidi, Host/ ELT centre employee).

The impacts of these differing approaches on EFL students' accommodation experiences are explored in Section 5.4 and Chapter 6.

Overall, the findings presented in this section have shown that family is a dynamic and complex term (McIntosh et al. 2011), that is (re)shaped by a persistent ideology of what a 'normal' family should look like. This works to exclude those that do not 'fit' into the traditional images of a British nuclear family, which corresponds with Blunt and Varley's (2004:3) argument that the home is "shaped by inclusions, exclusions and inequalities in terms of gender, class, age, sexuality and race". An exception to this trend is the inclusion of single, female-led households in the centre's marketing imagery. As homestay accommodation is sold as a form of care, this highlights the persistence of the female carer model in the homestay sector. Contrastingly, there are no single male hosts, ethnic minorities or same-sex families portrayed in the imagery employed by Brighton and Hove's ELT centres. The narrative provided by ELT professionals suggests that these populations are excluded from operating in the sector due to a fear of male-led households being unsafe, and cultural sensitivities, respectively. It can be argued that the ELT centres are therefore reproducing notions of archetypal British families and gendered notions of care as part of their marketing strategies. This finding is in line with Cranston's (2016:656) contention that "the experience of culture shock becomes something that organisations seek to control", and, therefore, rather than the EFL student learning encounter through the 'contact zone', they are taught the normal expected experience by ELT centres (Cranston 2016). Consequently, this sets EFL students' expectations of their host families before they arrive in the UK, which are subsequently used as a comparison with the reality

encountered (Di Domenico and Lynch 2007). When confronted, this can lead to discrimination against hosts, which challenges the ideology of the home as a place of safety. The impact of cultural differences on host families will be explored further in Section 5.4 alongside other themes highlighted in this section including performances of family, and the tension between homestay accommodation as care versus a monetised service.

## 5.3 Motivations for Hosting

The aim of this section is to identify the motivations of Brighton and Hove's homestay hosts, and to explore if this differs by demographic. The EFL industry has been active in Brighton and Hove since the 1960s, and Rose, a Director of an ELT centre stated that over the years, the motivations of hosts have changed:

> "Hosts used to do it maybe for a little bit of pin money if the mother wasn't working and because they really thought having a foreign person in their house would enrich their children. Now it's seen as an extra income. If you said are you doing it for your children, to meet people from Europe, no. They're doing it solely to boost their income" (Rose, ELT centre Director).

Chaloner et al. (2015) support Rose's interpretation, stating: "for thousands of families, hosting students in their spare bedroom is a financial lifeline", however, they also argue that it remains "a way of meeting interesting young people from all over the world." Importantly, the findings presented in this section show that the decision to become a host family is not an either/ or, but is far more complex, and individualised, often encouraged by change points in the lifecourse.

For those that do host for cultural enrichment, it was revealed that the motivation could come from previous family exposure to the homestay, and a desire to replicate these experiences over future generations:

> "My family used to do it when I was a child and I loved it. We always had international kids in the house so I was raised that way, and it was only natural that I wanted my children to learn about different countries, cultures, languages, different food groups y'know, so it also helps them to mix, it makes it easier for them to liaise with people from different countries" (Lauren, Host).

Similarly, Gloria started hosting EFL students because her son had benefited from a similar experience in Spain, which enabled him to receive a degree in Spanish and Economics. As a result, she wanted to enable this experience for others:

> “He ended up in the middle of Spain in a state school the first few months said it was absolutely ****. Hadn’t got a clue what he was doing, didn’t understand any of the language but had to learn, and 3 months later found himself speaking fluent Spanish. So, we decided, you know what let’s do something […] it was my son going away and getting so much from what he did, and now he’s sending his daughter – she’s only 11, but he’s already said, ‘when you’re 17 young lady you’re going to do what I did’, because it made him as a person” (Gloria, Host).

On the other hand, there are hosts that are more likely to be motivated by the financial reward, and an important finding from the interviews is that there is a scale of financial dependency. For some, hosting provided a supplemental income to allow families or individuals to go on holidays or pay for treats. This was the case for both retired hosts and those that had young families, who used the extra money to fund activities for children in the school holidays. For others, the supplemental income was used to minimise a fall in living standards arising from life events (see Lynch 1998), such as divorce and redundancy. For example, Erin – a single mother who works full time – used the income from hosting to top up essential bills:

> "I'm on my own, I don't have a partner, the cost of living, the cost of accommodation is expensive…"It's all about money and invariably that's the sole purpose. I wish I could say it's for the sole enjoyment - although it is enjoyable - but it's mainly for extra income” (Erin, Host).

For Emma, hosting became a solution to the high cost of living. This is particularly pertinent in the context of Brighton and Hove - as housing in the city is unaffordable for the majority of residents (Brighton and Hove 2014). Furthermore, previous research into university students in the city showed how the preference for private rented accommodation amongst this group contributed to increased housing costs in the area, and, subsequently, caused the displacement of local families (Sage et al. 2012b). Stephanie, a Student Accommodation Coordinator for EFL and university students, felt that there would never be enough demand for homestay accommodation from the university student population, who prefer to follow a traditional pathway through studenthood (Sage et al. 2013) to make any difference to the current pressures that the city faces. However, what this does show is that not all incoming mobile groups contribute to housing pressures. In fact, the inward mobility of EFL students to the city offers individuals and

families the chance to earn the extra income they need to meet increasing housing costs and to stay in their homes.

Erin's explanation also links housing unaffordability to being a single householder, and in Brighton and Hove there is a higher percentage of single households compared to the national average (Brighton and Hove 2014). Bennet and Dixon (2006) argue that a rise in solo living has been one of the most important demographic shifts of recent decades and that transitions into solo living can precipitate poverty. Nevertheless, Brickell (2012:233) argues that divorce is a key domestic disruption that has so far been largely ignored in the geographies of home, and therefore it is important to acknowledge the relationship between divorce and the homestay in the case study location. The proceeding quote illustrates that some ELT centres recognise separated families as a key target market to attract more hosts in times of increased competition:

> "What happens when families normally separate, one of the partners ends up with a house that's too big for them, probably a bit stretched financially, so it's natural. I hate to say it, but I was thinking of advertising to lawyers who specialise in it [divorce]. Not to capitalise on separation, but to say look, do you know about this" (Jamie, Director of ELT centre).

Hubbard (2013) states that changing family structures have important consequences for housing and domestic reproduction, in this case encouraging single parents to engage in the provision of care for non-related individuals which consequently prevents the need to downsize or move out of the area. Erin (Host) saw divorce as the main reason why people would choose to host, hypothesising that none of her friends in a 'proper family' would host as they had good jobs and did not need the money. Although she enjoyed hosting, she did not see care, cultural enrichment or socialising as significant enough motivations to take on the responsibility; she did not "know whether you would find a family that would do it for the love." Erin's perception of the type of 'family' that hosts, is in contrast with the nuclear family structure sold to EFL students by ELT centres, highlighting a tension between the expectations of EFL students and the reality encountered.

Taking into account the importance of the economic contribution that hosting makes to Erin's life, and her perception of others' motivations, hosting does not have as significant of an economic reward as other forms of commercial hospitality:

> "They get from £90 a week for self-catered, which is quite difficult, because if you were renting a room to a lodger in Brighton you can get like £500 a month for a room" (Stephanie, Student Accommodation Coordinator).

As hosts are also expected to provide meals for students and to spend 'family' days with the students that often incur an extra cost, this margin decreases even further. As a result, some hosts contest the idea that they make any money from hosting:

> "I don't make money on it honestly – I probably spend more money on them! They go home with gifts; I take them out… it's ridiculous. But I enjoy it" (Sofie, Host).

For those that hosted for economic reasons, when asked why they chose to host EFL students instead of lodgers they cited reasons that included liking the flexibility of hosting so that they could have short-term students and 'gaps' between new intakes. Julia also took into consideration the safeguarding of her own children, and felt comforted to have the support of the ELT centre if anything went wrong:

> "Airbnb, I don't know, because my children are so young - well it's not a risk, but I suppose letting anyone in to your home you just don't know who's coming. So, I think this is more like of a regulated way of doing it, I've got someone to contact if there's any issues or any concerns" (Julia, Host).

This shows that hosts value the flexibility and security of hosting EFL students over profit, which concurs with Lynch's (2005) finding that host families are the least entrepreneurial of all types of commercial home hosts. Nevertheless, when financial renumeration is the key motivation for hosting, some hosts expressed their guilt at this:

> "Awful thing… that awful word money. I'm really sorry to have to say it because obviously we had really good feedback, we looked after them" (Heidi, Host/ ELT centre employee).

Being financially motivated does not mean that hosts provide a worse experience to the students. Rather, having an economic motivation can encourage hosts to provide a better experience, as they want to secure a good reputation with the school to ensure they are kept on their books. For example, Julia commented that she stresses to her children that:

> "You need to be nice to the students because they are paying to stay here and we'll use the money to take you out in the summer holiday" (Julia, Host).

However, Heidi felt that her economic motivation was at odds with what Germann Molz (2007:70) defines as 'the real thrill of hosting' - learning about, interacting with and mixing with different cultures. This resonates with findings from the previous section, which showed that

hosts who did not conform to the nuclear family type felt guilty that they were not providing the home that was expected by the students. This is compounded by the perception of hosts such as Sofie who implied that to enjoy hosting you cannot be financially motivated:

> “Obviously there’s a lot of people that just do it for the money but I enjoy it, I’m too soft with it all really, I’m a good host actually, I’m too good!” (Sofie, Host).

In addition, some hosts delineate between those who host for economic reasons and those who do not based on age:

> "People of our age, you’re not doing it so much as a business are you - we’re not desperate” (Shirley, Host).

Shirley’s perception is that younger hosts are more entrepreneurial than older hosts. On the other hand, Shirley and Linda both attributed their motivation to the social contact:

> "It’s like having your children still at home and never getting older. Some of the girls, I’ve got so, so close to them they’ve been like my daughters, and my own daughter is approaching 40 now, and I’ve still got her at the age of twenty-something” (Linda, Host).

> "One of the reasons that I do it – it’s a very important reason for me – is that there’s somebody else in the house, otherwise I could fall over on the Friday night, and nobody would find me till Monday morning. My kids are busy, they don’t always come around at the weekends. I love having somebody there. Not that they would do anything like pick me up or put me to bed or anything, but it’s just nice to know. I’m a family person, so living on my own is actually quite sad" (Shirley, Host).

The association made by Shirley between hosting and having someone to look after her shows that hosting is not just a form of care for the student, but can be a form of care for the host. It is also reasonable to suggest that both Shirley and Linda are motivated by their feelings of loneliness, which has been deemed a ‘public health issue’ in recent years in the UK, particularly amongst the elderly generation (Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness 2017). Therefore, hosting students can be seen as way to maintain social ties post-retirement and when children have moved out of the family home.

Overall, caring for, or educating, EFL students as sold by ELT centres, were not viewed as significant enough motivations for hosts to provide homestay accommodation. Instead, this

section has shown that the decision to host is highly personalised and contextual. Whilst cultural enrichment remains a motivation amongst families that have had previous exposure to the benefits of the experience, increasingly, families are encouraged to host for the economic reward. This is as a result of the consequences of wider societal social processes, including an increase in single-person households. Nevertheless, in these instances, hosting is not seen as a principal form of income but rather a supplement that can be used towards holidays, treats and to cover shortfalls in bills. Although hosting is not the most financially viable commercial enterprise (Lynch 2005), hosts appreciate the flexibility of the lifestyle and the support structures of the ELT centre. Those motivated by economic reasons tend to be young families or single parents, whereas the retired hosts are more likely to host for reasons of socialisation. Therefore, hosting can be viewed as a way of filling a gap created by life-stage events such as divorce, retirement, and children growing up and moving out of the familial home. This problematises the concept sold by ELT centres as homestay accommodation being a form of care for students as first, EFL students can become a form of care for the hosts, and second more families are undertaking hosting for financial reasons. As a result, although it was shown that the EFL industry was unlikely to tackle the root causes of issues such as university student demand for private accommodation, it can be a solution for individuals who are suffering the consequences of societal phenomenon's such as the rising housing costs and loneliness epidemic.

## 5.4 Approaches to Hosting EFL Students

The previous section highlighted a perception amongst hosts that their financially motivated peers approach the homestay as a commercialised business rather than a form of care, resulting in a lesser quality of experience for EFL students. This section challenges this perception by arguing that approaches to hosting can be influenced by more than a host's commercial orientation, namely their perception of the EFL students' motivations and axes of social difference. The discussion highlights two key tensions: first, between the approach to hosting as a form of care or a monetised service and the expectations EFL students; and second, between verbal rule-setting and the desire to preserve the integrity of the home as a space of freedom and embodied respect. It is contended that the mutual success of a host-student relationship relies on open communication and early expectation setting.

The presence of EFL students within the home can result in certain spaces becoming 'out-of-bounds' for the host families. This can disrupt the normal rhythm of everyday life, particularly for young children who can view the home as a space without boundaries:

"They find it a bit tricky because obviously now they're a little bit older they understand more, but they didn't understand initially that they couldn't just walk into their [the students'] bedroom and say good morning and things like that!" (Julia, Host).

The cultural differences between the host and the guest can also change day-to-day practices within the home. For example, when it comes to food:

"Because they're coming into my home it's about how I've got to accommodate to their needs. Like the guy that came from Saudi, it was a halal diet and stuff so I'd buy all halal meat and the whole family ate halal for the period that student was there" (Julia, Host).

A number of hosts expressed how they made (small) adjustments to their day to day routines, such as keeping the house tidier than they usually would, when a student is present in the home. On occasions, this involved negotiations about what aspects of day-to-day activities were acceptable, and which should be changed. As a result, hosting can alter the everyday performances of family within a household:

"I still put my pyjamas on when I get home! Still slob about! We sometimes have to be a bit more polite. I try not to shout at the kids too much when they're there because I just think it sounds really bad" (Nicole, Host).

Therefore, whilst Lynch (1999:121) argues that "the home becomes a stage on which the actors (hosts and guests) must act out their roles in a type of experimental theatre where the script and its plot are developed as the play proceeds", I argue that this is an overemphasis. The findings of interviews with hosts in Brighton and Hove show that a desire to preserve the integrity of the home as a space of freedom means that they approach hosting as business as usual, with small tweaks to everyday behaviour and household practices.

Nevertheless, when hosts are resistant to flexibility, conflict between the host and student can occur:

"The two of them [host and EFL student] had polarised their positions and wouldn't speak to each other about it. It was very straightforward; all he wanted was some cheese: 'is that possible?' 'Well I only do toast', 'but he clearly doesn't want toast, can he have a piece of cheese?' Very straightforward but they couldn't work it out for themselves (Phil, Student Accommodation Coordinator)

The success of a host-student relationship therefore relies on open communication, mutual respect and compromise. The development of a comfortable relationship may therefore involve a process of negotiation and the verbal setting of rules about everyday practices within the home (Cox and Narula 2003):

> "All we ever say to all of our students is: we don't lock doors; we expect you to treat our home with the same respect you treat your parents. That's it. We get: 'but you don't have a lock on my door'… 'you shouldn't have to have a lock - we don't have a lock'" (Gloria, Host).

Gloria uses rules to preserve the integrity of the home as a space of freedom and mutual-respect by preventing behaviours that you would find in a hotel-like environment, instead reinforcing the relationship between the host and student as a familial parent and child arrangement. However, as EFL students are paying for a service, there is a tension between providing a family home and the commercialised expectations of homestay accommodation:

> "I don't really think they knew what the rules were for being a host family because they didn't clean my room as they were supposed to" (Hugo, 20, Swedish EFL student).

> "Internet is good, bed is good, food is acceptable… I talk with them then go to my bedroom. I consider it as more of a hotel" (Thomas, 19, Belgian EFL student).

Hugo's reference to 'supposed to' highlights that his expectations were set by the EFL industry. Jamie suggests that the expectation setting is the responsibility of the education agents rather than the ELT centre:

> "We rely on the agents to sell, so we rely heavily on them [education agents] to manage expectations which is one of the biggest challenges […] Things like laundry, and towels being changed, you've got to get everything in there, because one little thing like that could be the thing that ruins someone's experience" (Jamie, ELT centre Manager).

This concurs with the findings of Robinson-Pant and Magyar (2018) who argue that HE students' expectations of their study experience are shaped not only by the commercialisation of the international education market, but also the role of the education agent in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, the ELT centre plays a key role in determining the level of service to be provided based on the extent to which they commercialise the homestay accommodation:

> “There is a fixed structure price, it’s not negotiated. There will be more money if it’s exec – there are different levels. So self-catering, half-board, there’s a flat rate, and then there will be exec, which will be more because they have to have wine with their dinner and stuff like that” (Daniel, ELT centre employee).

When expectations do not align, and the level of service to be provided by a host is misinterpreted, or misarticulated, this can result in conflict arising within the home:

> “To be told by a 16-year-old girl ‘wash my bedding’ and I’m like ‘no, excuse me, don’t speak to me like that’” (Nicole, Host).

Nevertheless, in some instances, hosts actively seek to provide a hotel-like environment:

> "When they arrive, they have a welcome gift on their bed with a fluffy spa labelled [with the ELT centres initials] towel and robe. They have an Xbox in their room, they have internet, they have a large flat screen television, they have drinks and snack in their rooms, they have direct access to the garden area and our pool in the summer” (Lauren, Host).

It is possible to suggest that the level of service provided is also encouraged by the monitoring of practices within the home by the ELT centres:

> “We give them a manual explaining what they need to do – and we go through it with them as well – and then we have a feedback system that rates our host families and it’s kind of our check, so if a student rates a family really low, we check to see what other students have rated to see if we need to go and do a spot-check” (Aimee, ELT centre Director).

This type of feedback system implemented by ELT centres can put the home and family behaviour under intense scrutiny. As a result, the quality grading encourages hosts to develop an entrepreneurial outlook to provide a superior experience. For example, Erin stated that “I represent the school, so I make sure I give a good service" (Host). This approach by ELT centres therefore contributes to a standardised image of what a home should be. However, when asked what the concept ‘home’ meant to them, the students emphasised that home was a feeling (hooks 1990), which conflicts with the notion of homestay accommodation being about the service provided:

> “A place that is mine and mine only, where I can just stay and keep everybody else out when I want to be on my own (Ruben, 18, Belgian EFL student).

> “Home is a place where I feel very comfortable, where I like to come back to. I always like coming home again” (Felix, 19, German EFL student).

While Kidd and Evans (2011) state that home is something that travels with an individual, and can be created wherever they happened to be, this end point was not always achieved:

> “Home for me is a place I’m happy. At the end of the trip I really want to go home” (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Gabriella explained that her reasons for unhappiness related to her experience of her homestay accommodation:

> “They are really kind with me, and everything I need they help me, but I don’t know, probably because I’m Brazilian I was thinking that I would make friends for life because we are like this in Brazil. They are welcoming students for 8 years, so I’m just another student y’know. Sometimes it’s difficult” (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Holton (2015b) argues that the student home is a lived space in which students make, organise and perform social interactions. However, their agency to do so when entering someone else’s home is limited.

It is possible to suggest that in Brighton and Hove, the approach taken by Gabriella’s host family is a result of the specific supply and demand context in which the homestay sector operates, which inhibits relationship building between students and hosts:

> “I share my room with one girl. I mean it’s okay but sometimes it’s annoying. Normally you have two or three students in a house but we are six” (Larissa, 19, German EFL student).

This is in line with Bagnoli’s (2009) finding that when moving from a familiar context to an unfamiliar one, people are confronted with the ‘other’, which can lead to feelings of disappointment. On the other hand, Nicolás stated that “I expected nothing at all and I was really surprised like how welcoming they are, how they treat you, everything” (Nicolás, 23, Spanish EFL student). In some instances, EFL students expressed that they were aware that host families engage with the EFL industry as an extra source of income. Hugo was therefore surprised that the host took such good care of him:

> “If we’re going to be honest, I think its money, it’s an extra income, but I don’t think they hate me. I actually talked about this with my host family because I was sick at the beginning, and she took care of me really, really well, she was so nice and kind. She was like ‘of course we do it for the money, but you’re a human being and I expect that there’s going to be a relationship between us. So, they do it for the money, but it’s still rewarding” (Hugo, 20, Swedish EFL student).

This highlights that contrary to the perceptions of non-financially motivated hosts, care and financial motivations *can* co-exist. A lack of communication between the host and EFL student can therefore result in a misinterpretation of each other’s motivations. For example, Holton (2015b) finds that some students do not desire meaningful connections because they recognise the short-term nature of student mobility, and therefore some hosts perceive that EFL students’ use of the homestay is as a base to pass through on their way to other activities (Schmidt-Reinhart and Knight 2004). For example, Joe felt that the student’s main purpose was “for the trip South” – a reference to the seaside destinations on the English South coast. As a result, he was more reluctant to engage in general conversation with the students:

> “I just remember one Czech lad we had; he was a very a very nice lad- they were twins; couldn’t tell them apart- but he was very keen on talking. I was watching something on catch up y’know and down he came and started rabbiting away and ‘shut up’ [gritted teeth laughing]” (Joe, Host).

This perspective conflicts with the marketed purpose of the homestay as an extension of the learning environment, and as a result, the guarantees of ELT centres can shape student experiences of disappointment:

> “When I decided I would be in a host family Sprachcaffe in Spain told me that it would be very good for me because I will be able to speak every day for one hour or one hour and a half during the night. That’s what I expected and the truth is that after being in five different families I only have similar in one family” (Alberto, EFL student).

On the other hand, the responsibility that hosts feel for the students’ English language education can be at odds with the level of student engagement in the learning process:

> "The ones who don’t talk you wonder why they’re here. They don’t seem to want to talk, to make any effort to talk, it’s inexplicable. So, I just decide that in those cases I have to stop stressing about it and just write it off really - be polite, be professional. We are a big

opportunity for them to talk, and if they don't want to do it, they don't want to do it" (David, Host).

In some ways, this is akin to the role that parents would take in helping their children with their homework. However, David has explained that while his initial approach is to provide a learning approach, when this is not reciprocated, he will professionalise his approach and provide a service instead. David's willingness to flex his approach therefore prevents conflict and disappointment in the relationship between the host and student.

Overall, the majority of EFL students interviewed as part of this research want more from their homestay accommodation than a hotel-like experience; as Holton (2015b) revealed in his study of HE students, student accommodation is more than simply somewhere to live. For EFL students, the homestay can represent multiple and overlapping expectations and hope for comfort, care, learning and new family and social ties. However, the identity of the student is full of ambiguity, in some cases a guest, and others a member of the family. When the interpretation of this identity differs for the student and the host, this can lead to feelings of disappointment and isolation.

Another area of contention was that of independence, which was mediated by the age of the student:

"Some of them we've had a little bit of lip. 'Can we go out?' 'No'. I think it's just teenagers. 'Our friends are going out', 'well I'm sorry I had an email from the school saying you aren't going out tonight, there are no activities, you do not go out' in bright red. Then I get a phone call saying 'this is our teacher on the phone, can you talk to our teacher?' I used to be a teenager myself, I know how teenagers work, you think I'm stupid?" (Nicole, Host).

Nicole therefore suggested that it is easier to host over 18s as they can go off clubbing and come and go as they please. Stephanie, an Accommodation Coordinator, believed that one of the main attractions for hosts to work with her employer was because they did not take junior students and therefore hosts did not have to 'mother' the students:

"I've had my own kids basically, and my kids were all brilliant, and I don't want to go through worrying about other people's children … you could get ones that like too much drink" (Gloria, Host).

Gloria suggests that some hosts have a boundary on the level of care that they are willing to provide. On the other hand, some hosts saw themselves as surrogate parents and preferred to care for junior students rather than adults as they disagreed with student mobility at such a young age:

> "I often think would I have liked to send my children away when they were 10? Probably not, so I look at it that I look after them when they're over here… I tend to be there as a bit of a mum figure really…" (Sofie, Host).

However, host families with dual-earners can often struggle to provide the level of care that they aspire to as it causes a conflict with their responsibility for parenting their own children:

> "I usually do like walking them to school on their first day, but it just depends on what I'm doing because I have to do the school run, nursery run, I am busy in the week, so I don't have time…Some of them they get dropped off at our house, and then we give them a map and just say: 'there you go, off you go'" (Nicole, Host).

This example points to another important finding highlighted by this research: that caring labour for EFL students is gendered:

> "My husband always says 'before we start, Gloria is the boss. Anything you want you deal with her'. He will talk to them about history, and I'm the one who helps them with their grammar, and does their washing, and when they're not feeling well, they come to me" (Gloria, Host).

The ONS (2016) reported that women continue to carry out 60% more unpaid work than men when it comes to cooking, childcare and housework. This is an example of the 'double shift' whereby women have the dual responsibility of a paid job and unpaid domestic work (see Tofoletti and Starr 2016 for an example). Nevertheless, the boundaries between paid and unpaid work are blurred when hosting – providing paid domestic labour in your own home – is a woman's main profession.

The allocation of tasks between Gloria and her husband highlights the performance of traditional notions of femininity and masculinity within the host family as the woman takes responsibility for the emotional labour and cleaning. In contrast, men tend to do domestic tasks that occur outside the internal space of the home (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards 2011):

"My husband usually does the pick-ups and I usually do all of the food preparation. Because he works, he leaves home at like 7 o'clock and doesn't get home until 5:30. Usually when he walks through the door dinner is on the table" (Nicole, Host).

The findings therefore support arguments relating to the survival of gendered ideologies in the home and the marginalization of women's place therein (Di Domenico 2008). As a result, the EFL industry is reproducing normative gender roles, and subsequently EFL students see these gendered divisions of labour as British gender values. This can be met with surprise from EFL students who are used to a more equal distribution of domestic tasks between males and females in their home country as suggested by Maja (23, Swedish EFL student) and Linnéa (53, Swedish EFL student):

**Maja**: What fascinates me is that my host mum stays at home taking care of the children and that's confused me a bit, because I've grown up with two parents that do the food together- sometimes my dad makes it.
**Linnéa:** The cooking, and the washing… I think we are more equal in Sweden. 'Do you want a cup of tea?' and she serves me the tea, and not just me, even her husband. He's fully capable of making his own tea.
**Maja**: My host dad he gets his dinner. 'oh okay', I'm not used to that.

These findings have provided evidence to support Di Domenico's (2008:315) argument that "the home's everyday spaces reflect inescapable, external sociocultural norms and socially approved constructions of femininity that are closely associated with notions of care-giving and nurture". Nevertheless, it is important to note that the commercial aspect of hosting helps to make domestic labour visible, and reminds people of its economic significance (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards 2011). Therefore, rather than seeing female host mothers as compliant with gendered sociocultural norms, hosting can in fact be an empowering decision for women who turn traditionally unpaid domestic labour into an economically viable activity. This is particularly pertinent for women encountering change points in the lifecourse such as retirement (Gloria) and redundancy (Julia), who would otherwise be without paid employment.

### 5.4.1 The Multi-Scalar Impacts of Hosting EFL students

It is also important to recognise the wider impacts of hosting on the individual and family. It is contended that these impacts are determined by the approach that hosts take. First, hosting can impact upon family wellbeing. For example, Erin lives in a two-bed flat and when she is

hosting, the EFL students stay in her daughter, Rebecca's, room. As a result, when Rebecca is at her mum's house, she sleeps in her mum's bed with her:

> "Rebecca loves it. I know a lot of her friends just raise their eyebrows and are like 'ugh god students', but I try to make it fun for Rebecca. I go to bed at 10 o'clock and she comes to bed and we watch a bit of television, she'll fall asleep and she's like 'oh I just love coming into your bed with you'" (Erin, Host).

The presence of EFL students in the flat therefore encourages Erin and Rebecca to spend more quality time together. Nicole also suggests that her children benefit from the social side of the hosting experience:

> "They love it, absolutely love it. We had some students that don't interact with the children at all, and they spend their whole time in the bedroom, and they sort of grunt at them. But some of them, they go outside, they play football with them, they play dollies etc… " (Nicole, Host).

However, it is not just the children that benefit from new or intensified relationships as a result of hosting:

> "Pedro, he was with us for 4 weeks, and he was literally my husband's shadow; wherever my husband was Pedro was. We really taught him basically everything he knew...he was amazing. With him, he really became like a son you know, and when he went there were tears" (Gloria, Host).

Asis et al. (2004) argue that the ideals of what it means to 'be a family' have been unbounded and expanded by migration. Gloria shows that family is a flexible concept - not bound by blood relations, but constructed based on the roles performed by individuals. Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards' (2011:141) define parenthood as concerning: "the processes of identification of individual adults who are considered to have particular connections with individual children, with associated expectations for their care".

I argue that this definition should be expanded to account for the parental relationships that develop post-childhood. The relationship between the host and the student can therefore create a long-lasting bond. These relationships can also evolve into new forms when the hosting experience comes to an end:

"Last year I had a really lovely girl from Sweden- she came to me in March and she stayed 'til June, and then she moved in with her friend in rented accommodation in Southwick. But she came up every week for dinner, and now we email and stuff, it's really nice. We became friends" (Julia, Host).

The host-student relationships can also encourage reciprocal mobility once the student returns to their home country:

"There was one Swedish girl, I went to her wedding and I was guest of honour and I'm sort of godmother to her child. She's 14/15 now [the godchild] and I visit her a lot. It's really lovely. And now she wants me to take my two grandchildren – two little boys – to the summer house, which is lovely" (Shirley, Host).

This is an expression of an intensive personal relationship whereby reciprocal mobility reinforces the feeling of being a family (Weichbrodt 2014). Furthermore, the social and cultural capital gained from hosting EFL students can be reproduced over generations:

"We had a French boy actually fly back for my daughter's sweet sixteenth which is nice and she's invited out there all the time" (Lauren, Host).

In this way, hosting normalises everyday transnational practices for the student, the host and their families. As a result, although the focus of other studies on human capital gains from mobility practices usually focuses on the mobile subject (the EFL student), this thesis has shown that the EFL industry also enables capital gains for hosts through the exposure to mobile students.

## 5.5 Summary

"I can't imagine life without taking in students" (Gloria, Host).

On the one hand, this chapter has shown that through the racialisation, gendering and heterosexualisation of host families by EFL students and ELT centres, host families in Brighton and Hove represent a largely homogenous population of white, heterosexual females. However, through an in-depth exploration of individual motivations, approaches and experiences, the chapter has also identified important demographic and socio-economic differences between hosts, highlighting that it can also be a complex and diverse process, structured around change points in the lifecourse. Although the homestay is cleverly employed by ELT centres to create

images of safety, care and familiarisation, the majority of hosts were shown to have a high commercial orientation in their motivations for hosting EFL students, and to a lesser extent, the way that they approach hosting. Throughout the chapter, the tensions that result between selling, providing and consuming homestay accommodation as a form of care, and contrastingly as a monetised service, have been explored. This builds on the findings presented in Chapter 4 which showed how the commodification of the EFL student, and lack of regulation in the industry, has impacted on the extent to which some EFL students are safeguarded while in the UK.

It is also important to recognise how the homestay sector is inextricably bound up with the issue of gender (Lynch 1999), in the demographic make-up of the hosts, and in the way that host families' approaches to everyday household tasks reproduces gendered divisions of labour within the home. However, the chapter has also shown that running home-based hospitality enterprises can enable female hosts to challenge gendered stereotypes that caring activities within the home are voluntary and unremunerated (Di Domenico 2008). The thesis therefore contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between international student mobility and the geographies of home that will be further explored in Chapter 6 through an analysis of EFL students' experiences of their homestay accommodation in the case study location.

Finally, the chapter has analysed the multi-scalar impacts of homestay accommodation on the local host community, from the changed everyday performances of family, through to the creation of long-lasting transnational social networks that enable hosts and their families to accumulate cultural capital through their own international mobility. This is a unique and original finding on the impacts of student mobility on the local host community

# CHAPTER SIX

# ISM: The EFL Experience

## 6.1 Introduction

Holton and Riley (2013) argue that students have remained relatively absent from academic scholarship on student geographies. Therefore, while the previous two chapters have focussed primarily on the actors that shape and regulate the English as a foreign language (EFL) student experience, this chapter captures the diverse voices of EU and non-EU EFL students aged 18-54 who are studying for a period of 3 weeks to 6 months at three diverse English language teaching (ELT) centres across the city of Brighton and Hove: one mid-tier UK-based chain, one low-tier global chain, and one independent centre. The chapter examines the motivations and decision-making processes behind EFL students' participation in the industry; the reasons that EFL students chose to study in the UK and Brighton and Hove; and their shared and individual experiences taking part in the EFL Industry. The diversity inherent within the EFL student population (see Chapter 4) is valuable for deepening understandings of international student mobility (ISM) as it allows for a consideration of student motivations and experiences across a range of axes of social difference. Through this, the chapter argues that the conceptual boundaries of 'studenthood' should be extended to account for the heterogeneity that exists between mobile student groups (Holton 2017).

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section 6.2 explores the reasons for enrolling on EFL courses, the attraction of the UK and Brighton and Hove as EFL destinations, and finally, the decision-making process in relation to student accommodation. Section 6.3. explores the experiences of EFL students in the host city, specifically how they negotiate their dual identity as tourists and students, their experiences of creating and maintaining social networks, and their relationship with local residents. Finally, Section 6.4 provides a summary of the key findings of the chapter.

## 6.2 The Decision-Making Process: English, Experience, Escape

In recent years, scholars such as Beech (2014a) and Cairns (2017) have argued that the complexity of the international student decision-making process has generally only received limited recognition. Cairns contends that current understandings have focussed on two specific forms of ISM: mobility for fixed-term institutional exchanges (e.g. Erasmus programmes) and migration for entire degree programmes. This section therefore contributes to addressing the lacuna on the international student decision-making process in the context of the EFL student.

The findings reveal that ISM in the EFL industry is motivated on the one hand by the 'institutional narrative' (Bagnoli 2009), which presents learning English as necessary for success in the [global] labour market, and on the other hand, by highly personal factors tied to the concepts of escape and independence. The proceeding discussion also highlights how decisions are structured by 1) social networks and 2) structural forces such as national economic conditions, government funding and education agents. It is argued that the decision to participate in an overseas EFL programme is a complex and individualised process that extends beyond traditional push and pull factors of student mobility (Beech 2016).

ISM has been extensively researched through the lens of accumulating, and gaining access to, new forms of capital with the aim of increasing graduate employability (e.g. Waters 2005; 2006; 2012; Holloway et al. 2012). In these cases, it is possible to argue that students have strategic intent in terms of career and life planning. Career planning was also recognised as a motivation for engaging in ISM amongst EFL students. However, this was often tied to aspirations for specific or global roles that would require English language ability. As such, while ISM for Higher Education (HE) can be a way to obtain the cultural capital afforded by a Western education (Waters 2006), for EFL students it is about the opportunity to accumulate language capital in a native speaking environment. For example, English language ability was a necessity for Sarah's future career aspiration as a school teacher:

> "After this summer I may study for teaching. Primary teaching or kindergarten I don't know, but I need my English to make the certification" (Sarah, 18, Swiss EFL student).

In this example, Sarah has expressed her intention to use her newly accumulated English language capital to enable access to teacher training courses in her home nation, Switzerland. As EFL students such as Sarah access ISM at earlier stages of the life course than those engaging in HE courses, EFL can be viewed as offering the first opportunity to engage in ISM for career strategies. English was seen to enable access to a wider pool of opportunities:

> "I think English, I mean it's an essential; you have to speak English if you want a good job" (Camille, 19, French EFL student).

> "I work in a travel agency 2 years, and they let me know I need to make my English better. I want a good job" (Jialíng, 25, Taiwanese EFL student).

While it is contended that people who have been educated outside of their countries of origin are more likely to live and work abroad in the future than those who have been educated in their home countries (Li et al. 1996), EFL can be about preparing oneself to work in an internationally-facing company, rather than preparing for entry into the global labour market. For example, Gabriela draws upon her own experience to highlight that her decision to participate in ISM as an adult was to increase her personal resilience to changing economic and political conditions in her home country:

> "At my last job in Brazil I really need to use my English. Every day I was working at the Olympic Games in Brazil and every day in my work I had to use it, but now I'm unemployed. If at that time I knew more English, I would take more opportunities in my company. Now in Brazil it's not a good time to get a job, so I decided to come here to improve my English, and when I go back, I hope to find a good job" (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Both Gabriela and Jialíng's experiences of ISM came after they had entered the workplace. This shows that pursuing an overseas education can occur at different stages of the lifecourse, whether to improve at an existing job, or in other instances, to help individuals find a better job. Therefore, while motivations for ISM are often discussed in terms of potential benefits by those yet to enter the labour market, participating in EFL programmes can be a result of lessons learned through early exposure to the job market.

For other students, EFL was not tied to educational or career aspirations but to what Waters (2005) terms 'less obvious qualities' obtained through studying abroad, such as confidence, sociability, cosmopolitanism and possession of valuable social capital:

> "I finished university so it's [English] not so useful for my studies, but I will like to know English just because it's a satisfaction and I love English and it's an international language. If you know English you can speak with every people you meet in the street, even foreign people" (Elena, 25, Italian EFL student).

Waters, Brooks and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) reveal in their paper on 'youthful escapes' that notions of fun, enjoyment and the pursuit of happiness featured strongly in international HE student's stories. While HE is outcome oriented, most of the EFL students interviewed in this research would not receive any formal certification and therefore the pursuit of an experience, independence and escape was also a key finding in this research. For example, scholarship on youth transitions in the social sciences has associated markers of successful transitions

to adulthood in the achievement of specific skills and qualities. Youth mobility is often viewed as one of these social markers, characterised by leaving the parental home on what can be a journey of self-discovery (Bagnoli 2009). EFL was used by some young-adult students as a vehicle to achieve this aspiration. The association between mobility, youth and independence was highlighted by Hugo:

> "This is the best thing that you can do when you're young; to travel around, get new experiences and perspective. I think this is just a step forward to continue independent life maybe. I don't want to go back home that's for sure" (Hugo, 20, Swedish EFL student).

This concurs with Cairns' (2017: 413) contention that while financial imperatives are vital for highly qualified young people, scholars must also consider that students and graduates are not only building a career, but also constructing a life. The personal nature of this process was highlighted by Annika:

> "In my world I didn't need English, but now I have a boyfriend who is a translator, and he is a world traveller, and all his friends are world travellers, and they watch all the films in English and sometimes they use English words I don't understand, and I thought, 'okay now there's no way I can't learn English because I don't want to be behind him all the time'" (Annika, 32, German EFL student).

Annika has cited her motivations for partaking in EFL as a way to obtain a lifestyle. It was clear that the reasons for partaking in ISM for older EFL students was motivated by more personal factors, rather than a general overseas experience as a marker of independence. For example, Linnéa highlighted the need to take a sanctioned break from her work for her health:

> "For me it was something completely different. I need a break from my work. It's very stressful and I need to do something else. To get a leave from work I have to study something that my company thinks good for me" (Linnéa, 54, Swedish EFL student).

Nevertheless, Linnéa has shown that the experience the EFL industry offers can be just as important for self-development and leisure for adults as it is for youth and juniors. In this sense, it is pertinent to look to Bagnoli's (2009) study that made the link between travel and turning points in people's lives, suggesting that overseas experiences may help turn periods of anxiety into opportunities. One interviewee in particular, Kaito, made it clear that his motivation for participating in the EFL industry was an emotionally motivated decision; to escape both physically and metaphorically from the pain of his mother's recent passing:

> "Two years ago, my mum passed away and there's a lot of memories in Sweden […] I really don't want to go back home because when you go back home you expect your mum to come and surprise you. Even though she's passed away, in the end you still have the strong connection, you don't want to be waiting for it, keeping your hope. I tried to run away from that" (Kaito, 21, international[8] EFL student).

Kaito spoke impeccable English; his motivation was not to study or learn, but by a hope that he would meet other people of his age that he could form transnational social networks with and further delay his return to his home country. In this way, the EFL industry can be used as a way for people to recover control over their lives (Bagnoli 2009) in a setting that provides structure and purpose, without a commitment to study towards a formal qualification. Indeed, one ELT Director explained that a doctor prescribed the EFL industry as a way to 'overcome' a student's mental health issues. This vulnerability of some EFL students was also highlighted by the host families during the course of the research. I learnt that in one extreme instance a student's father had murdered her mother and was sent to the UK by her aunt. Others had full-time working parents that could not care for them in the summer holidays, or parents that were going through a divorce and wanted their children out of the way. For 'junior students', the decision for them to escape the tribulations of their home lives is therefore made by their parents/ guardians.

The influence of the parents on decision-making for students who had recently completed formal education, but had not yet lined up their 'next move' was also evident:

> "They didn't give me a lot of choice- you either go working, or you go and learn English" (Ruben, 18, Belgian EFL student).

> "It was my dad's decision, because I was 18, I had to start my university but I didn't know what to do" (Natalia, 19, Spanish EFL student).

Therefore, studying abroad can allow students to defer life decisions (Holton and Riley 2013), and escape from the pressures and expectations of national education systems (Waters et al. 2011) and family members (Bagnoli 2009). Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that participating in EFL programmes for leisure purposes because an individual "didn't have anything to do this half year" (Alice, 20, Swedish) is not an opportunity afforded to all. Aiden suggests that there is a distinction between the motivations of direct students (those who book via the ELT centre's website) and agency students (those who book via education agents)

[8] Self-defined. He has lived in 7 different countries throughout his life due to his father's career.

whereby the former has less disposable income and therefore has higher expectations of their learning outcomes:

> "Direct students are a bit more demanding in that they have got goals, and they are a bit more motivated, so I think our direct students will be a little bit older with more specific goals. But our agency students, yeah, are less demanding. Parents yes are probably paying, probably more wealthy backgrounds" (Aiden, ELT centre Director).

Holloway et al. (2012) argue that for many middle-class families, affording an international education is only possible with the help of the state. For the Swedish students interviewed in this research, all had their course fees financed through a government grant as part of the Folk High School programme – a Scandinavian educational charity. These students were acutely aware that they were fortunate to be in receipt of this funding, and openly expressed their appreciation during the course of the interviews:

> "I just keep thinking that it's amazing for us in Sweden to have this opportunity. It's so cool that we can do this" (Maja, 23, Swedish EFL student).

This opportunity was seen in stark comparison to the experiences of their friends of other nationalities:

> "I'm from Sweden but I live in Spain; all my friends they don't get help from the state so they have to pay all of theirs, they would have to pay so much money to do this and they can't do it. I'm really, really lucky, it's unfair" (Hugo, 20, Swedish EFL student).

The funding schemes of national governments therefore work to skew student flows and create geographical inequality in the access to the forms of human capital afforded by study abroad experiences. This is in line with Cairns' (2017: 413) findings that while a requirement for personal and professional growth creates and sustains the desire to be geographically mobile, the choice to become mobile is influenced by prevailing structural conditions. When these funded students were asked whether they would have chosen to participate in the EFL industry if they had to pay themselves, some expressed that it would have increased the risk of the decision and made it harder to 'take the leap'. Lucas reflected that without this funding, he would have chosen to stay in his home country and enter the workforce:

> "If I hadn't studied English through this way, I think I would have stayed in Sweden and tried to apply for a job or something" (Lucas, 19, Swedish EFL student).

On the other side of the coin, those who were self-funded drew comparisons to what they saw as wealthier nations who find paying for EFL study 'easy':

> "I think it depends from the place you come from, because for us, Italian citizens, I think it is expensive. In fact, I take only 6 weeks – the minimum to arrange the IELTS exam – if you come from other countries like Switzerland, it's very easy because they earn much more than us, so it depends where you're from" (Vincent, 23, Italian EFL student).

Personal economic capital is a determining factor on the length of students' stay in the UK. This impacts on the student experience in a number of ways (explored in Section 6.3). Another dimension of temporality impacted on by accessibility to funding is the age at which students enter the EFL market. For example, Gabriella was in receipt of a scholarship at university and was therefore socialising with groups who had the financial capital to participate in the EFL industry as teenagers. As a result, her experience of study abroad was delayed compared to her wealthier peers:

> "I have some friends that did it because at my university a lot of students did it, but I didn't have money because I was studying with a scholarship at my university. In Brazil it's quite expensive to study English for your whole life. Three years ago, I started to study English because I could pay because I was working" (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

This parallels the findings of Waters and Leung (2014) who argue that not all young people have the same opportunities to realise education-related youth migration, and that axes of social difference and inequalities, such as economic capital, can influence the temporalities of these experiences.

### 6.2.1 The Importance of Place in Choosing an EFL Destination

The previous section highlighted the complex and individualised decisions behind students' choice to participate in the EFL industry. However, it is necessary to understand not only *why* people aspire to move, but *where* they aspire to move to (Thompson 2016, emphasis added). Chapter 4 showed that the UK is well positioned to take advantage of the global market for ELT by offering prospective students the opportunity to learn from, and amongst, native English

speakers. For some EFL students, the quality of the English teachers in their home country was their main motivation for studying abroad:

> "I don't think that we have very good teachers and they don't really have an accent and make mistakes, so I think it's better here" (Helena, 18, Czech EFL student).

Accent was a key theme highlighted by a number of interviewees, who cited that those who learn English in their home countries by attending international schools, or through watching the television, assume an American-English accent. Refining a British accent is therefore a method used by EFL students to distinguish themselves against those who learnt to speak English in their home country. As a result, the British accent becomes a form of embodied cultural capital:

> "I want to speak the *real* English" (Giorgia, 25, Italian EFL Student).

> "At my last English course my teacher was teaching the British accent and for me it's prettier than American. It's difficult because in Brazil everything is from America so everything that I can watch, everything is American" (Gabriella, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Immersion in the language was a key selling point for EFL students in different ways. For example, Malta was Sarah's preferred choice of destination, but as this is popular amongst other Swiss EFL students, she didn't feel like she would benefit from the full immersion experience:

> "My first idea was in Malta but there's too much Switzerland people" (Sarah, 18, Swiss EFL student).

As a result, place is a key factor in the pursuit of language capital. Others framed their choice to study in the UK in relation to the UK's geographical proximity to other countries. Non-EU students saw their EFL experience as travel to Europe rather than just the UK and intended to visit other EU destinations once the formal aspect of their studies had come to a close. Ruben suggests that the USA is more desirable than the UK by declaring that he 'got the short straw', but in searching for the positives of the destination, he also identifies geographical proximity to other EU countries as a benefit:

> "My brother is in the USA. Actually, I have the short straw, who goes to the UK, who goes to the USA! The UK it is easier to be in multiple places, to move from one to another" (Ruben, 18, Belgian EFL student).

However, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, governments regulate the movement of EFL students. Yuki shows how destination choice is often not based on personal preference but on visa requirements, highlighting the role of the state in restricting student mobility flows and overruling aspiration:

> "Actually, I wanted to go to New York because my job is hair and makeup, so I wanted to study more about my job, but New York is very difficult for me to get a visa. Next, I want to work in London and I want to wrote down my name on a magazine. So next I want to get a visa to go to New York" (Yuki, 30, Japanese EFL student).

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents did not directly discuss visas as most were from the EU, and those who were not had been successful in obtaining a visa. Instead, government policies were discussed more in relation to how attractive a place was from a political perspective. Alice used the USA as an example to show why the UK was her preferred destination:

> "Sometimes the US with all the freedom stuff I'm a bit allergic to that sometimes, so I feel that Britain is more the view… the politics and everything is more what I have" (Alice, 20, Swedish EFL student).

Whilst Alice suggested her decision to come to the UK was based on familiarity of the country's political ideologies, Vincent suggested that the UK's current political state – Brexit – was a reason that he would not come to the UK in the future as there is a perception that it would make mobility more difficult:

> "The nice thing of Europe is that you can take a flight and go to another place without having a visa or something like that. So, I think I don't come. I like to be easy! I think it would be worse for Great Britain if they don't have some agreements that European communities, citizens, can come as before. I think Great Britain will lose a lot of tourists" (Vincent, 23, Italian EFL student).

It is important to note that I can only hypothesise about the effects of Brexit on the EFL industry at this stage, using limited data. However, it is equally important to recognise these initial perceptions as Beech (2014b) states that when students choose to study overseas, they are influenced by diverse perceptions of place that are constructed over long periods of time.

The role of the education agent in influencing these decisions was also explicit:

> "I researched it in Japan, and finally I visited the agency. The agent he recommended to me, it's a very good environment and pronunciation, because almost all Japanese cannot pronounce correctly, so I chose here" (Yuki, 30, Japanese EFL student).

As these agents have the same cultural and local understandings as the students, this can make it easier for them to gain the students' trust (Beech 2018), particularly for students such as Sarah who was introverted and nervous:

> "They helped me to choose this school because they had another school that was in the middle of the city but they said it would be busy and touristy, so for me this school is better" (Sarah, 18, Swiss EFL student).

Therefore, whilst the influence of politics and language have been explored thus far, city level geographies were just as an important factor for understanding destination choice. Chapter 4 used the concept of geographical imaginations as a framework for understanding how mobility is sold and (re)produced by the EFL industry. Nevertheless, the concept is also useful for exploring the importance of place and situated learning in the decision-making process. For example, Brighton and Hove was consistently compared as a preferable location to London, as somewhere that you can find similar qualities to the capital city, but on a smaller, calmer, more friendly, and ultimately safer, destination:

> "I don't like so much crowded city. I like London because it's wonderful, but it's overcrowded for me, and Brighton is not as big as London, I think it's the perfect size" (Elena, 25, Italian EFL student).

> "I choose Brighton because I heard people saying it was like London but by the sea, and not so busy, it's much more calm and down to earth" (Larissa, 19, German EFL student).

Destination choice can therefore be influenced by the emotions a place inspires. In this way, the symbolic importance of a place can stem from the emotional associations that they produce (Bondi et al. 2005). For Gabriella, choosing a destination by the sea was important for helping her to feel at home:

> "In my home town in Brazil I have beaches close to me, and it's important for me to stay close to the sea" (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Therefore, while Prazeres (2016:919) revealed that students view international exchanges as an opportunity to leave their comfort zone in order to discover and change their sense of self, choosing a destination that made Gabriella feel at home was a key influence on choosing to study in Brighton and Hove. As such, this provides evidence to suggest that language capital is more important than the need to accumulate place-specific cultural capital for EFL students. It is also important to note that Gabriela learned about Brighton and Hove from a friend. While this concurs with Beech's (2015) argument that some students tend to follow predetermined pathways to choosing a destination following in the footsteps of their social networks, Gabriela was the only EFL student to acknowledge this influence in this research.

For young-adults, the impact of Brighton and Hove's culture on destination choice was clearly evident:

> "In Brighton they're quite welcoming, quite warm. Especially the gays, lesbians etc, etc. They told me that Brighton is the gay capital of England, so I supposed that it would be warm and welcoming" (Ruben, 18, Belgian EFL student).

As a result, destination choices were also influenced by the association between place and a specific type of lifestyle (Prazeres et al. 2017). Holton (2015a) also revealed in his study of HE students that some students based their decision to attend the University of Portsmouth upon the learning and social experiences they assumed the University could offer them e.g. music and football. Similarly, Hugo's destination choice was influenced by his leisure interests:

> "I mainly came here because I knew that there's this big underground pop music culture, and this open mic culture that doesn't exist in Spain really, and that's why I wanted to come here because I love to do music and play live, so that's really what triggered my motivation to come here" (Hugo, 20, Swedish EFL student).

Overall, in deciding where to study, students were motivated to find somewhere that they can feel welcome or at home in, whether that be related to the landscape, population or social activities on offer.

### 6.2.2 Accommodation Decision-Making Practices

Chapter 2 drew upon existing studies on the geographies of students to explore a common pattern in the housing pathways of UK HE students from halls of residence, to private rented housing (Smith and Hubbard 2014; Holton 2016). The short-termism of EFL courses prevents

the majority of students from creating a comparable residential pathway. Instead EFL students exercise their decision-making power when choosing residential accommodation as a way to construct their desired EFL experience: either as a way to accumulate language capital, or as a youthful escape. In the context of Brighton and Hove, the following section highlights how these decisions are mediated by prior experience and pre-conceptions of student-living; and axes of social difference, namely age.

There are a number of individualised reasons why EFL students choose to stay with host families. In a practical sense, the homestay was not always the first choice, but was a decision based on the feasibility of accessing other alternatives. For example, Hugo stated that "I thought about renting an apartment with someone else, but its more expensive" (Hugo, 20, Swedish). Furthermore, due to the short-term nature of many EFL student stays, their ability to access the private-rented sector is inhibited.

This reasoning contrasts with the marketing by industry professionals that sells the homestay as a way for students to maximise their learning outcomes by immersing themselves in a native speaking environment. Nevertheless, the homestay as a learning environment was important for students who had strategic intent in accumulating language capital:

> "Student house I think it's so much fun but if you are with your host family and have no level, they can help you; they can be your teacher. But if you are alone, after the school you are not going to do anything" (Nicolás, 23, Spanish EFL student).

This supports the contention that students living with parents or in their own homes take a pragmatic approach to university, meaning they are likely to experience doing a degree rather than being a student (Holton, 2017). Nicolás suggests that in contrast, the student house is about having 'fun'.

> "It's better to improve your English in a homestay than a student house because you are hearing proper English. In a student house you are dealing with French accent, German accent, not the English, but it's nice" (Natalia, 19, Spanish EFL student).

As such, the homestay is a method to accumulate embodied cultural capital in the through the British accent.

For others, the choice is tied more closely to lifecourse, based on emotion rather than practicality. As some EFL students are school-aged, this is often their first prolonged period

away from the familial home. This was the circumstance for Sarah, who chose to stay in homestay accommodation due to her apprehension about her first time on an independent trip away from her family:

> "Because it's the first time that I'm alone here in the holidays. In a student house it's also alone, and I have to cook, I have to do homework… a host family is like a family" (Sarah, 18, Swiss EFL student).

Conventionally young people's lives have been treated as being outside of family life and orientated around achieving independence from parents (Holdsworth 2007). Moving away for education is therefore seen as a key marker of the transition from childhood to adulthood. The homestay then can be interpreted as a form of support, a bridge, through this transition process and therefore, young people's lives may be more usefully thought of as in a state of liminality rather than clearly demarcated as dependent or independent (Holdsworth 2007). Sarah also highlights the importance of the family home for feelings of comfort and care. In this way, the domestic home can be viewed as a key site of constancy, familiarity, safety and comfort (Skey 2011) in times of unfamiliarity and new experiences. This environment of care offered by the host family was also apparent as a motivation for Thomas who when asked why he choose to stay with a host family he commented: "I don't want to cook. Only reason" (Thomas, 19, Belgian). Whereas Sarah's decision was motivated by the emotional connotations of care, Thomas used the care provided by host families to consciously delay his transition to independence, highlighting that the notion of child/adult boundaries are permeable (Aitken 2001).

Contrastingly, EFL students studying at ELT centres who enforce compulsory homestay accommodation expressed how this disrupts the student identity making process, particularly for those on the cusp of adulthood. Consequently, the homestay can be viewed as stifling the independence that adults should be entitled to:

> "They have these ridiculous rules that you can't go out on the weekdays and so on. They tell the host family we have to be home by this time, come on we're not 16 or 12" (Kaito, 21, international EFL student).

This exposes a tension between supported independence and the idea of having an experience. As a result, whilst Holton (2015a) argues that students have a great deal of control in how they wish to experience student behaviours, this is not always possible for EFL students living with a host family. Natalia drew upon this reasoning to explain her reason for choosing to stay in a student house rather than a homestay:

> "Because I'm so special and I don't think I would be able to adapt to some family and their rules or whatever" (Natalia, 19, Spanish EFL student).

However, she later expressed regret at not 'doing' the EFL experience in the traditional way and benefitting from the immersion provided by the host family. As such, in the same way as HE student accommodation is divided into phases (student residence followed by private renting) homestay can be viewed as phase one, and student residence for EFL students as phase two:

> "I was in a host family when I was younger and I was in Nice, but I think when you're a bit older and you want to do what you want and you don't have to tell the host family every time you're not there for dinner and it's really nice to just be in a flat. You have other pupils you can talk and do stuff with them, but you also just have the opportunity to stay in your room and do what you want" (Celine, 21, Swiss EFL student).

Accommodation decisions therefore relate to stages in the lifecourse. Gabriela views the student house as catering for a stereotype of the adolescent student:

> "Because I like to stay close to someone that can speak the real native speech. And I'm too old to stay in a student house, I think everything is a mess, and I was not in the mood to every day go to parties" (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Where the respondent stayed influenced how they saw themselves, particularly with regard to positioning themselves between a student/tourist:

> "Sometimes I think that I am a tourist because I really like to do tourist things. If I was more with the students, I think that I would feel more of an international student" (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

Therefore, while Sage et al. (2013) state that students have 'similar socio-cultural preferences, 'including consumption-based lifestyles and proximity to nightlife', the diversity of age ranges within the EFL student population means that many EFL students do not embody the same consumer habits as HE students. Residing in homestay accommodation is one of these outcomes, and therefore Gabriella's experience is in line with Holton and Riley's (2016) argument that residential accommodation offers students the opportunity to learn to construct, adapt and manage their student identities. Indeed, for Camille, the association between student housing and social network formation was a precondition of her acceptance to enrol on an EFL course:

> "I said to my mother 'if I'm coming to England, I'm coming in a student house not in a homestay. It's easier to make friends in a student house, you're more independent" (Camille, 19, French EFL student).

Holton (2017) argues that for those in student accommodation the 'student experience' is largely taken for granted as they are exposed to student-centric socialising from the outset.

In summary, EFL student accommodation choices can be viewed as a cyclical trajectory: homestay as comfort and a learning experience, student residence as independence, homestay as comfort and a learning experience.

## 6.3 Studenthood: The EFL Experience

This section explores the EFL student experience framed within the context of friendship networks, social activities, and the historically constituted relationship between 'town and gown' in Brighton and Hove. Unlike the HE student, the EFL student experience is typified by its temporary nature, with the students interviewed in this research being enrolled at ELT centres for as little as 2 weeks up to a maximum of 6 months. Waite (2015) states that the characteristics, motives, processes and impacts of migration only a few weeks in length will differ significantly when compared to those of longer durations.

The relationship between EFL student identity and length of stay is highlighted by a number of students. For example, Sarah (18, Swiss) commented that "I'm not a tourist because I live here for 4 weeks. In contrast, other students such a Linnéa (54, Swedish EFL student) and Maja (23, Swedish EFL student) who are enrolled on their course for 5 months view students in Sarah's position as being tourists:

**Linnéa:** That's like a vacation
**Maja:** They're not students
**Linnéa:** I think you have to stay here for 2 months to really feel like you are a student. I think 1 month is too short

This shows that changes in identity linked to temporality are relative depending on the length of the individual stay. For each, there was a 'turning point' as to when they began to feel less like tourists and more like students. For Nicolás, the turning point was when he felt familiar with his surroundings:

> "I was amazed I was like 'woah what's that', but after a few months you feel like an international student" (Nicolás, 23, Spanish EFL student).

The high turnover of the EFL student population adds to the difficulties faced in creating social networks, as the expenditure has to be consistently repeated:

> "Every week sometimes, so now I have to make new friends" (Vincent, 23, Italian EFL student).

> "We've met some people, but not super close bonds… yet. I guess when maybe if we stay over the summer" (Hugo, 20, Swedish EFL student).

As a result, whereas Holton (2015a) revealed that for HE students, year one provided a platform for them to learn to become students and subsequent years allowed them to relax into being students, EFL students do not have this luxury of time. Therefore, the experimentation phase with independent living, social activities and the student lifestyle was reflected on, and changed, after the initial few weeks of their stay:

> "Another advice that I could give to someone that is coming is like don't spend too much money going out. One night you can go crazy and spend like £200 in one night, so be careful with that! I used to go a lot, I saw my account and said no, no more" (Nicolás, 23, Spanish EFL student).

Many students gather into 'cultural cliques' (Beech 2016), which can make it difficult for individual students to penetrate these social circles. I observed this during my time in one ELT centre where there were school groups of junior students who stuck together at lunchtimes and spoke their native language. This finding concurs with Prazeres' (2016:920) argument that "students' motivations are laced with contradictory intentions", so instead of seeking encounters with students of different nationalities as an opportunity to practice and hone their English skills, when available, EFL students retreat to the comfort of familiar social circles. On reflection, when Natalia was asked what advice she would give to students about to start their EFL experience, she stated:

> "Try to not be with the same people from your country y'know, because at first, I was so uncomfortable, I didn't know how to speak English, the first thing I would do is going with the Spanish people. I don't think that helped me. I would say to them don't do it, because the improvement is so different" (Natalia, 19, Spanish EFL student).

Research has shown that international students can have difficulty engaging in multicultural friendships and making friends with host-nationals. Rather international students will 'seek' each other out and form friendships with other students from their home country, or at least with other international students (Beech 2016).

The effects of cultural cliques are different depending on the space that the EFL students are in, for example the preceding explanation focussed on the school setting, whereas living in student accommodation encourages social network formation with peers from across the world (Beech 2016). It is nevertheless important to recognise that for introverted students, and for those such as Jialíng whose culture prevents regular social contact with the opposite sex, it can be difficult to form relationships with their housemates. In these instances, the cultural contact can be superficial (Allen 2010).

Holton and Riley (2013) have called for a deeper understanding of how the international migration of students ties into the discussions of more local student geographies, in reference to how international students utilise and experience studentified spaces. When participants were asked how they spend their free time, social experiences were often associated with the consumption of alcohol:

> "Getting drunk to go to Tempest inn! Usually enjoying the social programme; last Saturday we went to Lewes, and then this evening we are going to a swing pub in the lanes. Next Saturday we are going to Seven Sisters" (Elena, 25, Italian EFL student).

> "I went to the beach, and I went out also in nightclubs, and I spent time with the other students in the student house" (Camille, 19, French EFL student).

> "Lots of clubs, lots of pubs, made a lot of friends" (Ruben, 18, Belgian EFL student).

> "Go to the beach, go to parties. Go sightseeing sometimes" (Vincent, 23, Italian EFL student).

However, not all students participate in these consumer orientated activities and the references to sightseeing on the weekends however highlights a different cultural practice to that you would find among British ('local') students, showing how the tourist and student identities can co-exist.

The student identity has been a key theme in prior research on studentification in Brighton and Hove which exposed how characteristics of studenthood are contributing factors in creating divisions between the HE student population and local host community. This was a key theme in Sage et al.'s (2012) paper that showed how students can 'test the limits of community tolerance', and 'give rise to a less harmonious set of social relations'. As a result, the researchers observed the local population pro-actively setting in motion formalised resistance to studentification in a show of organised community resistance to the negative urban changes associated with studentified communities. However, one interviewee Claire argued that in recent years these relations have improved, and that the local media outlets are overemphasising the impacts of students:

> "You know how *The Argus,* the local, paper might report, the reality is it's not actually all about students, it could be any HMO, it's just if it is a HMO, it *must* be students" (Claire, EFL Accommodation Coordinator).

Consistently, violence against EFL students, was a key theme drawn upon by *The Argus* (see Table 6). Studentification literature has well documented the problems that can occur when "living alongside people not like us" (Sage et al. 2012a), and encounters between individuals of different nationalities in 'contact zones', can also lead to experiences of racially motivated verbal or physical abuse (Collins 2010). However, this discourse was challenged by the EFL students interviewed in this research, who instead recounted exclusively positive encounters with the local population:

> "After the Brexit you feel like an immigrant [laughs] no not really! It's not like in the north like in Liverpool and Manchester there were some cases about bullying foreign, Spanish people, but here in Brighton you can speak to a friend in your own language and they don't care. Actually, they come 'oh you're Spanish, teach me something!" (Nicolás, 23, Spanish EFL student).

Nicolás' perceptions of 'the north' highlight the importance of recognising how the particular moments in history in which individuals experience EFL study play a role in constructing comparative geographical imaginations of other destinations and host populations. This would be an interesting finding to explore in the context of other UK EFL destinations, both from the perspective of the EFL student, and the local media.

**Table 6.** The themes of articles concerning ‘language students’ and ‘language schools’ as reported in *The Argus*

| Year | Theme | Count |
|---|---|---|
| 2007 | Violence against EFL students | 1 |
| | Impacts of studentification | 2 |
| | EFL centre expansion | 1 |
| 2008 | Violence against EFL students | 7 |
| 2009 | Violence against EFL students | 10 |
| | Community events for EFL students | 1 |
| | Introduction of council tax for EFL students | 1 |
| | Safeguarding | 1 |
| | Visibility of EFL student groups | 1 |
| | Impact of visa policy | 3 |
| 2010 | Impact of visa policy | 4 |
| | Violence against EFL students | 5 |
| | Economic contributions of the industry | 1 |
| 2011 | Impact of visa policy | 2 |
| | Response to natural disaster in EFL students’ home country | 1 |
| | Violence against EFL students | 1 |
| 2012 | Violence against EFL students | 1 |
| 2013 | Impacts of studentification | 2 |
| 2014 | Safeguarding | 1 |
| | Studentification | 1 |
| 2015 | Charity ELT experiences | 1 |
| | Studentification | 1 |
| | Immigration policy | 1 |
| | ELT centre expansion | 1 |
| | Impact of ELT centre closures | 2 |
| | Violence against EFL students | 1 |
| 2016 | Safeguarding | 1 |
| | Brexit | 6 |
| | Award for ELT centre | 1 |
| | Studentification | 1 |
| | ELT centre charitable actions | 1 |
| | Response to Berlin terrorist attack | 1 |
| 2017 | Brexit | 4 |
| | ELT centre opening | 1 |
| | Crime in ELT centre | 1 |
| | Global industry promotion | 1 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Host families on stage | 1 |
| | Community events for EFL students | 1 |
| | ELT centre charitable actions | 2 |

(Source: Nexis 2018)

As discussed in Chapter 5, social well-being is particularly important in overcoming feelings of isolation and loneliness, and thus positive cross-cultural relationships with the host community are essential in helping international students navigate their settling-in experiences.

> "I love that from when I came, the first weeks or month it was weird for me because strange people came to me and started to have a chat. We went out to the pavilion park and a group of three guys went can they join us, I said okay, but they were really funny and welcoming. At first you have a bad impression but you can talk to anyone. You're smoking a cigarette in the garden of a pub and you have a chat and it's really normal! I love that!" (Nicolás, 23, Spanish EFL student).

In this sense, mobility challenges prior imaginations of the host culture and in some instances helps to create new, positively framed experiences:

> "It was more than I imagined before. Everyone is really polite and really kind. Because we have an idea that British people are quite reserved you know, sometimes old, but I don't think so now" (Gabriela, 28, Brazilian EFL student).

> "I go to choir every Wednesday actually, and they were really helping and everything when I came there first time, they were like: 'oh welcome here!', 'where are you from?' it's really god actually, a really good experience" (Elias, 20, Swedish EFL student).

Whilst Bagnoli (2009) and Beech (2016) found that short-term international education programmes can limit a student's capacity to establish significant relationships or interactions with the local community or to develop their intercultural skills respectively, the findings of this research indicate that some EFL students can take a proactive approach to form these relationships:

> "Last week I met a man, he's a musician. I introduced on my own and he was interested in my job because he sometimes performs live and he always puts on makeup himself, so I explained about it, we had a coffee and cup of tea" (Yuki, 30, Japanese EFL student).

Interestingly, these experiences were less likely to be recounted by EFL students living in shared housing, and therefore it is possible to suggest that as a result of the intensified non-student relationships experienced in homestay accommodation, students living with a host family are more likely to establish positive and productive relationships with the local community. This contention was supported by the interviews with some hosts who noted how they had 'grown up' with EFL students. Therefore, whereas the local community in Brighton and Hove feel that HE student-initiated processes of change 'have been done to them, not with them' (Sage 2012a; 2012b), their direct participation in the EFL industry through the homestay sector results in a more positive relationship being presented than the town-gown experience of HE students in Brighton and Hove.

## 6.4 Summary

This chapter has explored the complex decision-making processes behind EFL students' motivations for taking part in EFL courses in the UK, the type of student accommodation in which to live, and the destination in which to study. In doing so, two key themes were highlighted: the motivation to accumulate language capital, and the motivation to escape. Ideas of escape were mediated by stage in the lifecourse with young adults seeing ISM as a way to achieve independence and have an experience, whereas older EFL students identified more strategic and personal intentions. Social difference in the form of economic capital was also highlighted to play a key role in the decision-making process supporting Waters, Brooks and Pimlott-Wilson's (2013) argument that for the most privileged social groups, fun, adventure and escape go hand in hand with the (un)strategic accumulation of capital through education.

Second, the chapter focussed on the EFL student's in-situ experiences of engaging in EFL study in Brighton and Hove, showing that there is no singular international student experience. In doing so, the section contributes to understandings of ISM as a spectrum of different mobility types (King 2012), and argues for the importance of recognising the diverse nuances of what it means to be an international student in future academic research on ISM.

# CHAPTER SEVEN
# Discussion and Conclusion

## 7.1 Introduction

In recognition that current conceptualisations of the mobile student largely homogenise the population as consumers of higher education (HE), the thesis has sought to examine processes and outcomes of international student mobility within the context of the English as a foreign language (EFL) industry. By drawing upon the the case study of Brighton and Hove, it has been possible to identify unique aspects of homestay and EFL study on a local-geographic scale, and to make inferences on the wider industry in the UK, paving the way for future comparative studies. By diversifying current understandings of the mobile student, the thesis has contributed original empirical perspectives on a number of contemporary debates within academic scholarship, including the education mobility industry, student geographies and the geographies of home. The thesis has also addressed policy-relevant issues, including the regulation and facilitation of international student mobility, safeguarding children, and the impact of short-term population influxes on host communities.

In bringing this thesis to a conclusion, this chapter discusses the key original contributions to knowledge of the thesis to broader academic debates, and situates these within the context of the four research objectives:

1. to identify the scale and distribution of the EFL industry in the UK;
2. to investigate how ISM is produced, facilitated and regulated within the UK's EFL industry;
3. to explore the dynamics of homestay student accommodation through an analysis of the profiles, motivations, and experiences of host families in Brighton and Hove;
4. to examine EFL students' destination and residential decision-making processes, and their experiences of studenthood in Brighton and Hove.

The following sections also make recommendations for policy-makers, consider how the research could have been approached differently, and suggests further avenues for research on the EFL industry.

## 7.2 The EFL Mobility Industry

Cranston et al. (2018: 552) state that “to understand migration, we cannot simply locate our research with migrants, but have a need to think more widely about the actors that intersect with their journeys”. Chapter 4 therefore introduced the EFL mobility industry as a compilation of actors that produce, facilitate and regulate the movements of EFL students. In a UK context, five main actors were identified: education agents, English UK, English Language Teaching (ELT) centres, the sending government and the receiving government.

By interviewing ELT centre Directors on their junior programmes, this thesis has addressed the lacuna recognised by Holloway et al. (2011) that within scholarship on the geographies of children and youth, young people receive more attention than the processes, discourses and institutions that they interact with. This thesis therefore contributes towards a holistic understanding of EFL mobility, from the perspective of the industry actors, and the students. Chapter 4 also illustrated that the majority of EFL courses are booked through a commissionable source For EFL students. This trend was shown to be a result of factors including reassurance, safety, trust, and the same cultural understandings. The education agents were shown to provide a myriad of services, including advising EFL students on course selection, the application process and visas. On the other hand, they also market and sell courses on behalf of the ELT centres which therefore creates a complex relationship between EFL students, ELT centres and education agents. As a result, ELT centres have to increasingly diversify their product to maintain competitiveness. This disproportionately affects small and independent centres who rely on education agents in the absence of their own marketing and sales capacity.

ELT centres also expressed frustration with the inaccuracy and contradictions in government discourse that they felt was harming the UK’s EFL industry. Two particular areas of concern were the changing visa requirements and the Short-term study visa preventing students from gaining any work experience or paid employment to contribute to their study fees. This manifests in disproportionately affecting poorer students. Contrastingly, the mobility programmes introduced in sending nation’s education policy highlighted the dichotomous role that the sending and receiving governments play in shaping student flows. For example, sending nations harnessed the EFL industry as a way to widen access to mobility for the working class in Italy, and in Saudi Arabia, to invest in the English language skills of their air force.

To understand why students’ chose a destination, the concept of geographical imaginations was employed as a framework for understanding how EFL industry stakeholders shape these decisions. It was identified that they draw on particular cultural and geographical attributes as

well as comparing destinations against each other, which therefore highlights how the EFL mobility industry is shaping learner's experiences (Robinson-Pant and Magyar 2018), particularly when confronted with the 'other' (Bagnoli 2009).

## 7.3 Extending the Empirical Foci of [International] Student Geographies

Chapter 4 highlighted some key findings on the characteristics of the students and EFL Industry in Brighton and Hove. Importantly, there is the presence of a variety of providers including small family-run centres, big independents, international chains, colleges, independent schools and universities, which offered disparate programmes such as General English, English for academic purposes, English+ and specialised business courses. This contributed to a diversity in the type of EFL student studying in Brighton and Hove. Broadly, the students can be categorised into two conceptual triads: tourism, mobility, migration; and juniors (under 18s), youth and young professionals. EFL students therefore do not sit neatly within current conceptualisations of other short-term mobility programmes such as the gap year, the school exchange or credit mobility within university degrees. Furthermore, although the thesis largely focuses on youth mobility, it is important to consider the diversity of the EFL student population. For example, the junior students are largely seasonal with a large influx of 15 to 17-year olds in July, whereas November to February is characterised by students aged 25 or over.

Undoubtedly, the EFL industry capitalises on the scarcity value acquired by learning English in a native-speaking environment, and, therefore, it is important to consider language capital as a key motivating factor in students' decision to participate in the EFL industry. However, ideas of escape were all present within the stories of EFL students in Brighton and Hove. The intention of the escape mediated by stage in the lifecourse, with young adults seeing ISM as a way to achieve independence and have an experience, whereas older EFL students identified more strategic and personal intentions. This thesis therefore argues that they were looking for different student experiences. To fulfil these experiences, EFL students either resisted or looked for parental-like care.

## 7.4 The Geographies of Homestay Accommodation

The relationship between care and ISM was explored in more detail in Chapter 5, through an investigation of the homestay sector. Introducing the homestay into geographical scholarship is important for a number of reasons. First, the relationship between 'town and gown' has largely focussed on disharmony, displacement and separate lives whereas the premise of homestay

accommodation is living together. Second, although geographers have engaged with the patterns and processes of transnational networks of care from the perspective of domestic foreign workers in the host's home, care provided by British families to internationally mobile children and young adult students was under-explored. Finally, homestay accommodation disrupts traditional notions of youth mobility as a transition to adulthood and an opportunity for forming an independent student identity.

Within the context of homestay accommodation, a key policy recommendation in this thesis is for central government and individual local authorities to take greater ownership of the ELT centres operating in their jurisdiction to ensure robust safeguarding of EFL students, particularly juniors. During the recruitment process, all members of a host family over the age of 18 must be DBS checked and provide references. To implement this practice, 'hidden' ELT centres in each Local Authority District must be identified. This will include those not accredited by Accreditation UK scheme and those that enrol EFL students from non-visa EU countries.

Through an exploration of the profile of Brighton and Hove's host families, a homogenous population of white, heterosexual females was identified. This was a result of the nuclear family and female carer model sold by ELT centres to EFL students as desirable and acceptable family, caring environments. In contrast, single-male hosts were viewed as being unsafe and perceived cultural sensitivities with ethnic minorities and LGBTQ households meant that they were overlooked. ELT centres are therefore reproducing notions of archetypal British families and gendered notions of care. Nevertheless, the decision to host is a highly personalised and contextual decision, linked to replacing a loss of social connections and economic capital. As such, hosting is attributable to change points in the lifecourse such as divorce, retirement, and children moving out of the family home. This finding is timely given a national increase in single-person households and the identification of loneliness as a public health issue.

Hosts' desire to preserve the integrities of their home and family lives means that they predominantly approach hosting as 'business as usual' with small tweaks to everyday behaviour and household practices. Importantly, the homestay was shown to reproduce gendered divisions of labour, where the 'mother' takes responsibility for the emotional labour and cleaning, and the 'father' tending to engage with domestic tasks that occur outside the internal space of the home such as driving.

ELT centres also play a key role in determining the level of 'service' and care provided by host families to EFL students based on the extent to which they: 1) commercialise the homestay accommodation, and; 2) set expectations of the homestay as an extension of the learning

environment. Adversely, this can shape student experiences of disappointment. Furthermore, the specific supply and demand context in which the homestay sector operates in Brighton and Hove can inhibit long-term relationship building between students and hosts.

A further key finding was that what it means to 'be a family' has been unbounded and expanded by mobility processes. In the example of the EFL industry, it was shown that family was not bound by blood relations, but constructed based on the roles (mother, father, child) performed by individuals. In some instances, these relationships led to life-long transnational social networks that produced international mobility within the host community and over consecutive generations.

Overall, the findings showed how the EFL industry and the micro-world of families and the home are inextricably bound together. Within the context of Brighton and Hove, tensions were revealed between selling and consuming homestay accommodation as a form of care and a learning experience, and as a monetised service.

## 7.5 Future Directions

Overall, this thesis has addressed its aim of examining the processes and outcomes of international student mobility within the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove. However, the research has not been without limitations, and a number of interesting themes have emerged that require further investigation. First, it was not possible to include the voice of junior EFL students in this research due to the requirements of Loughborough University's Ethics Approval Sub-Committee requiring under 18-year olds to have a signed parental consent form (see Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion). The ability to capture the perspective of junior EFL students would have contributed further insight into the diversity of the mobile student. Similarly, a future study would also benefit from investigating the impact of homestay accommodation on hosts' children, as a way of providing evidence on how hosting has contributed to shaping their childhood and future mobility prospects. This is particularly pertinent as Holt (2011) commented that research on geographies of children, youth and families has neglected the socio-spatial context of the family. Nevertheless, research on the homestay within geographical scholarship is in its infancy, and therefore this is an important spatial context for future research.

Moreover, as one of the most expensive local authorities in England (HM Land Registry 2019), Brighton and Hove is, arguably, in the midst of a complex housing crisis as almost 72 per cent of households in the city cannot afford market housing without spending a disproportionate level

of their income or receiving some form of subsidy (Brighton and Hove City Council 2012). Therefore, by conducting research on the homestay sector in a contrasting location, the economic motivations of host families might be less marked than they are in Brighton and Hove. A less commercially oriented homestay case study would also have interesting implications for investigating the approach of hosts and the experience of EFL students. The locational map of the scale and distribution of ELT centres in the UK will provide a useful tool for identifying an appropriate case study location.

It was also suggested in the course of interviews with ELT centre Directors and EFL industry stakeholders that the 'type' of EFL student varies by destination due to the geographical imaginations of places such as Oxford as academic, and Canterbury as historic. A comparative study would therefore allow for an investigation into whether the motivations and demographic characteristics of the EFL student population differs by destination, as would attending to different spatial scales such as a small town or larger city.

It would be equally insightful to conduct longitudinal research on the EFL student population. This would allow a comparison to be made between how experiences and expressions of studenthood change throughout the course of study from the initial settling in period to the end of the course akin to that conducted with HE students (e.g. Holton 2015a). A follow up virtual interview post-EFL study could be also a useful way to explore the students' next steps, and to understand whether the EFL experience inspires further international mobility, and if so, how it shapes the decision-making process.

Lastly, the UK's exit from the European Union marks an opportunity for research to be conducted on the motivations and experiences of European EFL students, and the impact of changing mobility patterns on different types of ELT centres.

## 7.6 Concluding Remarks

This research has produced the first empirical study of the EFL industry, EFL students and homestay accommodation in Brighton and Hove, responding to the calls from Waite and Smith (2017) and Holton and Reilly (2013) for further research to be carried out on unique forms of temporary international migration and to understand the diversity of experiences between student groups, respectively.

As a distinct form of mobility to Brighton and Hove, there is no singular 'EFL experience' as the varied temporalities and demographic characteristics of the EFL student mean that EFL as a

form of mobility is employed in different ways throughout the lifecourse. However, the findings in this thesis have disrupted current understandings of what it means to be an international student, most starkly in the way that living with a host family was the most popular form of student accommodation. This adds a new perspective to prior research that conceptualises student accommodation as a way to seek independence and form a distinct student identity. (Smith and Hubbard 2014; Holton 2016). Nevertheless, for those aged 18-25, the inability to engage in traditional student-identity making processes such as moving away from the parental home and participating in social and leisure activities was a key cause of dispute with the host family.

By investigating homestay accommodation in Brighton and Hove, this thesis has shown how ISM and transnational networks of care are inextricably bound together. The theme of care runs as a narrative throughout the thesis, in the way that it is sold by the EFL industry, in the way that it is sought by students and in the way that it is provided by both host families and through the role of safeguarding policies in the UK and Brighton and Hove. Therefore, the relationship between the mobile student and host community also needs to be looked at in respect to the tensions that result from the commercialisation of care. This highlights a unique relationship between the mobile student and the local host community to that previously identified in research on studentification in Brighton and Hove (Smith and Holt 2007; Sage et al. 2012a; 2012b; 2013).

The thesis has made a number of further empirical contributions. First, by investigating the structures that manage and facilitate the industry and the mobility of EFL students, Chapter 4 responded to Beech's (2018) fascinating call for more research to be conducted on the education migration industry in a variety of different contexts. It was revealed that education agents and ELT centres play a key role in creating geographical imaginations of EFL destinations and thus influencing flows of EFL students to the UK. Moreover, while the UK's ELT industry is employing strategic campaigns to attract students in the face of increased competition, the post-study work rights and political context work to undermine this factor.

Furthermore, host families in Brighton and Hove represent a largely homogenous population of white, heterosexual females due the racialisation, gendering and heterosexualisation of host families by EFL students and ELT centres. The homestay is therefore bound to the issue of gender (Lynch 1999), in the demographic make-up of the hosts, and also in the way that host families' approaches to everyday household tasks reproduces gendered divisions of labour within the home. However, the presence of the EFL industry in Brighton and Hove enables female hosts to challenge the stereotype that caring activities within the home are

voluntary and unremunerated (Di Domenico 2008). The homestay sector also disrupts the notion that population influxes precede the displacement of local residents, and therefore EFL student mobility does not contribute to this particular expression of studentification in Brighton and Hove. Conversely, EFL students contribute to social, cultural and economic capital accumulation within the local community by offering social contact, economic gain and the establishment of transnational social networks.

Finally, the findings of this thesis are timely given the unfolding socio-economic and political conditions in the UK as 'Brexit' has exposed divisions within communities over the pace and scope of demographic change (Harris and Charlton 2016). During this period of lively and provocative debate surrounding the UK's membership in the European Union, it has been rewarding to conduct empirical research with EFL students and host families. First, to understand why the UK remains one of the most popular study destinations for EFL students, and second, to identify why households across the four nations are opening-up their homes to welcome international students into their families.

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## Appendix 1: Example Questionnaire

Loughborough University

**Language Schools and Student Accommodation in Brighton and Hove**

I am a PhD student in the Geography Department at Loughborough University. My thesis is exploring language school students and housing within Brighton and Hove. It is important that the accommodation needs and experiences of language school students are fully understood for local housing strategies in Brighton and Hove.

All answers to this questionnaire will be treated in an **anonymous** and **confidential** way.

If you would like more information or have any questions about the research, please email Charlotte at: ✉ **c.g.bolton@lboro.ac.uk**, or call on ☎ **01509 222797**

1. **Name of your language school:** .....

### Section A: Your Language School

2. **Why is your language school located in Brighton and Hove?**

.....

.....

3. **Do you have offices in other locations in the UK or overseas?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes (go to Q3a.) ☐ No (go to Q4.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q4.)

3a. **Please state the location(s) of these offices:**

.....

.....

4. **What programme(s)/course(s) does your language school provide?**

.....

.....

5. **Does your language school stay open all year?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes (go to Q6.) ☐ No (go to Q5a.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q6.)

5a. **Please state the months that your language school is open.** *Please tick all that apply.*

| Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

## Section B: Your Students

6. **How many students were registered at your language school each month over the last year?** *Please provide a number for each month.*

| Jan. | Feb. | Mar. | Apr. | May | Jun. | Jul. | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

7. **What was the most common age group registered at your language school each month over the last year?** *Please tick only one box in each row.*

| | 14 and under | 15-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 25 and over |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| January | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| February | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| March | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| April | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| May | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| June | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| July | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| August | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| September | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| October | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| November | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| December | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

8. **On average, what is the gender composition of your students?** *Please indicate a percentage for each category.*

| Male (%) | Female (%) | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|
| | | ☐ |

9. **What were the 5 most common nationalities registered at your language school over the last year?** *Please rank on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the most common.*

| Nationality | Estimated % of total student population |
|---|---|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |

10. **Which of the following statements best describes the companionship of your students when studying in Brighton and Hove?** *Please tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Alone
- ☐ With parents and/or siblings
- ☐ With a partner and/or children
- ☐ With friends
- ☐ With an organised group of unrelated individuals
- ☐ Other (please specify) .....

11. **What are the most important priorities for your students to learn English?** *Please tick only one box in each row.*

| | Essential | High priority | Medium priority | Low priority | Not a priority |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To be able to work in the UK | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| To be able to work globally in English-speaking countries and/or companies | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| To develop communication skills for everyday use (ie. in shops and doctors surgeries) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| To study at an English-speaking school or college | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| To study at an English-speaking university | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Other (please specify) ..... ..... ..... | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Other (please specify) ..... ..... ..... | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

12. **On average, how long do your students stay in Brighton and Hove?** *Please tick one box only.*

- ☐ One week
- ☐ A fortnight
- ☐ One month
- ☐ Several months
- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ More than 1 year
- ☐ Other .....

**13. In your opinion, what are the main factors that influenced your students' decision to study in Brighton and Hove?** *Please tick only one box in each row.*

| | Extremely influential | Very influential | Somewhat influential | Slightly influential | Not at all influential |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accessibility from home country | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Costal location | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Brighton's reputation as a vibrant and cosmopolitan city | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Brighton's reputation for language school teaching | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Quality of learning | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Accommodation options | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Activity opportunities | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Other (please specify) ..... ..... | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Other (please specify) ..... ..... | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

## Section C: Accommodation

**14. What percentage of your students require accommodation in Brighton and Hove?**

.....

**15. What are the most popular locations for your students to live in Brighton and Hove?**

.....

.....

**16. Do any of your students live outside of Brighton and Hove?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes (go to Q16a.) ☐ No (go to Q17.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q17.)

**16a. Why do your students live outside of Brighton and Hove?** *Please tick all that apply.*

☐ Out of choice
☐ Lack of available accommodation in Brighton and Hove
☐ Other (please specify) .....

**17. On average, what proportion of your students stay in the following accommodation options?** *Please indicate a percentage for each category.*

| Private Rented (%) | Host Families (%) | Hotel or B&B (%) | Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (%) | University Halls (%) | Friends or Family (%) | Other (please specify) ..... |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

**18. Do your students use university accommodation in the summer?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

**19. Does your language school have an aspiration for use of/increased use of purpose-built student accommodation?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

**20. Do your students use letting agencies to find their accommodation?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes (go to Q20a.) ☐ No (go to Q21.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q21.)

**20a. Please state the name(s) of the letting agencies:**

.....

.....

**21. What are the minimum and maximum average *weekly* prices that your students pay *per person* in Brighton and Hove?**

| Minimum | Maximum | Don't Know |
|---|---|---|
| £ | £ | ☐ |

**21a. Please state which month is the most expensive and which is the least expensive.** *If the price does not change leave this question blank.*

Most expensive: .....

Least expensive: .....

## Section D: Demand

**22. Is your school looking to expand or contract its business?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Expand (go to Q22a.) ☐ Contract (go to Q23.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q23.)

**22a. Please indicate how many more students you will be able to enrol after expansion:**

.....

**23. Do you believe that there is enough accommodation in the city at current levels to cope with an increase in language school students?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

**24. Do you have any concerns about future immigration controls affecting your intake of international students?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes (go to Q24a.) ☐ No (go to Q25.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q25.)

**24a. Please explain your concerns:**

.....

.....

**25. Has your language school experienced any effects from the global recession?** *Please tick one box only.*

☐ Yes (go to Q25a.) ☐ No (go to Q26.) ☐ Don't know (go to Q26.)

**25a. Please explain your answer:**

.....

.....

**26. Finally, please give a brief description of the positive *and* negative impacts that you think language students have on Brighton and Hove:**

| | Positive Impacts | Negative Impacts |
|---|---|---|
| Social impacts | | |
| Cultural impacts | | |
| Economic impacts | | |
| Physical impacts | | |

## Thank you for completing this questionnaire

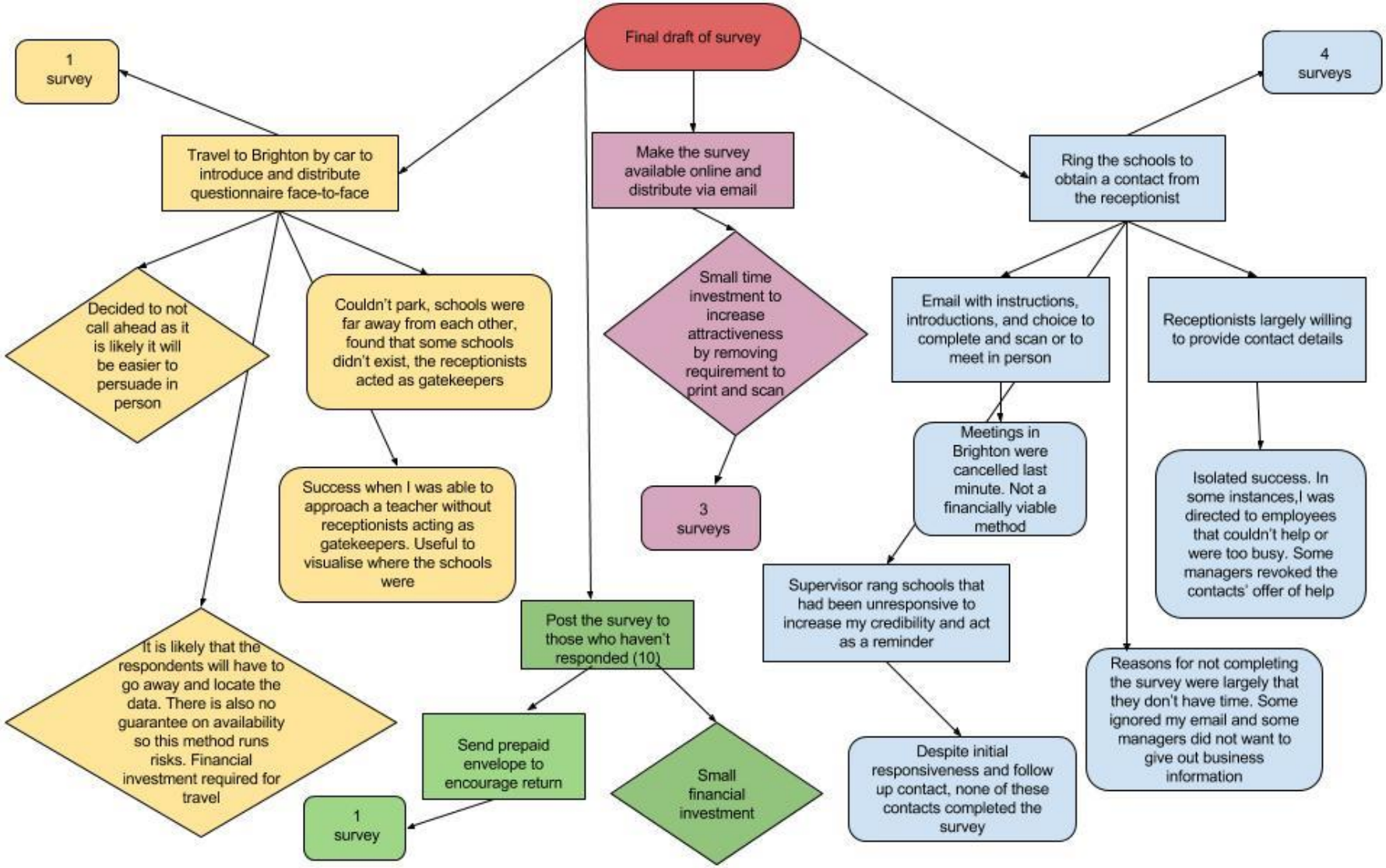
*Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview to help explore this topic further at a later date? If so, please can you provide your name, email address and/or contact number. As stated at the outset, all information that you provide will be treated in an anonymous and confidential way.*

Name: .....

Email: .....

Phone: .....

## Appendix 2: Survey Methodology Flow Chart



## Appendix 3: ELT Centre Interview Guide

1. What courses do you offer?
2. What age groups do you cater for?
3. Has this changed over time?
4. Are there any gender disparities?
5. What do you think are the key motivations for participation?
6. Is parental influence a factor?
7. Why do you think they choose Brighton?
8. Do the students get any qualifications during their stay here?
9. Do most of your students come in groups or on their own?
10. How long do your students tend to stay for?
11. Has this changed over time?
12. What are the key nationalities at your school?
13. Has this distribution changed over time?
14. Do you have an activity programme?
15. Are your English + courses a result of changing demands from students?

**Seasonality**

1. Do student numbers fluctuate over the year?
2. Are staff members at this school seasonal?
3. What jobs do they do at other times of the year?
4. What is the nationality of your teachers?

**Affiliations**

5. Can you tell me about your relationship with English UK?

**Recruitment**

6. Can you tell me about your relationship with education agents?
7. What percentage do they recruit?
8. Where are the education agents based?
9. Does the nationality of your students correlate with the location of the education agents?
10. How else do you recruit your students?
11. Have you had to change your recruitment strategies as the industry has become more competitive?

**Hosting and Accommodation**

12. Can you tell me about the different types of accommodation that you offer?
13. What type of student stays in each? I.e. do older students or different nationalities prefer HMOs or PBSA to host families?
14. Do you use PBSA all year round?
15. Do you have HMOs because of demand or preference?
16. How do you recruit your host families?
17. Do your hosts and their household members have to hold DBS'?
18. What do you think the family's motivations are?
19. Has this motivation changed over time?
20. Can you tell me about your 'typical' host family?
21. Do these groups have different motivations?
22. Is there a hosting geography within Brighton?
23. What are your reasons for advocating the homestay rather than residential accommodation?
24. Do you think students get an authentic experience if the motivation is financial?
25. Do you receive feedback on the host families?
26. Do you have to mediate where you place certain students?
27. Do you think hosting can offset the housing issues in Brighton and Hove?

**Brighton**

28. How would you describe the relationship between local residents and EFL students?

**Demand**

29. What is your opinion on past and present visa policies that impact EFL students?
30. How do you think Brexit will impact, if at all, on the industry?
31. Have you already felt an effect of Brexit?
32. I have read that some UK ELT providers are catering to demand for children aged 3. Do you think this younger demographic is the future of ELT?
33. Do you think that the EFL industry is accessible to all?

## Appendix 4: EFL Student Interview Guide

### EFL Students

1. If you don't mind, how old are you?
2. What is your nationality?
3. What course are you studying?
4. How long is your course?
5. Did you come to Brighton on your own or as part of a group?
6. How are you enjoying [The ELT Centre]?

### Decision making process

1. Have you spent time abroad in the past?
2. What made you want to study abroad/ learn English outside of [home country]?
3. How did you find out about learning English abroad?
4. Did you get any advice from education agents? [how/why]
5. Have any of your family or friends spent a period of time abroad?
6. Were your parents involved in the decision-making process?
7. What made you want to learn English over another language?
8. What made you choose England as your destination?
9. Did you consider other countries? Why these?
10. Why did you choose Brighton?
11. Did you consider other locations? Why these?
12. [non-EU students] Did visa policy influence your choice of destination?
13. [non-EU students] What was your experience of the visa application process?
14. Did Brexit affect your decision?
15. Why did you choose [ELT centre]?
16. How is your course and accommodation fees funded?
17. Has your experience been value for money?
18. Do you know anyone that wants to learn English abroad but can't because of the cost?

### Experiences in the city

1. What do you do after school and at the weekends?
2. Is England and Brighton what you imagined?
3. Have you interacted with any local residents?
4. Have you formed any social groups?
    - Are they of their own nationality/culture?
5. Where do you feel most at home in the city?

**Experiences of the homestay**

1. Why did you want to stay with a host family?
2. Can you tell me about your host family?
3. Are there any types of family that you wouldn't have wanted to live with?
4. Did you know anything about your host family before you met them?
5. How did you feel before you arrived?
6. Has the homestay helped you adjust to being in England?
7. What rules are there in your host family?
8. What is your opinion of these rules?
9. Do you have a curfew?
10. How would you describe your relationship with the host family?
11. Do the different members of the household have different roles in your care?
    - Was this what you expected?
12. Is your host family similar or different to your family at home?
13. What does home mean to you?
14. Do you feel at home in your hosts' house?
15. Does your host family help you with your English skills?
16. What do you think your host family's motivation to host is?
17. Has your experience been what you expected?
18. Will you keep in contact with your host family?
19. If you had your time over, would you choose to stay with a host family again?
20. Before you arrived, was the educational experience or experience of living with a British family more important?
21. Has your opinion changed on reflection?

**Or**

1. Why did you choose to stay in a student house?
2. How many people do you live with?
3. What are their nationalities?
4. Did you have to sign a contract?
5. Did you have to leave a deposit?

**Post-study**

1. What could have made your experience better?
2. How would you describe yourself? As a tourist, an international student, a European student or a migrant?

3. Now that you have lived abroad, has it made you more or less likely to want to live, work, or holiday abroad in the future?
4. What are your career aspirations?
1. What have you missed most, if anything, about [home country]?
2. What will you miss most about this experience when you return home?
3. What advice would you give to someone about to arrive?

## Appendix 5: Host Family Interview Guide

### Personal details and reasons for hosting

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your household?
    - Employment status
    - Occupation
    - Household composition
2. How long have you been hosting for?
3. Who have you hosted for?
4. Has the demand for host families changed over time?
5. Why did you choose to become a host?
6. Were you encouraged by others, or have you encouraged other people to host?
7. How did your family feel about the decision?
8. What do your friends and neighbours think about hosting?
9. Has hosting helped you to do things that you otherwise wouldn't be able to?
10. Why did you choose to host EFL students rather than lodgers or advertise on Airbnb?

### Networks and protocol

1. What processes did you have to go through to become a recognised host?
    - [If no DBS] do you think that DBS checks should be introduced?
2. What contact do you have with the ELT centres?
3. Are you involved in any homestay networks, or do you go to any homestay events?

### Students

4. Do you host all year-round?
5. Do you prefer long stays or short stays?
6. What are the nationalities and ages of the students that you have hosted?
7. Did you know anything about your students before you meet them?
8. Do the parents of the students get in contact with you?
9. What do you think the students want to gain from the homestay?
10. Do you stay in contact with the students after they leave?

### Approach

11. What is your approach to hosting?
12. How do you divide the labour between your household?
13. What are your expectations of the students?
14. Do you interact with the students in the evenings?

15. Do you take your students on any day or evening activities whilst they are with you?
16. Do the students have a curfew?
17. What do the students do in their spare time?
18. Does hosting impact upon your social life?
19. How would you describe the communication between yourself and the students?
20. Do you help the students to practice their English?
21. Have you noticed a change in the students' expectations over time?
22. Have you had to change your approach with regard to these expectations?
23. Do you view your home as a space of work when a student is present?
24. Do you change the way you behave in your home when a student is present?
25. Has being a host made you more knowledgeable about other cultures?
26. Do experiences vary with different students? [Gender/age/nationality]
27. Is your experience what you expected?
28. How do you think the rest of your household would describe the experience of being a host family?
29. Do you receive feedback from the schools?
30. Would you like to receive feedback?

**Local reception**

31. How do you feel that local residents respond to EFL students?
32. How does this compare to how they respond to university students?

**Closing questions**

33. What are your future plans with regards to hosting?
34. At what point would you stop hosting?
35. What key qualities do you need to be a host?
36. Can you outline your key benefits and/or highlights of hosting?

**If you don't mind me asking a few personal questions…**

1. How old are you?
2. Which area do you live in? Postcode or ward
3. Do you own or rent your house?

**Appendix 6: EFL Student Recruitment Poster**

Loughborough University

## OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE YOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS!

If you are 18+ and would be happy to talk about your experiences of being an English language student as part of a research project being conducted at Loughborough University, I would love to hear from you!

You will be asked to take part in an audio recorded interview at your school or a local café. All conversations will be anonymous and confidential.

You can choose to do this on your own or **bring some friends**.

**Sweets and cake will be provided as a thank you**!

Please contact Charlotte at c.g.bolton@lboro.ac.uk if you are interested in taking part.

**Appendix 7: Example Participant Information Sheet**

# Participant Information Sheet

Loughborough University

**PhD Research on Brighton and Hove's English as a Foreign Language Industry**


**Investigator:**
Charlotte Bolton
+44 (0)1509 222797
c.g.bolton@lboro.ac.uk

**Supervisor:**
Professor Darren Smith
+44 (0)1509 222745
d.p.smith@lboro.ac.uk


**What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the geographical processes associated with the English language industry in the UK in order to inform scientific knowledge in this field of research.

**Who is doing this research and why?**

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD thesis by Charlotte Bolton. This research project is supported by Loughborough University and is supervised by Professor Darren Smith and Dr Sophie Cranston.

**Are there any exclusion criteria?**

To partake in this research, participants must be registered on an English language course.

**What will I be asked to do?**

Participants will be asked to partake in an audio recorded paired interview. The purpose of the interview is to discuss past and current experiences of being, and becoming, an English language student.

**Once I take part, can I change my mind?**

Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have you will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form. However, if at any time before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

*Note: Once the results of the study have been submitted (expected to be July 2018), it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the research.*

**How long will it take?**

The interviews are expected to take around 45 minutes.

**What personal information will be required from me?**

The researcher will require information on the participant's age, gender and nationality.

**Are there any risks in participating?**

There are no risks in participating with this research.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Any personal data collected as part of this study will be kept anonymous and confidential and will be securely stored on a password protected database and destroyed after the results have been submitted (expected to be July 2018).

**I have some more questions; who should I contact?**

If you have any more questions about this research please contact Charlotte Bolton (at c.g.bolton@lboro.ac.uk, or on +44 (0)1509 222797) or Professor Darren Smith (at d.p.smith@lboro.ac.uk, or on +44 (0)1509 222745).

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of this study will be used in the investigators PhD thesis.

**What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?**

If you are not happy with how the research was conducted, please contact Ms Jackie Green, the Secretary for the University's Ethics Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee:

*Ms J Green, Research Office, Hazlerigg Building, Loughborough University, Epinal Way, Loughborough, LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222423. Email: J.A.Green@lboro.ac.uk*

**Is there anything I need to do before the sessions?**

Participants do not need to do anything before the interview.

**Is there anything I need to bring with me?**

Participants do not need to bring anything with them.

**Appendix 8: Example Informed Consent Form**

Loughborough University

# INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**(To be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)**

## PhD Research on Brighton and Hove's English as a Foreign Language Industry

| **Taking Part** | **Please initial box** |
|---|---|
| The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethics Approvals Sub-Committee. | ☐ |
| I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form. | ☐ |
| I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation. | ☐ |
| I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study, have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing. | ☐ |
| I understand that taking part in the project will include being audio recorded. | ☐ |
| I agree to take part in this study. | ☐ |

**Use of Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| I understand that all the personal information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others or for audit by regulatory authorities. | ☐ |
| I understand that anonymised quotes may be used in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. | ☐ |
| I understand that any personal data collected will be securely stored until the submission of the researcher's thesis (expected July 2018), and destroyed thereafter. | ☐ |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Charlotte Bolton. | ☐ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of participant | Signature | Date |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher | Signature | Date |

## Appendix 9: Letter from the Home Office, UK Government

Home Office

Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 020 7035 4848
Fax: 020 7035 4745
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Ms Charlotte Bolton
Department of Geography
Loughborough University
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU

Reference: T12560/16
[redacted]

Dear Ms Bolton,

Thank you for your letter of 2 November 2016 about student migration policy with particular reference to English language students.

International students are greatly valued by the UK. It is recognised that they make an important contribution during their time here, and they help make our education system one of the best in the world. After the USA, the UK remains the second most popular destination in the world for international higher education students and we want to continue to attract the brightest and best to study at our world-leading institutions. There remains no limit on the number of genuine international students who can come to study in the UK.

At the same time, we will continue to reform the student visa system to tackle abuse, and deliver an effective immigration system that is fair to British citizens and those who play by the rules.

We have a route dedicated to students who wish to come to the UK for a short-period of time to study, which caters for the market in English as a foreign language. The short-term study route allows international students to come to the UK to study for a period of up to 11 months if they are aged 18 or over and studying English language at an accredited institution.

As the Home Secretary recently announced, we will be seeking views on the non-EU work and study immigration routes. This will include consideration of what more we can do to strengthen the system to support the best institutions – and those that stick to the rules – to attract the best talent.

Interested parties, including businesses and members of the education sector, will have the opportunity to engage with this consultation to help us get these reforms right.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Student Migration Policy Team